



# JEEVIKA NEW S L E T T E R

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## Pragati Yatra : Walking the Path of Progress with JEEVIKA Didis

There is something truly special about seeing dreams turn into reality. Over the past few months, Pragati Yatra has been a journey of hope, determination and change. It has been about walking alongside women who, with hard work and support from JEEVIKA, have created something of their own.

Led by Honourable Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, this initiative was not about grand speeches or policy announcements. It was about listening to real stories, meeting real people and witnessing first-hand how women in Bihar are shaping their own futures. These were not staged events in government buildings. The Chief Minister visited villages, spoke to women where they worked and saw for himself the progress they had made. It was a reminder that true change happens on the ground, not in boardrooms.

For many of these women, this was a moment they never imagined. They were speaking to the Chief Minister for the first time, having their



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## Lead Story : Pragati Yatra

struggles and successes acknowledged at the highest level. And for Bihar, it was proof of what happens when women are given the right support.

### A Journey Through Bihar's Heartland

The Pragati Yatra took the Chief Minister across several districts, where he met JEEVIKA Didis in their own spaces — at their stalls, in self-help group meetings and inside the training centres they had built.

For years, financial independence was out of reach for many rural women. Most had little say in financial matters and depended entirely on their husbands' earnings. The idea of earning their own income was not even considered. But things began to change when JEEVIKA introduced Self-Help Groups. Women started saving small amounts, taking loans and slowly learning to run businesses.

By the time Pragati Yatra began, these businesses had flourished. The Chief Minister saw this everywhere he went. In West Champaran, he met a woman who had started with just two dairy cows and now supplies milk to multiple towns. In Muzaffarpur, he visited a group of women who had set up a community kitchen, providing fresh and affordable meals to schools and hospitals. In Gopalganj, a cluster of SHG members had taken their handwoven sarees to new heights, selling them not just locally but across Bihar.

Everywhere, the message was the same — when women earn, their entire families move forward. Children stay in school, families eat better, homes are built and life becomes more secure.

### The Stalls That Told Stories

One of the most striking moments of Pragati Yatra was the exhibitions set up by JEEVIKA Didis. Across different stops, women proudly displayed their work — handmade pickles, spices, traditional Madhubani paintings, handwoven fabrics, organic farm produce and herbal products. Each item represented a story, not just of a business but of the journey that had led to it.

The Chief Minister did not just walk past these stalls. He stopped, asked questions and genuinely listened. He wanted to know how much they earned, what challenges they faced and how they planned to grow. He even made purchases, showing that their work had real value.

For these women, this was not about government schemes or policies. It was about knowing that their hard work was being recognised. Many had once been invisible in their communities. Now, their businesses were being noticed by the state's highest leader.

### Confidence That Speaks Volumes

Financial independence is important, but the most noticeable change was in the confidence of these women. Many who once hesitated to step out of their homes now spoke with clarity and pride. They described their businesses, explained their earnings and talked about their future plans — all with a confidence that was unimaginable a few years ago.



**Lead Story : Pragati Yatra**



In Kesariya, Motihari, the Chief Minister met a woman who, not long ago, could not even sign her name. Today, she manages her own accounts, negotiates with buyers and mentors other women. In Siwan, he spoke to a woman who broke social barriers to start a dairy business. Today, she supplies milk to an entire district and helps train younger women. These were not just individual success stories. They were proof that when women gain confidence, they don't just improve their own lives. They lift others along with them.

**Financial Support for Bigger Dreams**

The Chief Minister also distributed funds to Self-Help Groups across districts, making it easier for women to expand their businesses. In Vaishali, Rs.135 crore was given to help women grow their ventures. In Kishanganj, Rs. 137 crore was allocated for bank linkage support, ensuring that women could access credit without difficulties. In Rohtas, thousands of SHG members received financial assistance to expand their businesses.

For many women, this financial support meant they could buy raw materials in bulk, invest in better equipment or take their products to larger markets. It wasn't just about money. It was about trust. These funds sent a clear message — rural women in Bihar are not just small-scale earners; they are entrepreneurs who deserve investment.

