



# JEEVIKA NEW S LETTER

January 2024/ Vol. 75



## **Bihar Saras Mela 2023 :** **Celebrating Rural Women Entrepreneurs and Artisans**

Bihar Saras Mela, a vibrant and culturally rich event, has been a significant part of Bihar's socio-economic landscape. Held twice annually, this fair serves as a platform for showcasing the state's diverse handicrafts, handlooms, and agricultural products. The 2023 edition of Bihar Saras Mela continued this tradition, attracting visitors and participants from different parts of the country. The Bihar Saras Mela, organized by JEEVIKA, aimed to promote rural crafts and products. The event took place from December 15 to 29 at Gandhi Maidan, Patna. Over the years, Bihar Saras Mela has gained national recognition, and its two editions are organized annually, with one in September at Gyan Bhawan, Patna, and the other in December.

One of the primary objectives of the JEEVIKA's Bihar Saras Mela is to provide a stage for artisans and craftsmen to display their skills and products. The fair is a kaleidoscope of colors, offering visitors a glimpse into the rich tapestry of Bihar's handicrafts and handlooms. Traditional art forms such as Madhubani painting, Manjusha art, and

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## Lead Story : Bihar Saras Mela 2023



Sikki grass craft take center stage, captivating the audience with their intricate designs and vibrant hues. The Mela becomes a hub for cultural exchange, as artisans not only showcase their products but also engage in live demonstrations, explaining the nuances of their craft to interested onlookers.

The grand inauguration of the Bihar Saras Mela on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023, was carried out in a luminous ceremony by Shri Shravan Kumar, Honorable Minister of Rural Development Department, Government of Bihar. The event commenced with the warm welcome of esteemed guests and dignitaries, who were greeted with floral bouquets on the main cultural stage. Following this, Dr. N. Sarvan Kumar, Secretary of the Rural Development Department, Bihar, extended a gracious welcome to the arriving guests, emphasizing that Saras Mela serves as a platform not only for showcasing indigenous products but also for promoting and encouraging people associated with rural crafts. Prior to the inauguration, the welcoming ceremony for the chief guest, Hon'ble Minister, Rural Development Department, Shri Shravan Kumar, took place at the main entrance. Subsequently, Dr. N. Sarvan Kumar, in his address, highlighted the significance of Saras Mela as a platform that not only brings local products to the market but also boosts the morale of artisans and entrepreneurs engaged in rural crafts.

Through the Bihar Saras Mela, rural women have been transforming their skills into thriving businesses, establishing themselves as skilled entrepreneurs. They have given a new dimension to the handicrafts of their respective regions. In the Mini Saras Mela held from September 20 to 27, 2023, at Gyan Bhavan, Patna, approximately 2.93 crores worth of products and culinary delights were purchased. Women artisans from 22 states, including Bihar, showcased their crafts, culture, taste, and tradition.

**Lead Story : Bihar Saras Mela 2023**

Subsequently, from December 15 onwards, the Bihar Saras Mela featured the participation of around 191 self-help groups from all 38 districts of Bihar. Additionally, 66 women entrepreneurs and 151 self-employed individuals from 22 other states participated, displaying their products, cuisine, and crafts. Various departments, institutions, and banks provided information about different schemes at 50 stalls. District-level stalls were also set up, where women entrepreneurs showcased and sold their handicrafts, artworks, and culinary creations. The event recorded a transaction of over 16 crores within 15 days, indicating the significant economic impact. It is estimated that more than 11 lakh people attended the Mela.

Women entrepreneurs from Bihar, including those from Mithilanchal, Bhagalpur, Kaimur, Darbhanga, Madhepura, Purnia, Gaya, and other districts, presented a diverse range of products. These included Madhubani paintings, Sikki art, Makhana from Mithilanchal, silk garments from Bhagalpur, Darri and Kalin from Kaimur, Lahthi and Choodi from Muzaffarpur, bamboo products from Katarni in Bhagalpur and Banka, and exquisite home decor items made of brass and copper from Patna district. The event saw the active participation of self-help groups such as Madhugram Utpadak Company, managing the demand for products like honey made from various species such as Tulsi, Sahjan, Mustard, Karanj, Jamun, and Litchi. The Shilpgram Utpadak Company, run by JEEVIKA Didis, displayed and sold a wide variety of clothing and handicrafts. The products from Madhugram and Shilpgram received significant attention, leading to substantial sales. The demand for honey and products from Shilpgram was particularly high, showcasing the success and economic sustainability of these ventures.

