

SRUTI@40 : CELEBRATING JOURNEYS OF HOPE & CHANGE



**Honouring Four Decades of Collective Action,
Cultural Expressions, and Social Transformation**

The journey of SRUTI over the past four decades is a powerful testament to resilience, solidarity, and the unwavering pursuit of justice. It is a story shaped by countless individuals and people's collectives who have stood together through adversities, amplifying the voices and struggles of marginalised communities across rural, tribal, and urban landscapes.

Since its inception, SRUTI has served as a vital platform for grassroots collectives to express everyday struggles and aspirations through diverse forms of cultural expressions. As we entered 2025, the vision for *SRUTI@40: Celebrating Journeys of Hope and Change* was to bring this spirit to a broader audience, reaching the citizenry, including youth and students from schools and colleges, regionally and nationally, through immersive, inclusive celebrations.

The lead-up to the national event featured a series of Regional Culmination Programs in Lucknow, Bhopal, Ranchi, and Ooty, held in February and March. These gatherings were rooted in the local cultural ethos of each region, drawing participation from a wide spectrum of communities.



In Photos: Regional Culmination Programs (top L-R: Bhopal, Ranchi; bottom L-R: Lucknow, Ooty)

The national celebration took place on March 29–30, 2025, at Travancore Palace, New Delhi, bringing together SRUTI fellows and volunteers, alongside civil society groups, writers, researchers, journalists, donors, academicians, and well-wishers.

The first day was marked by insightful discussions, storytelling, and performances that showcased the personal and collective journeys of SRUTI fellows. A special educational exhibition engaged urban youth (school and college students) with grassroots perspectives on pressing social issues.

On March 30th, SRUTI@40 opened to the public with thoughtfully curated spaces that celebrated four decades of grassroots struggles and collective resilience. Distinguished guests inaugurated the program: SRUTI mentor Pradip Prabhu, renowned actress and activist Shabana Azmi, actress and singer Deepika Deshpande Amin, SRUTI founder member Poonam Muttreja, and musician-activist Rahul Ram. Their presence lent warmth, inspiration, and heartfelt support, making the occasion truly special.

The celebration began with From the Archives, a multimedia exhibition offering an immersive journey through SRUTI's history. It traced people's collectives and their work on themes like identity, dignity, forest, land, labour, migration, among others. It turned out to be a living archive of voices and memories.



In Photos: A still from the exhibition (left); Audience including school students partaking in the exhibition (right)

As evening fell, the courtyard transformed into a stage of sound and storytelling with Geet aur Gatha. A soul-stirring performance of folk songs in 18 languages and dialects echoed the cultural diversity of the grassroots. Electrifying performances by Rahul Ram, JUST US, and Dastaan Live, whose reimaging of M.K. Raina's play Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein into a "rock opera" powerfully addressed issues like migration, inflation, and climate change. Shabana Azmi's words reaffirmed a deep solidarity with grassroots struggles for dignity and justice.

Adding vibrant colour and flavour was Satrangi Chowk, a lively cultural hub featuring spices, seeds, and handloom stalls from Kumbaya, Baragaon Weaves, and Aha Vastra. Complementing this sensory feast was a delicious spread of regional delicacies from 10 states, thoughtfully curated by Café Lota.

Together, these spaces - From the Archives, Geet aur Gatha, and Satrangi Chowk - formed more than just a celebration.

They were a rich sensorial journey through SRUTI's legacy: a confluence of culture, memory, and solidarity, designed not only to honour the past but to inspire a more just and equitable future.



In Photos: Glimpses of the Medley performance in 18 languages by Jharkhand group (top); Distinguished guests Shabana Azmi, Deepika D. Amin and Poonam Muttreja observing the exhibition (middle); and SRUTI mentor Pradip bhai extending solidarity (bottom)



The event's success was a result of the collaborative efforts of the co-organisers- Excurators, Teamwork Arts, Baragaon Weaves, Red Cedar Hospitality, Geet Aur Gatha, and Sparrow Communications, who, along with SRUTI, co-created a truly unique and memorable experience for all.

As *SRUTI@40* came to a close, it left behind not just memories, but renewed energy and inspiration to carry forward the spirit of the celebration and the values SRUTI imbibes. In the coming months, *From the Archives* will travel to new venues and cities, continuing to tell the story of collective struggle, dignity, and hope - to wider audiences.

We also look ahead to deepening our engagement with youth, who, inspired by the powerful *Jangeet* songs composed by people's collectives, will take these tools of cultural renaissance into their own contexts and everyday work. The thoughtfully designed spaces, the vibrant voices of fellows, the warmth of people who found time to attend, and the solidarity shared across generations have reaffirmed SRUTI's commitment to nurturing inclusive, people-led change.

The journey continues - with newer spaces to create, voices to amplify, and stories yet to be told.



In Photos: A glimpse from the cultural performance of different groups with Rahul Ram