**Building Stronger Communities**

Beyond individual businesses, Pragati Yatra also focused on strengthening community infrastructure. Across multiple districts, the Chief Minister inaugurated JEEVIKA Bhawans and Didi Ki Libraries, ensuring that both women and students have the right spaces to learn, grow and collaborate.

For JEEVIKA Didis, having a dedicated space to meet, plan and work together has always been a challenge. With the establishment of JEEVIKA Bhawans, that is changing. These centres provide a structured and supportive environment where women can regularly come together to discuss challenges, share ideas and make informed decisions about their businesses and financial matters. It is a space where strategies are built, training sessions are held and future plans take shape.

On the other hand, Didi Ki Libraries are helping bridge the education gap in rural Bihar. Stocked with textbooks, competitive exam guides and digital resources, they ensure that students do not have to rely on expensive coaching or travel long distances to access study materials. With Wi-Fi and digital learning tools, young learners can now explore beyond their school syllabus, prepare for competitive exams and access career opportunities that once seemed out of reach.

## Lead Story : Pragati Yatra



### Women Leading the Way

One of the most inspiring aspects of Pragati Yatra was seeing women in leadership roles. Women who once struggled to feed their families were now guiding others, running businesses and leading financial literacy programmes. The Chief Minister personally honoured women who had trained others, created jobs and made a lasting impact in their communities. Rekha Devi from Muzaffarpur, for example, shared how she had once been too shy to speak in front of her own family. Today, she runs her own business and mentors hundreds of women. These were not just stories of struggle. They were stories of change, resilience and hope.

### Looking Ahead

The Pragati Yatra is not a one-time event. The government now aims to expand rural marketplaces for SHG products, introduce JEEVIKA goods to e-commerce platforms, strengthen financial literacy programmes and improve digital training for women entrepreneurs. This journey will continue. And with each step forward, the women of JEEVIKA are proving that they are not just earning; they are building something lasting.

### A Movement, Not Just a Programme

The Pragati Yatra was never about policies alone. It was about real people — women who once thought financial independence was beyond their reach and are now running businesses, creating jobs and shaping their communities. It was about proving that when women are given opportunities, they don't just earn; they lead. They build futures for their families, their communities and the next generation.

The progress of Bihar is no longer an abstract goal. It is happening now, in homes, in small businesses, in villages where JEEVIKA Didis are making their mark. And as this journey continues, one thing is clear — when women move forward, the entire society moves forward with them.

## Programs & Initiatives

### Empowering Women Through Nutrition: The Impact of Didi ki Rasoi in Bhagalpur

“A kitchen is something we all set up at home, but now this kitchen has become our path to employment.” These words by Prema Devi, a JEEVIKA Didi working at LNJ Hospital in Bhagalpur, reflect the transformational journey of thousands of women in Bihar through the Didi Ki Rasoi initiative. Providing nutritious and hygienic food to patients in large government hospitals in Bihar was a significant challenge. Food services were earlier managed by private vendors, raising concerns about food quality and hygiene.

To address this, the JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi initiative was launched as a pilot project at LNJ Hospital, Bhagalpur, with the dual objective of improving food standards and creating livelihood opportunities for women.



Owing to the success of this experiment, the initiative was scaled up across the state. Today, JEEVIKA Didis operate community kitchens in all major government hospitals, district hospitals, and sub-divisional hospitals in Bihar, ensuring clean, nutritious, and affordable food for patients, their attendants, hospital staff, and the general public. More than 10,000 women have found sustainable employment, moving steadily towards entrepreneurship and financial independence. In Bhagalpur, Didi Ki Rasoi is operational in one sub-divisional hospital, two district hospitals, and the medical college hospital, along with a Scheduled Caste Residential School. The first kitchen in Bhagalpur was launched on August 10, 2021, at LNJ Hospital, and has since become a model of community-driven enterprise, resilience, and impact.

#### Genesis and Background

Women associated with Self-Help Groups under JEEVIKA have long been working for their social and economic upliftment through various livelihood initiatives such as garment production, honey processing, and handicrafts. The idea of community kitchens emerged from a lived experience. During a hospital visit in Bhagalpur, some SHG members were dismayed by the poor quality of food served by roadside vendors. This sparked the idea of starting a hygienic food service within the hospital itself.

