



JEEVIKA NEW S L E T T E R

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Bihar Saras Mela 2024 : A Resplendent Showcase of Culture, Craft and Tradition

The Bihar Saras Mela 2024, held from December 12 to 26, became an extraordinary platform for celebrating the essence of India's diverse cultural heritage, rural craftsmanship, and the entrepreneurial spirit of women associated with self-help groups. Spanning fifteen days, the event turned into a vibrant confluence of art, tradition and commerce, drawing visitors from across generations to immerse themselves in the splendor of age-old traditions, delectable local cuisines and exquisite craftsmanship.

Organized under the aegis of the Bihar Rural Development Department and managed by JEEVIKA, the Saras Mela represented the spirit of self-reliance and rural innovation. Participants from Bihar and 25 other states, including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal, contributed to making this event a grand spectacle. Each state showcased its unique art, tradition, culture and cuisine through the efforts of SHG members and rural artisans.

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A Grand Opening and Daily Delights

The mela was inaugurated on the evening of December 12 by Shri Shravan Kumar, the Honourable Minister of Rural Development, Bihar Government. The event's venue was meticulously planned, with the thematic arrangement of stalls and hangars dedicated to various regional languages spoken in Bihar, such as Magahi, Bhojpuri, Angika and Maithili. These hangars celebrated the linguistic



diversity of the state while serving as a marketplace for handcrafted goods and rural products. Daily cultural programs held in the Vajjika hangar enriched the evenings, featuring traditional performances that reflected Bihar's rich heritage.

From the very first day, the Saras Mela attracted a significant footfall. Over 70000 visitors attended the event on the inaugural day alone, and the numbers soared as the days progressed. On weekends and Christmas Day, the mela recorded an astonishing attendance of 1.5 lakh visitors. By the end of the event, approximately 16 lakh people had experienced the vibrant celebrations. Families, including four generations in many cases, came together to witness and participate in this remarkable cultural extravaganza.

Showcasing Rural Creativity and Empowerment

With over 500 stalls, the Saras Mela provided a platform for rural artisans and entrepreneurs, particularly women associated with SHGs, to showcase and sell their creations. Among these, 300 stalls were exclusively reserved for SHG women, highlighting their handcrafted goods and cultural products. The food zone featured 50 stalls, including the much-loved "Didi Ki Rasoi," which served an array of traditional dishes, while additional stalls catered to various organizations, banks, and government departments. These stalls not only facilitated commerce but also served as centers for raising awareness about developmental schemes and opportunities for visitors.

The products on display ranged from rural handicrafts, textiles and silk sarees to organic food items and decorative pieces. The live demonstrations of product creation, such as Sikki art and Mulberry silk weaving, captivated visitors and provided insights into the intricate processes behind these crafts.

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

A standout feature of the mela was the remarkable representation of women entrepreneurs. The Madhugram Women Producer Company Limited showcased premium-quality honey in diverse flavors like tulsi, litchi, mustard, karanj, eucalyptus and jamun. This initiative not only highlighted the entrepreneurial acumen of rural women but also underlined their role in producing high-quality organic products. The honey stall alone recorded sales exceeding Rs. 1.5 lakh over the course of the mela.

Similarly, the Shilpgram Women Producer Company Limited garnered significant attention with its exquisite collection of silk sarees, dupattas, stoles and khadi cotton garments. The stalls displayed a harmonious blend of traditional and contemporary designs, attracting both local and international buyers. Live demonstrations of silk weaving added an educational aspect to the shopping experience.

Sustainability at the Forefront

Sustainability was a central theme of the Bihar Saras Mela. Stalls like "Didi Ki Paudshala" showcased a wide variety of

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medicinal and ornamental plants, ranging from aloe vera and tulsi to exotic varieties like red sandalwood and insulin plants. Visitors purchased plants worth over Rs. 40,000, emphasizing the growing interest in sustainable and eco-friendly practices. The stall also served as a hub for promoting the importance of green living and Ayurveda.

