



**A STRATEGIC FIELD BRIEF**

# INDIGENOUS YATRA & GRAMEEN CHARCHA

**LISTENING AT SCALE:  
WHAT VOICES FROM RURAL INDIA ARE TELLING US**

## WHY THE INDIGENOUS YATRA

The Indigenous Yatra was launched to listen to the voices of tribal and rural communities. It created spaces for people to share their knowledge, experiences, challenges, and hopes for the future. Through community dialogues, storytelling, traditional games, forest walks, indigenous culinary traditions, and cultural activities, the journey explored themes including indigenous wisdom, forests and biodiversity, traditional livelihoods, and community aspirations for a better future.

## LISTENING AT SCALE



**3,427**  
VILLAGES REACHED



**9,607**  
VOICES CAPTURED



**57,214**  
PEOPLE PARTICIPATED

**26 DAYS | 7 STATES | 32 DISTRICTS | 32 SANGATHANS**  
**ONE COLLECTIVE LISTENING JOURNEY**

## GROUND REALITIES: WHAT WE OBSERVED DURING THE YATRA

### SEEDS OF RESILIENCE

#### Agriculture and Food Systems

Rural communities continue to depend on indigenous seeds, millets, wild greens, and forest foods that sustain nutrition and resilience. Seasonal knowledge and traditional farming practices remain central to local food systems.

### YOUTH BETWEEN ROOTS AND MIGRATION

#### Youth Migration

Many young people aspire for education and employment beyond their villages, leading to increasing migration. This shift is gradually weakening the transfer of traditional knowledge and farming practices across generations.



## WOMEN AS KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

### Women Leadership

Women emerged as powerful voices during the Yatra, leading conversations on seeds, food, forests, and livelihoods. Their knowledge sustains community nutrition, cultural traditions, and ecological stewardship.

## FORESTS AS LIFE SYSTEMS

### Forest and Ecology

For many tribal communities, forests are sources of food, medicine, and cultural identity. Communities highlighted both their deep dependence on forests and growing concerns about ecological change and declining access.

## THE JOURNEY THROUGH PICTURES



**229**  
RECIPE COLLECTED

**108**  
WISDOM BOX  
MOVED THROUGH VILLAGES

**504**  
MEDICINAL HERBS  
COLLECTED

**548**  
INDIGENOUS SEED  
VARIETIES COLLECTED

**209**  
INTER-GENERATIONAL  
LETTERS WRITTEN

**322**  
YOUTH PAINTINGS  
ON VIKSIT BHARAT



# VOICES FROM THE GROUND

Across village chaupals, community gatherings, and other engagements, people shared reflections on changing landscapes, food traditions, and aspirations for the future, revealing the deep connection between culture, ecology, and livelihoods.

“The forest feeds our families and gives us medicine when someone falls sick. Our elders have always taught us how to gather food and herbs from the forest. For us, the forest is part of our life. If the forest is protected, our village will always remain strong.”

Community Elder, Mayurbhanj, Odisha

“In our homes, women keep the knowledge of seeds and seasonal foods. We know which seeds to save, what grows in each season, and how to cook food from the forest and our fields. We learned these things from our mothers and grandmothers. Now we are teaching our daughters, so that this knowledge stays alive in our village.”

Women's collective member, Kandhamal, Odisha

“We want education and better opportunities, but we also want to stay connected to our land and our culture. If there are good earning opportunities in our village, we can stay close to our families and our roots. Moving forward in life should not mean forgetting where we come from.”

Youth Participant, Alirajpur, Madhya Pradesh



# GRAMEEN CHARCHA 2026

FEBRUARY 22-24, 2026 | BIASAM CUTTACK, RAYAGADA, ODISHA

Grameen Charcha emerged from the learnings of the Indigenous Yatra, which travelled across villages to listen to local experiences and aspirations. It is a participatory platform that brings village voices, Indigenous wisdom, and grassroots innovations into broader discussions on rural development, climate resilience, and livelihoods.

Through village dialogues, exhibitions, and participatory workshops, Grameen Charcha brings together farmers, youth, women's groups, community leaders, civil society, researchers, and government representatives. The discussions help shape a **People's Action Charter** outlining community priorities for rural development and collective action.

## LISTENING AT SCALE



3

**THEMATIC PANEL DISCUSSIONS**  
(Ecology, Economy, Emotion)

1,635

PEOPLE PARTICIPATED



30

**THEMATIC KNOWLEDGE PAVILIONS**  
(Innovation, Wisdom, Stories)



222

VOICES CAPTURED

1

**SPECIAL EVENT**  
(Indigenous MasterChef)

1

**COMMUNITY SOLUTION PLATFORM**  
(Rayagada Challenge Lab)

32

GRASSROOTS COLLECTIVES PARTICIPATED

**SEVEN STATES, ONE SHARED DIALOGUE:**  
PARTICIPANTS CONVERGED FOR 2 DAYS OF VILLAGE IMMERSION FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE  
FOLLOWED BY 3 DAYS OF GRASSROOTS DIALOGUE

## FROM LISTENING TO ACTION

The Indigenous Yatra gathered voices from villages through dialogues and community interactions. Grameen Charcha brought these insights together, helping communities reflect on shared challenges and opportunities. The process moved beyond listening to collective commitments for strengthening livelihoods, protecting nature, and preserving cultural knowledge.



## COMMUNITY PLEDGE

Villages participating in the Indigenous Yatra expressed a shared commitment to strengthening local well-being through three interconnected dimensions of village life.

### Ecology

Communities pledged to protect forests, conserve water sources, and revive traditional farming and seed practices that sustain biodiversity and ecological balance.

### Economy

Villages committed to strengthening local livelihoods through agriculture, forest-based enterprises, traditional crafts, and small rural businesses that support sustainable incomes.

### Emotions

Communities emphasized preserving cultural traditions, local festivals, songs, and traditional games while creating spaces for youth, women, and elders to participate in collective village life.



## THE JOURNEY THROUGH PICTURES



# ROLE OF THE GRAMEEN CHARCHA COLLECTIVE



- \* FOLLOW UP WITH PARTICIPATING VILLAGES
- \* DOCUMENT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

- \* CONNECT COMMUNITIES WITH INSTITUTIONS
- \* SHARE LEARNING ACROSS REGIONS

## A NEW APPROACH

The initiative encourages communities to move beyond only seeking solutions from outside and to take greater local initiative in shaping their own development pathways. Through dialogue and collective reflection, villages are identifying actions they can lead themselves while also inviting collaboration from institutions and partners.

This approach is guided by the **Samaj | Sarkar | Bazaar** framework. **Samaj (community)** brings local knowledge, leadership, and collective action. **Sarkar (government)** provides policy support, programs, and public resources. **Bazaar (markets)** creates opportunities for fair livelihoods, enterprises, and value chains.

## LOOKING AHEAD

In the months leading to the next Grameen Charcha, participating villages will continue to take forward the commitments discussed during the dialogues. Community-led actions will be documented, local innovations will be shared across villages, and progress will be reviewed through ongoing engagement with communities and partners.

This process will help strengthen learning, collaboration, and collective action as villages move toward more resilient and self-reliant futures.





**“When thousands of rural voices are heard together, they reveal not only challenges but also pathways for change.”**

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