

Press Release

Art can be a powerful tool in climate conversation: Vasu Dixit

The eARTh Initiative, which puts art at the heart of climate action, launched

Bengaluru, 15 October 2023

“Music can become a powerful tool to convey profound thoughts,” said Vasu Dixit, composer, musician, and lead singer of the band Swarathma. “Songs that embody the deep philosophies of thinkers such as Purandara Dasa can touch us and bring about a positive change.” He was speaking at “eARTh”, a climate communication event by policy think tank, the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), organised on Saturday at the Bangalore International Centre.

“There is immense power in music to send a message across, but, unlike a bomb, it is a very gentle tool”, Dixit added after inaugurating the eARTh Initiative by watering a *tulsi* plant. Belting songs on the environment such as “*Nadiyolage*” and “*Pyasaki*”, he talked about our deep connection with it. Dixit amped up the crowd further when he performed his popular sing-along song “*Ragi Tandira*”.

The event also had performances by Anoushka Maskey, singer-songwriter, and the Bangalore Little Theatre, who performed a short, interactive play “Thermos”, which is a comic and irreverent examination of the phenomenon of global warming and climate change. The eARTh Initiative aims to tap into the synergy of the artist community to propel collective climate action.

Artist Gigi Scaria noted that art can open up certain new areas for engaging with citizens and motivating them. “The change brought in by art is gradual but happens at a deeper level”, he added, while participating in a panel discussion on the role of art and artists in the climate conversation.

Sharing her experience of working on reviving the Puttenahalli lake in Bengaluru, writer and lake conservationist Usha Rajagopalan stressed the need to rope in citizens, “Bureaucrats and ecologists cannot do anything by themselves. The public needs to be brought into the climate conversation.”

Stand-up comedian and podcaster Sundeep Rao of the SoapyRao Show fame spoke about the perils of growing consumerism and the need to rethink our choices. “I am part of the problem (climate change) if I am not thinking about my choices and actions.”

Journalist and documentary filmmaker Shawn Sebastian, whose short film “The Mangrove Man of Kumbalangi” was screened on the occasion, pointed out that art can help spread hope through stories of the resilience of communities. “To communicate about climate

change we need evidence and science, but we also need human emotions, and this is where art and artists come in,” he said.

“It is challenging to have communities who struggle to make their daily ends meet see climate change as one of the important problems (of the so many problems they have),” opined Poornima Sukumar, founder of the Aravani Art Project, which works with the transwomen community.

“The eARTh Initiative is an effort to involve the community at large in climate action through art by bringing about behavioural change,” summed up Jai Asundi, Executive Director, CSTEP.

“eARTh” is an initiative from CSTEP, a non-profit with a decade-long experience in climate and energy research, to inspire climate action through art. It is supported by the Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation and India Climate Collaborative as knowledge partners.

The event also featured an exhibition of artwork by abstract impressionist Kanchan Rathna, who incorporates materials like old magazines, paper, natural foliage, and flowers, showcasing a sustainable and responsible approach to art.

The event sets the ball rolling on the eARTh Initiative—the larger long-term endeavour envisaged for sustained engagement with the artist community to trigger climate-positive behaviour change among citizens. This includes an artist collective to mentor young artists and encourage climate art and a climate fellowship for students to enable them to create solution-oriented artistic narratives around climate change.

If you have any queries, please mail them to cpe@cstep.in.

About CSTEP

The Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) is one of India’s leading think tanks. We are involved in solving some of the grand challenges the country faces currently. These include a Sustainable and Secure Future; India’s Green Energy Transition; Clean Air for All; and Digital Transformation. Our research leverages innovative technology-based ideas to solve developmental problems. We provide policy advice to central and state governments and are a part of various government committees. We also collaborate with national and international research institutions to build a coherent narrative on policy challenges and solutions for India’s sustainable development. Our vision is to be the foremost institution for policy analysis in India.