A Platform for Financial Inclusion and Awareness

In keeping with the government's vision of fostering digital transactions, all stalls at the mela were equipped for cashless payments. JEEVIKA-operated customer service centers facilitated financial transactions, with daily cash deposits and withdrawals ranging from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1.5 lakh. These centers underscored the importance of financial inclusion and provided vital services to both stall owners and visitors.

Various banks and government institutions, including Punjab National Bank, Indian Bank, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, and the Reserve Bank of India, also set up stalls to raise awareness about financial schemes and digital banking solutions. These efforts were complemented by interactive programs such as puppet shows and street plays aimed at promoting financial literacy.

Cultural Extravaganza and Social Awareness

The Bihar Saras Mela was not just a marketplace but a cultural carnival. Every evening, the venue came alive with performances of traditional folk dances and songs, including Jat-Jatin, Sama Chakeva, Bidesia, and Jhijhiya. These performances celebrated Bihar's cultural vibrancy while providing a platform for local artists. Children's performances, magic shows, and competitions like essay writing and drawing further enriched the event, making it a wholesome experience for families.

Simultaneously, the mela served as a platform for addressing critical social issues. Daily discussions and interactive sessions on topics like child marriage, dowry prohibition, domestic violence, and financial literacy were organized by organizations such as JEEVIKA, Mind Matters and Wings of Fire. Thought-provoking short films and skits highlighted the need for social reform and inspired visitors to contribute to positive change.



Modern Amenities for a Seamless Experience

The Bihar Saras Mela 2024 prioritized visitor convenience and safety. Assistance centers were strategically placed across the venue to provide support to both visitors and stall owners. The health department operated a dedicated health center that conducted free anemia screenings for over 250 individuals and distributed free medication.

The venue was monitored by 50 CCTV cameras to ensure safety and security. Fire brigades and emergency gates were also installed, providing comprehensive safety measures. The mela operated from 10 AM to 8 PM daily, with a dedicated team of officials and security personnel ensuring smooth operations.

A Haven for Photography Enthusiasts

One of the highlights of the mela was the beautifully designed selfie zones. With backdrops inspired by Bihar's iconic landmarks such as Nalanda University and Buddha statues, these zones became a popular attraction for visitors. The selfie zones allowed attendees to capture their memories amidst the vibrant ambiance of the mela.

Conclusion: A Testament to Bihar's Cultural Brilliance

The Bihar Saras Mela 2024 was not just an event; it was an experience that brought together culture, commerce, and community. By providing a platform for rural artisans and women entrepreneurs, the mela highlighted the immense potential of self-help groups and rural enterprises in driving socio-economic development. It also served as a reminder of Bihar's rich cultural heritage, drawing visitors from across the state and beyond to celebrate the timeless traditions that define the region.

As the curtains fell on this grand celebration, the success of the Bihar Saras Mela 2024 stood as a testament to the transformative power of collective effort, creativity and cultural pride. It not only revived traditional art forms and crafts but also provided a roadmap for sustainable development and women's empowerment, making it a truly memorable event for all.

Programs & Initiatives

Armaan JEEVIKA Mahila Vikas Swavalambi Sahkari Samiti Limited: Empowering Lives through JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi

The JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi, operated by the Armaan JEEVIKA Mahila Vikas Swavalambi Sahkari Samiti Limited, Chainpur, Sampatchak, has become a beacon of hope and empowerment in Bihar. Located within the premises of Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH), this community initiative provides not only nutritious and affordable meals but also sustainable livelihoods for women associated with JEEVIKA. This effort, undertaken in collaboration with the Health Department, exemplifies a model of community empowerment through innovation and resilience.