The Bihar Saras Mela 2023 was not just an exhibition; it was a celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit and cultural diversity of rural women. The event provided a platform for them to showcase their talents, connect with a wider audience, and contribute to the economic growth of their communities. As the Mela continues to grow in stature, it serves as a shining example of how grassroots initiatives and cultural celebrations can be powerful tools for empowerment and economic development. The success stories emerging from Bihar Saras Mela 2023 are a testament to the resilience and creativity of rural women in Bihar and beyond.

Various stalls from different states showcased a rich variety of products and handicrafts during the Bihar Saras Mela 2023. From Madhya Pradesh, exquisite boutique and Chanderi print sarees were displayed. Andhra Pradesh

## Lead Story : Bihar Saras Mela 2023



contributed with warm spices and wooden home decor products. Odisha showcased Sambalpuri textiles and cultural garments. Haryana exhibited appliqué art on blankets and sarees. Gujarat's Kutch region presented traditional textiles and clay pottery. Jharkhand contributed handcrafted herbal medicines by indigenous tribes and Manipuri jewellery and products. Other states like Punjab showcased Phulkari artistry in garments, while West Bengal exhibited decorative items made from date palm leaves and artificial flowers. Telangana's stall displayed appliqué work on bedspreads, along with handmade clothing for children and products made from jute and leather. Chhattisgarh showcased attractive salwar suits and sarees.

The Bihar Saras Mela successfully provided a platform for women entrepreneurs from different regions to exhibit and sell their products. These entrepreneurs from across India not only added vibrant diversity to the fair but also facilitated cultural exchange, allowing visitors to appreciate the rich heritage and traditions of various states. The event served as a catalyst for women's empowerment and self-reliance. The rural women involved in the exhibition from 66 self-help groups across 22 states displayed their skills in handicrafts, art, and culinary expertise. This not only helped them gain recognition but also boosted their morale by receiving appreciation and support from the people of Bihar.

One such inspiring story came from Ms. Jamaya Lamo, representing Ladakh's Leh district. She, along with her sister Kunj Lamo, participated in the Bihar Saras Mela for the first time, showcasing woolen fabrics, dry fruits, and handicrafts. Ms. Jamaya shared her experience of earning a profit of more than 25,000 in just seven days, proving the success of their participation. Moreover, the fair facilitated awareness about various government schemes and departments. Fifty stalls from different departments and banks informed visitors about different schemes and opportunities available for self-help groups and entrepreneurs. The fair's success was not only measured by the sales, but also by the positive response and impact it had on the participants and the local economy. The Saras Mela also featured Saras Rasoi, a section dedicated to a delightful array of traditional and nutritious dishes. Visitors enjoyed a variety of dishes such as Makki ki Roti, Chane ki Saag, Bara Mithai, Khaja, and date-based sweets. The Saras Mela provided a unique culinary experience, offering pure, indigenous, and healthy food to the attendees.

## Lead Story : Bihar Saras Mela 2023

had a great time in the Palna Ghar and Fun Zone. They indulged in playful activities, and at the 360-photo booth, visitors filmed their children's reels based on film songs. In the Desi Selfie Zone within the Saras Mela premises, visitors captured memories with their loved ones by taking selfies. The focus on cleanliness was paramount in the Saras Mela. The fairground was a zero-waste zone, and the use of single-use plastic was completely prohibited. The surveillance of the fairground was maintained through CCTV cameras, ensuring a clean and safe environment for the visitors.



Under the guidance of the Women Development Corporation, daily awareness programs were conducted by artists from Vidya Kendra, Manthan Kala Parishad, and Gramin Lok Seva Sangh. These programs aimed to educate visitors about gender violence, sexual harassment, substance abuse, the campaign against child marriage, and dowry eradication. Short plays such as "Beti Bahadur Aur Badh Chali Betiyaan" and humorous skits conveyed serious messages and engaged the audience. Additionally, through the State Bank of India's initiative, Kalambaz artists educated visitors about cybercrime prevention, alertness towards online shopping, and the use of banking apps.