The JEEVIKA Didi Ki Rasoi began on October 10, 2018, at District Hospital, Vaishali, serving clean and nutritious food to inpatients and visitors. The initiative garnered praise from patients, attendants, and hospital staff. During the COVID-19 pandemic, JEEVIKA Didis also provided meals to migrant workers, further proving the model's value and scalability. Recognizing this potential, the Bihar government officially approved its expansion on January 12, 2021, and a formal agreement was signed between JEEVIKA and the Department of Health, in the presence of the Hon'ble Chief Minister. This marked the beginning of statewide implementation.

#### Implementation in Bhagalpur

The implementation of Didi Ki Rasoi in Bhagalpur was carried out under a convergence model. The Ekta JEEVIKA Mahila Cluster-Level Federation (CLF) from Goradih block was selected to operate the kitchen at Sadar Hospital, Bhagalpur. Twelve Didis were shortlisted based on predefined criteria, and larger hospitals employed up to 50–60 Didis. The selected women underwent a six-day residential training program conducted by Kudumbashree and IJHM, covering culinary skills, hygiene, hospitality, and kitchen management.

A formal agreement was signed between the CLF and the hospital, clearly defining the menu, pricing, and service delivery

## Programs & Initiatives

mechanisms. A business plan was prepared and approved at both district and state levels. The procurement of equipment and supplies followed community procurement guidelines, monitored by district officials. The kitchens provide breakfast, lunch, evening tea, and dinner for hospitalized patients, while a separate canteen serves attendants, outpatients, and the public. The cost for meals provided to patients is Rs. 150 per day, and meals for others are served at Rs. 50 per plate. A real-time ERP system (CPMS) ensures transparency in tracking expenses, revenue, and inventory.



### Monitoring and Convergence

To ensure quality control, a three-tier monitoring system is in place at cluster, block and district levels. The initiative also extends beyond hospitals. In Bhagalpur, Didi Ki Rasoi has been started at the Scheduled Caste Residential School, where 24 Didis are employed, not only preparing meals but also maintaining cleanliness.

JEEVIKA has partnered with the Social Welfare Department to replicate the model in residential schools for marginalized communities. There are ongoing efforts to extend Didi Ki Rasoi and canteen services to anganwadi centres, schools, and other public institutions.

### Impact and Achievements

Currently, five Didi Ki Rasoi units operate in Bhagalpur district. The Sadar Hospital unit, managed by the Ekta CLF, has eight Didis working in shifts, ensuring continuous service. The initiative has provided livelihood opportunities to 54 women so far in hospitals and 24 women in residential schools.

As of March 2023, the Sadar Hospital unit alone generated revenue of Rs. 64.56 lakh, with net profits exceeding Rs.12 lakh. This model has not only provided a reliable income source but also empowered women by transforming them into entrepreneurs and leaders within their communities.



### Future Prospects

Didi Ki Rasoi has emerged as a transformative livelihood model, ensuring both food security and women's empowerment. With proven success, the Bihar government is keen on expanding the model to other government institutions. Despite challenges like hospital coordination and timely bill settlements, the initiative stands as a robust example of community-led enterprise, driven by women's participation and resilience.

## Transforming Lives

### Kiran Didi : A beacon of Change in Rural Agriculture and Women Empowerment

In the heart of Dhamdaha block in Purnia district, Bihar, resides an inspiring woman who has transformed her life and the lives of many others through determination, leadership and a deep commitment to rural development. Kiran Devi, wife of Yogendra Sah, from Dhokawa, Dhamdaha Dakshin, is a living example of how grassroots efforts can drive social change and economic empowerment.



Kiran Devi, affectionately known as Kiran Didi, started her journey as a small farmer owning just 5 kattha of agricultural land, two tractors, and a threshing machine. Despite limited resources, her passion for learning and improving agricultural practices led her to join JEEVIKA in 2008, where she became a part of Gurudev Self-Help Group, under Laxmi Village Organization and Sakthi Cluster Level Federation. She also actively participated in the PATJHAR Producer Group (PG), focusing on value addition in agriculture.