The Beginning of a Transformative Initiative

The JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi at PMCH was inaugurated on January 17, 2024, by Shri Pratyaya Amrit (IAS), Additional Chief Secretary of the Health Department, Government of Bihar. Conceptualized as a community kitchen inspired by Kerala's celebrated Café Kudumbashree model, the initiative seeks to provide high-quality meals in government hospitals, schools, banks, and other institutions across Bihar. To ensure its smooth functioning, the Armaan JEEVIKA Mahila Vikas Swavalambi Sahkari Samiti invested an initial capital through loans at an interest rate of 12%. To date, the cooperative has infused Rs. 70-75 lakh as working capital into this venture, underscoring its commitment to this impactful enterprise.

Nutritious Meals and Empowerment Under One Roof

The JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi caters to a wide audience, including patients admitted to PMCH, their attendants, hospital staff, and visitors. Every day, it serves approximately 800 to 1,000 patients with nutritious and wholesome meals, along with an additional 250-300 attendants, doctors, and hospital employees. The kitchen has struck a fine balance between affordability and quality, ensuring that the meals are accessible to everyone.

This initiative has not only addressed the nutritional needs of those in government institutions but also created sustainable employment opportunities for women. Currently, 52 JEEVIKA Didis are directly employed at the kitchen, earning a stable income and achieving financial independence. Their diligent efforts and commitment to quality have transformed this community kitchen into a successful venture, generating a monthly revenue of 35-40 lakh and a net profit of Rs. 5-6 lakh.

Empowering Women through Training and Skill Development

The success of JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi lies in the systematic training and capacity-building programs conducted by JEEVIKA. The cooperative identifies women from self-help groups and trains them in essential skills such as cooking, food service, inventory management, hospitality, cleanliness, human resource management, and financial planning. This comprehensive approach ensures that the women can independently manage the operations of the kitchen while maintaining high standards of quality and efficiency.

These training programs have instilled confidence and entrepreneurial spirit among the women, enabling them to take risks

Programs & Initiatives



and explore new opportunities. By participating in such initiatives, these women have not only improved their socio-economic conditions but also inspired others in their communities to follow in their footsteps.

A Model of Social and Economic Transformation

The JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi is a shining example of how community-driven initiatives can bring about significant social and economic change. For the women involved, this initiative has been a catalyst for personal and professional growth. It has improved their living standards, facilitated better education for their children, and provided them with the financial stability needed to dream big and achieve more. The model has also contributed to the economic empowerment of the Armaan cooperative, increasing its income while ensuring transparency and efficiency in operations. Beyond the monetary benefits, the kitchen has fostered a sense of community and collective responsibility among the women, strengthening their social bonds and mutual support systems.



Recognition and Expansion

The JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi model has received widespread recognition for its success and impact. Its story has transcended Bihar's borders, inspiring similar initiatives in other states. The scalability and replicability of this model make it a promising solution for addressing issues of nutrition and employment in other parts of the country as well.

A Vision for the Future

The JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi at PMCH demonstrates the power of community-driven initiatives to address critical societal challenges. It is not just a kitchen but a symbol of resilience, innovation, and empowerment. The women working here are not only earning livelihoods but also breaking barriers, redefining their roles in society, and contributing to the economic development of their communities.

As the JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi continues to grow, it holds the potential to become a nationwide movement for community empowerment and sustainable development. Its success reaffirms the belief that with the right support and opportunities, communities can take charge of their destinies and build a better future for all.

Transforming Lives

Transformational Journey of Sushma Sinha : A Testament to Empowerment and Resilience

Sushma Sinha, a resident of Bhainswa village in Masaurhi block, Bihar, has transformed her life from extreme poverty to economic independence through the support of JEEVIKA. Her journey exemplifies the power of self-help groups and community-driven initiatives in empowering women.



Struggles and Hardships

Born into a marginalized community, Sushma faced severe financial constraints. As an agricultural laborer, her annual income was only 90,000—insufficient to support her family of six. Societal discrimination, coupled with her husband's alcohol addiction, further restricted her opportunities. Limited awareness of financial aid and government schemes left her family struggling for survival.