Every evening, the Youth and Culture Department, along with various organizations, presented folk songs and dances, adding vibrancy to the fair. The audience was captivated by performances that included local, Sufi, and contemporary songs played on traditional and modern instruments. Sushila Shrikala, Muskaan Cultural Stage, and Jack Guitar Club artists contributed by presenting Sufi, folk, and modern songs using both traditional and contemporary instruments, revitalizing Bihar's fading folk songs and dances. Daily seminars and discussions on contemporary issues, employment, entrepreneurship, and start-ups were organized by various departments and institutions under the guidance of JEEVIKA. A significant number of rural women and youth actively participated in these programs as spectators. Experts from organizations like P.C.I., Sakhi, the Department of Animal and Fishery Resources, Disaster Management, the Cooperative Department, and Atal Innovation Mission shared their knowledge, benefiting both the audience and the self-help groups associated with JEEVIKA. Bihar Saras Mela stands not only as a vibrant marketplace but also as a multifaceted platform that successfully integrates cultural celebration, awareness programs, and economic opportunities. The event showcased the rich tapestry of India's heritage through the centuries-old bioscope and provided a playground of joy for children in Palna Ghar and the Fun Zone. The 360-photo booth and Desi Selfie Zone created lasting memories for families, encapsulating the essence of the fair. The emphasis on a clean and safe environment demonstrated the organizers' commitment to promoting responsible practices. The strict prohibition of single-use plastic and the vigilant surveillance through CCTV cameras contributed to maintaining a pristine and secure fairground. The Saras Mela has become an integral part of Bihar's annual calendar, fostering a sense of community, celebration, and progress. As we reflect on the accomplishments of this edition, it is evident that the Saras Mela continues to be a catalyst for positive change and a celebration of Bihar's rich cultural tapestry.

## Programs & Initiatives

### Officials Spearhead JEEVIKA's Transformative Initiatives in Bihar



In an impactful event on December 21, 2023, Ms. Smriti Sharan, Joint Secretary of Rural Livelihoods, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, conducted a significant field visit in Sampatchak Block, Patna District. Accompanying her were distinguished personalities including Mr. Pradeep Kumar Pandey, CEO of Uttarakhand NRLM, Dr. Vasudha Shukla, Ms. Nimesha Rathva from National Rural Livelihood Mission, and Ms. Kiran Verma from Gujarat Livelihood Promotion

Company (GLPC), among others.

The presence of Mr. Rahul Kumar, CEO of JEEVIKA, added valuable insights as he briefed the attendees on the operational aspects of JEEVIKA. The event commenced at the Shiv Temple in Chipra Khurd village, where beneficiaries of the Satat Jeevikoparjan Yojana (SJY) shared profound experiences related to income generation, health, cleanliness, and nutrition.

Babita, a SJY beneficiary, unfolded her transformative journey. Initially involved in the local production of country liquor with her husband, the prohibition of alcohol in Bihar posed challenges. Undeterred, Babita pivoted her life by establishing a cosmetics store with the support of JEEVIKA. Today, she stands as an economically empowered individual, ensuring her children receive education, and witnessing a substantial enhancement in her overall living standards. Following this, Pummy Kumari utilized folk songs to educate JEEVIKA members about the communication system pertaining to health, cleanliness, and nutrition. Raki, a member of the JEEVIKA Self-Help Group, eloquently emphasized the crucial role of such information for the well-being of her children and herself.

Post the program, Ms. Smriti Sharan and Mr. Rahul Kumar led a rally to raise awareness against gender-based violence, encouraging participants to break the silence and raise their voices. The duo also inaugurated rope pulling and kabaddi competitions organized by Sarovar Self-Help Group and Armaan Self-Help Group in a nearby ground, felicitating the deserving winners with trophies. In a subsequent session at the Armaan Self-Help Group office, Ms. Smriti Sharan and Mr. Rahul Kumar engaged in a thoughtful discussion regarding the positive changes brought about by JEEVIKA. The members presented financial details through a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Smriti Sharan acknowledged the commendable efforts and recommended the regular organization of such sports events to propagate awareness against gender-based violence.

The event culminated successfully with a renewed commitment to empower women through sustainable livelihoods and awareness campaigns.

## Transforming Lives

## Empowering Change : Puja Devi - Bank Sakhi and a Proud Sarpanch

**P**uja Devi, a resilient individual hailing from Akabarpur village in Paliganj block, Patna district, Bihar, has emerged as a beacon of inspiration through her remarkable journey.

