

Celebrating Plurality and Youthfulness: A Peek into the Youth Festival 2023



The annual Youth Festival observed lively participation of **260 individuals** from across **15 states** of the country (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal). Organised from **16-18th June 2023** at Sevagram Ashram, Wardha; Maharashtra, the Festival was organised as a culmination of all School for Social Change (SSC) batches run across four different language schools (Hindi, Marathi, Odia and Tamil) in a year. This year Youth Festival also marked the beginning of SRUTI's celebration of completing 40-years of empowering communities.

The participants immersed in the festivities, celebrating their cultures and ethnicities, and exchanging experiences and diversity with each other. Dressed in traditional cultural attires, holding their Sangathan banners high, the participants rallied and danced to the beats of traditional instruments like the dhol, and mandar. Singing and chanting songs and slogans of their Sangathan and the value systems they uphold, the multi-vibrant rally exhibited oneness.



The Youth Festival was designed to create opportunities for mutual learning and exchange. Following a round of introductions from each of the Sangathans and the areas they hail from. The gathering was addressed by Senior saathis – Aradhana Bhargava, Amit, and Devendra about the importance and value of this pedagogical initiative – the School for Social Change. They also shared about the 40-year journey that SRUTI has walked and the vital role that SSC has played in enhancing the perspectives, capacities and skills of change-makers and imbibing leadership values in them.

The value of this initiative was further strengthened by the transformational experiences and journeys shared by participants of the outgoing 2022 batch.



एसएससी में मैंने जाना कि आप वैज्ञानिक चेतना के आधार पर छोटी से छोटी चीज़ को भी एक बड़ी सोच में बदल सकते हो !

श्रेया, हिमांचल प्रदेश

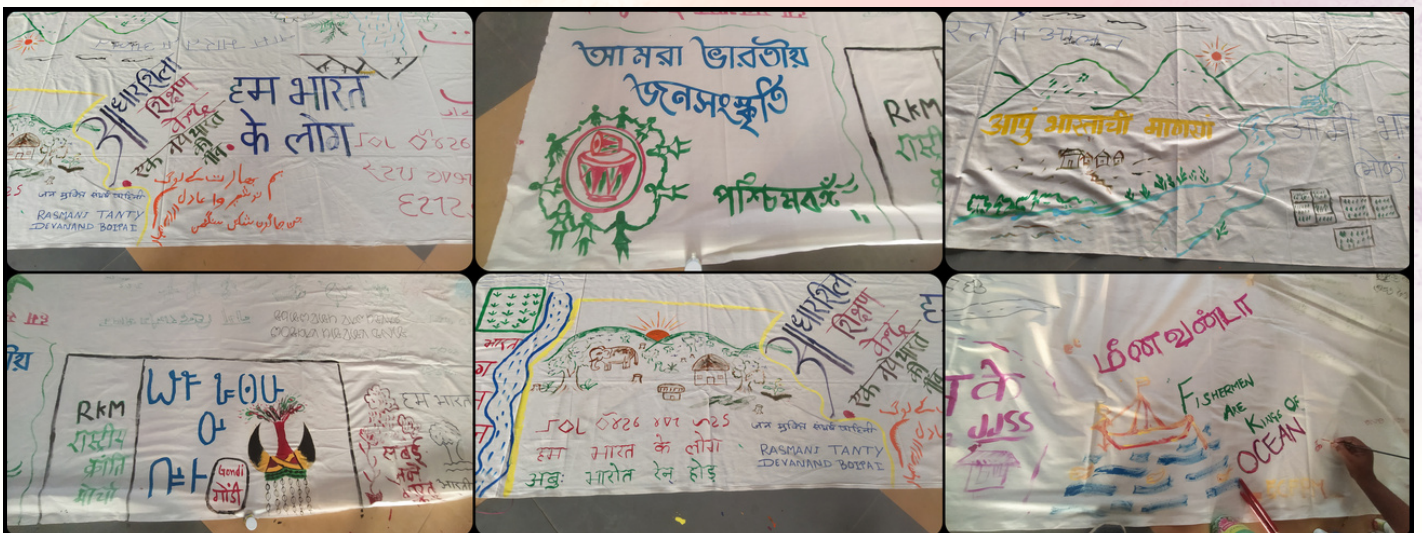


एसएससी शिविर में महिलाएँ खुलकर अपनी बातों को आगे रखना सीखती हैं ! लोगों के सामने बोलने में जो हिचकिचाहट होती थी, एसएससी में आकर वह दूर हो गयी है !

पार्वती, बिहार



In one of the events, the participants huddled with paint brushes and sketch pens around long pieces of cloth, to write **'We the People of India'** in their own languages and dialects, sketching and painting representations of their different communities and cultures. Emerging to be a culturally rich and vivid portrayal of our diversity, the activity helped to align in unison on the values of social change they envision and wish to bring.





A West Bengal-based theatre group – **Jana Sanskriti Manch’s Theatre of the Oppressed** performed forum theatre. An audience-engaging script, where a young girl is married off to an elderly man highlighted the patriarchal structures and norms of the society. Sanjay Ganguly, the director of the group, engaged the audience by asking them how they would’ve responded leaving the audience in deep thought by the end of the exercise.

To give a taste on how the Parliament works, a Youth Parliament was also convened. The campus bustled with politically charged energies, where each party candidate indulged in party campaigning and sloganeering. Parties convening press conferences, and media playing their ever-important role added a lively surprise to the entire atmosphere. The Parliament finally culminated in a voting session on the final day, deciding upon the predicament of a proposed Law, bound to affect each of the parties and their vote banks.

A day was also dedicated to participants dividing themselves into skill-building sessions namely **poster making, fake news and fact check, fundraising, short film production, digital poster making, theatre, song-making, documentation and slogan making**. Each of the activities was designed in a way to strengthening the Sangathans and their work.

While under the skillful hands of Sanjay Ganguly, the theatre group busied themselves, internationally acclaimed documentary makers Biju Toppo and Deepak Bara mentored the film-making group. Devendra, Selvaraj and Shweta teamed with the song-making groups who composed and performed in the Finale a new song having a melodious mix of five regional languages.





Gathered in the evening for a walk around the campus of Bapu Kutli, Sevagram, and participating in the evening prayer at the campus, which to date has preserved and documented the life and spirit of Mahatma Gandhi.

Cultural evening and convocation ceremony

The festivities culminated with a felicitation ceremony. All participants of SSC were acknowledged with Certificates by their trainers. The Resource Persons of the Youth Festival and SSC were also accoladed. The campus resounded with slogans of resilience, togetherness, equality, justice, and fraternity being chanted by different saathis in different languages. The evening was marked by performances of music and theatre groups along with those from saathis of different Sangathans. Dancing arm-in-arm to the beats of different songs, the participants bid their farewells, taking back memories and refreshed energies to their homes and Sangathans.



UNITY IN DIVERSITY