Through JEEVIKA, Kiran Didi not only learned advanced agricultural techniques but also acquired communication, leadership and organizational skills. Her ability to grasp knowledge and share it with others made her a natural leader among rural women. She became an inspiration for many women farmers and housewives in her community, encouraging them to form SHGs and participate in livelihood activities.

Kiran Didi took part in various training programs organized by JEEVIKA across states like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Bihar, where she deepened her understanding of agribusiness, collective farming, and rural entrepreneurship. She has been instrumental in motivating and mentoring poor women farmers, guiding them on how to access credit from banks, leverage support from PGs and CLFs, and establish their own income-generating activities.

Her work in mobilizing women farmers to join Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) has been remarkable. She helps them procure quality seeds and fertilizers at affordable rates, while also connecting them to better markets through FPCs to ensure fair pricing of agricultural produce. Her efforts have improved income levels and bargaining power of rural women farmers in the region.

Over the years, Kiran Didi has received numerous accolades for her exceptional contributions:

- She was honored by Late Shri Arun Jaitley at an NCDEX event.
- Her work was recognized by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, who invited her to showcase her FPC stall in New Delhi.
- She also received an award from State Bank of India for facilitating access to credit for women through SHGs and VOs.

Kiran Didi's journey from a landless farmer to a social reformer and agricultural entrepreneur is a powerful testament to the potential of rural women when given the right support and opportunities. Today, she is actively involved in forming new SHGs and VOs, nurturing leadership in other women, and paving the way for sustainable development in rural Bihar. Her story is not just one of personal success, but a symbol of collective empowerment and social transformation.

## April

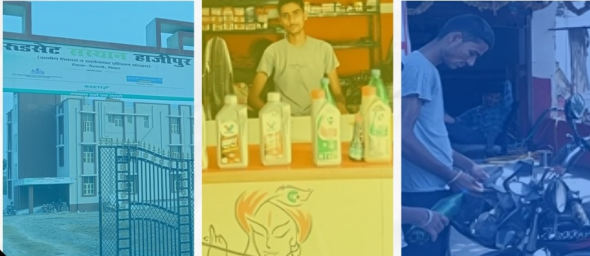
Calendar of Events

### COMING UP IN THE NEXT EDITION

- Bihar Diwas 2025
- International Women's Day

## सफलता की कहानी

आज कृष्णा राज खुद को आत्मनिर्भर और सफल उद्यमी के रूप में देख रहे हैं। वह रुडसेट के प्रति आभारी हैं, जिसने उन्हें सही मार्गदर्शन दिया। उनकी कहानी साबित करती है कि अगर इंसान में हिम्मत, मेहनत और सही दिशा हो, तो कोई भी सपना साकार हो सकता है।



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बढ़ावा देगा, बल्कि उनकी  
आत्मनिर्भरता को नए  
आयाम देगा।



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## Parvati Devi : A Journey from Hardship to Entrepreneurship in Blanket Making

Parvati Devi, a 62-year-old woman from Dhanha village in Buxar district, has transformed her life through sheer determination and the support of JEEVIKA. She was once struggling to sustain her family of 18 members, including her husband, children, and grandchildren. With agriculture and livestock as their primary sources of livelihood, financial stability was always a challenge.

In 2014, Parvati joined the Mahadev Self-Help Group under the Ekta Village Organization and later became part of the Udaan Cluster Level Federation in 2018. Her journey into entrepreneurship began when she sought a loan of ₹2,000 from her SHG to purchase raw materials for blanket making. With the collective support of the SHG, she secured ₹20,000 under the VRF fund and later Rs. 50,000 through the Community Investment Fund (CIF) to buy a stitching machine for making blankets.

Her dedication and hard work paid off, as she not only repaid her loans but also expanded her business. Today, her blankets are sold across different states, and she has successfully showcased her products at three trade fairs. With a steady monthly income of Rs. 24,000, she has not only secured her family's future but also empowered other SHG members by involving them in her business.

Parvati Devi's inspiring journey reflects the transformative power of collective effort and financial inclusion. From financial struggle to becoming an entrepreneur and a landowner, she exemplifies resilience, proving that determination and community support can pave the way for a better future.