As an ambitious woman with a positive outlook, Puja faced significant challenges when her husband and father-in-law, the sole breadwinners, worked as daily wage earners. The family's financial struggles worsened when her father-in-law fell critically ill, leading to



mounting medical expenses that drained their modest savings. Despite their best efforts, her father-in-law succumbed to his illness, leaving the family emotionally and financially devastated. In the pursuit of providing for her family, Puja took up a domestic helper role, earning a meager Rs. 500 per month. Trapped in the cycle of poverty, she yearned for a better opportunity. In June 2017, during her difficult times, Puja found solace and hope in JEEVIKA Self-Help Group (SHG).

Recognizing Puja's sincerity and leadership skills, JEEVIKA appointed her as a Community Mobilizer. In this role, she discovered the BC Sakhi model, an initiative offering banking services to communities. Intrigued by the concept, Puja applied to become a BC Sakhi and was selected in July 2018. With a loan of Rs. 60,000 from the Village Organization under the Sustainable Livelihood scheme, she set up a Customer Service Point (CSP) licensed under "Dakshin Bihar Gramin Bank." Puja underwent training on CSP operations, and initially faced challenges with low customer turnout. Seeking guidance from the JEEVIKA Block team, she embarked on door-to-door campaigns, creating awareness about the benefits of banking services. Her diligence bore fruit as footfalls increased, and her earnings grew. Puja went beyond, achieving milestones by selling insurance and pension products, serving over 1000 customers during the challenging phase of the pandemic.

Presently, Puja enjoys a monthly income of Rs. 10,000-15,000, enabling her to provide for her family's needs and ensure quality education for her children. The BC Sakhi program not only bestowed economic support but also garnered social and political recognition for Puja. In the recent Panchayati Raj election, she contested and triumphed as the Sarpanch of "Sikariya Panchayat," a testament to her commitment and hard work. Puja Devi's journey from adversity to success exemplifies the transformative impact of programs like JEEVIKA and BC Sakhi. As she continues to serve her community with pride as both a BC Sakhi and the Sarpanch, Puja remains a symbol of resilience, determination, and positive change.

# February

Calendar of Events

**COMING UP IN THE NEXT EDITION**

→ **Tableau of JEEVIKA**



### Rising Beyond the obstacles : Sunita Devi's Triumph

**D**uring the Samadhan Yatra, Sunita Devi, an active member of Sudama JEEVIKA Self-Help Group and President of Prakash JEEVIKA Mahila Gram Sangathan, seized the opportunity to address the Honorable Chief Minister, Shri Nitish Kumar during Samadhan Yatra. In her address, Sunita conveyed her greetings to the Hon'ble Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, officials, and all JEEVIKA Didis. Proudly representing the women of Pakdihaar village, she spoke about her roles as the Treasurer of Sudama SHG and the President of Prakash JEEVIKA Mahila Gram Sangathan. Joining JEEVIKA allowed Sunita to establish her identity among fellow members, demonstrating the success of the platform in recognizing and acknowledging the rights of women.

Sunita shared her journey, beginning in 2014 when she joined JEEVIKA with limited knowledge of its potential. Initially attracted by the promise of financial assistance, she soon realized the broader impact of the group. Her initial attraction to the group for financial assistance evolved into a broader understanding of its impact on personal growth and community development. Now, she stands known by her name among JEEVIKA Didis, crediting Nitish Bhaiya for enhancing their identity and recognizing their rights. Emphasizing the pivotal role of JEEVIKA, Sunita spoke about the platform empowering her to effectively communicate with government officials, police, and various authorities. She highlighted that JEEVIKA not only provided financial assistance but also instilled confidence in her to interact with diverse stakeholders.

Sunita's success story extends beyond herself. With determination and JEEVIKA's support, she proudly shared the achievements of her two daughters. One is pursuing B.B.A. at E-Max College in Ambala, while the other is enrolled in Mathura Institute of Technology for B.B.A. and M.B.A. Both daughters are now educated and employed, a testament to the transformative impact of JEEVIKA on their lives.

Urging continued support for JEEVIKA, she emphasized the need to empower women from the Nari community, ensuring their unique identity and securing their rights. Sunita Devi's success story serves as a beacon, illuminating the path of empowerment and transformation for women in West Champaran.