Turning Point: Joining JEEVIKA

In 2013, Sushma joined the Mahalaxmi JEEVIKA Self-Help Group under the Prakash JEEVIKA Mahila Gram Sangathan. Initially a group member, her dedication led her to become a Community Resource Person (CRP). Through JEEVIKA, she received training in advanced agricultural techniques and visited Uttar Pradesh for skill enhancement. With financial assistance from her self-help group and village organization, she invested in farming, increasing productivity and income.

Economic and Social Empowerment

JEEVIKA's interventions extended beyond agriculture, providing access to government schemes. With their guidance, Sushma's family secured a ration card, a house under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), and a job card under MGNREGA. These benefits improved their living conditions, while the construction of a toilet enhanced hygiene and dignity. With financial stability, Sushma prioritized her children's education. She enrolled them in the DDU-GKY vocational training program, equipping them with skills for better career opportunities. Through active participation in community events, she overcame social barriers and gained recognition as a role model in her village.

Impact and Achievements

Sushma's transformation has inspired many women in her community. Her success in agriculture has demonstrated how knowledge and financial support can elevate livelihoods. Today, she enjoys a stable income, ensuring her family's well-being and her children's future.

Her journey highlights that empowerment extends beyond financial independence—it fosters self-confidence, social inclusion, and the courage to challenge traditional constraints. Through JEEVIKA, Sushma has become a symbol of resilience and hope.

Future Aspirations

Determined to expand her agricultural ventures, Sushma plans to invest further in modern farming techniques. Her priority remains her children's education, believing it to be the key to long-term success.

A Model of Transformation

Sushma's story showcases the impact of JEEVIKA's self-help groups and capacity-building programs. Her journey underscores that with the right support, even the most challenging circumstances can be overcome. She stands as a beacon of empowerment, proving that resilience and community-driven efforts can create lasting change.

February

Calendar of Events

COMING UP IN THE NEXT EDITION

→ JEEVIKA Tableau of Republic Day 2025



Neetu Singh : A Step Towards Self-Reliance with JEEVIKA

Neetu Singh, from Bhainswa village, transformed her life from a homemaker facing domestic violence and societal constraints to a self-reliant entrepreneur through JEEVIKA. Bound by the purdah system and child marriage, she had limited financial independence and decision-making power. Her husband's restrictions further compounded her struggles.

Empowerment Through JEEVIKA

Joining the Tulsi JEEVIKA Self-Help Group in 2013 became a turning point. Through financial aid and training, she gained confidence and economic stability. A loan from JEEVIKA enabled her to construct a toilet, improving her family's hygiene and dignity. Later, she took another loan to start a small clothing store, securing a steady income and strengthening her financial independence.

Impact and Inspiration

Neetu's journey showcases the transformative power of women's empowerment. She not only uplifted her family's economic condition but also inspired other women to break free from traditional constraints. Today, she stands as a symbol of resilience, proving that with the right support and determination, women can achieve self-reliance. Her aspiration is to expand her business and ensure a brighter future for her children, demonstrating how financial and social empowerment can lead to lasting change.



संघर्ष में सफलता तक
"लखपति दीदी" खुशबू देवी की
प्रेरणादायक कहानी

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने खुशबू देवी के प्रयासों को सराहा
कहा, "लखपति दीदियाँ आज पूरे देश में अपनी अलग
पहचान बना रही हैं"



ग्रामीण किसानों के लिए डिजिटल बैंकिंग

काजल ने किसानों को वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान करने
हेतु आधार-सक्षम भुगतान प्रणाली (AEPS) को
क्रियान्वित कर रही है। अब ग्रामीण कृषक अपने गाँव
में ही आसानी से पैसे जमा और निकाल सकते हैं,
जिससे बैंक जाने की जरूरत नहीं पड़ती।



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