



'Dal Utsav'

RESTORING TRADITION, REVIVING SWARAJ

09 -10 JUNE 2026

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Indigenous communities have long shaped their food systems rooted in self-reliance, local control, and intergenerational knowledge, a culture of Swaraj over what they grew, consumed, and shared, which is now fading. This shift prompted a series of dialogues among tribal women, who expressed deep concern over the weakening relationship between their age-old culture, food and nutrition sovereignty, and the circular practices that have traditionally sustained their communities.

Dal Utsav, emerged from these dialogues, was envisioned as a living expression of Swaraj, where food and nutrition sovereignty, self-reliance, biodiversity, ecological balance, and cultural continuity converge. It became the initial point for a broader dialogue on restoring circular food systems and indigenous ways of living.

PURPOSE

Dal Utsav was a beginning of efforts led by tribal women to reflect on and strengthen the alignment between their food and nutrition sovereignty, living income, and ecological and circular practices with their culture, through intergenerational dialogue, shared practices, and stronger linkages with community and markets.



KEY OUTCOMES

- **1,431** tribal women led the celebration
- **2,948 Kg** of Dal processed by women.
- **2,371 Kg** of Dal retained for family consumption, while 497 Kg sold into market.
- **₹2.1-2.8 Lakh** worth of nutrition value retained.

(Based on prevailing market prices, and directly reducing household expenditure on protein-rich food)

PROCESS

- **Community Mobilization:** Tribal women across 13 blocks in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat collectively planned and led Dal Utsav within their villages.
- **Reviving Traditional Practices:** Women processed Green Gram, Black Gram, and Chickpea into pulses using traditional, community-rooted methods such as hand-held stone mills (Ghatti), reviving indigenous knowledge and circular food practices.
- **Intergenerational Learning:** Elder women shared their knowledge, skills, and experiences with younger women through hands-on demonstrations, storytelling, and dialogue, strengthening intergenerational learning.
- **Celebrating Culture:** Traditional songs, local narratives, and collective cultural expressions associated with farming, food, and community life were revived and celebrated.
- **Collective Reflection:** The celebration created opportunities for women to reflect on the changing food system, discuss challenges, and identify pathways for strengthening food and nutrition sovereignty, circularity, and indigenous ways of living.

CONCLUSION

- Dal Utsav brings together three interconnected journeys – Agroecology, Food and Nutritional Sovereignty, and Women's Leadership – into a single community-led celebration.
- This is reflected in tangible outcomes: Green Gram and Chickpea are largely sold in the market in their raw form, and when families later need to buy pulses, they end up purchasing them back at a much higher price. Dal Utsav has helped build an understanding of this loss, enabling families to save more and contributing to an increase in their living income.
- Care was also taken to ensure that by-products generated during processing are not wasted, for instance, by encouraging the use of Churi (chickpea husk/bran) both for household consumption and as livestock feed.

Together, these journeys offer a vision of tribal and rural development, where progress is measured not only by production and market access, but also by the extent to which communities retain control over their food systems and their future.



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