

SARITA-MAHESH FOUNDATION

(A Charitable Trust registered under the Indian Trust Act, 1882)

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025



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A Brief Introduction

Sarita-Mahesh Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation, registered in October 2023 under the Indian Trust Act 1882, in the fond memories of Sarita and Mahesh, two young social workers who were engaged in peaceful and constructive development work in Bihar but were tragically gunned down on 24 January 2004 at Fatehpur in Gaya district, Bihar. The Foundation is a family-based charity trust.

Sarita and Mahesh were committed to building a just, prosperous, environmentally sustainable, secular society. In a brief period of four years, they worked to uplift forty villages in the Fatehpur block of Gaya district in Bihar. They awakened and led people in reviving and renovating a traditional rainwater harvesting structure – a 45 km long water canal (called *Hadhadwa pyne*), its branch channels, and some 170 ponds (*aahars*) linked with it – completely based on people's voluntary labour and cooperation. They tried to build a development model in a village called Sabdo, which was based on collective planning and decision-making, a village development committee to oversee the execution of the collective decisions; people's cooperation; collective farming, animal husbandry and fisheries; total literacy; cent-per-cent enrolment of all boys and girls in the school-going age; alcohol prohibition; gender equality; cleanliness and sanitation by making the village open defecation free; using the bio-mass for fertiliser-making, general awareness about social evils; and skill and livelihoods related efforts particularly focused on women and young men. All the while, they relied on financial contributions from the local communities and the Zilla Parishad. Their work rubbed the vested interests entrenched in society and the power structures the wrong way, resulting in a premature and abrupt end to the promise and potential their work held.

Building on the legacy of Sarita and Mahesh, the Foundation is committed to promoting the well-being, welfare, and rights of underprivileged people. Presently, the Foundation works in Bihar and Mumbai. The Foundation's current activities have focused on working with youth and children to raise their awareness about the self and the world around them, inculcate values of gender parity, non-discrimination, non-violence, justice, care and cooperation, and to promote creativity among them. The Foundation has mostly worked in collaboration with civil society organisations and individuals to carry out its activities.

Aims and Objectives of the Foundation

To promote the well-being, welfare, and rights of underprivileged and marginalised communities

(including but not limited to women, children, youth, students, workers, migrants, slum dwellers, displaced persons, people involved in unclean or stigmatised occupations, Dalits, Adivasis, and persons with physical or mental disabilities)

To uphold and strengthen the core values of secularism, diversity and plurality, peace and harmony, access to justice and non-discrimination

To establish and/or support institutions of care and protection for vulnerable populations such as orphans, the elderly, stigmatised individuals, the homeless and destitute, people with mental illness, those without family or community support, individuals in need of halfway homes or community-based living

To undertake or support research and studies in areas of equality and justice, freedom and human rights, social welfare and care systems

To organise and sponsor public events and platforms including workshops and conferences, lectures and training programmes, festivals and awareness campaigns

To Institute fellowships and awards to promote and recognise contributions in fields such as art, literature, sports, cinema, theatre, media, social work, peace-building, academics, and social and economic development

To Develop awareness, leadership, and creative capacities among children and youth

To work towards improving livelihoods, and enhancing living and working conditions of disadvantaged groups

To provide humanitarian assistance to people affected by personal tragedies, natural disasters, or other emergencies

To publish or support publications in multiple formats to share knowledge and raise awareness

Work Report: Since Inception Up To March 2025

After registering and completing various statutory procedures, the Foundation formally started its activities from January 2024 to March 2025. It worked both in Bihar and Mumbai. In both places, it worked in collaboration with various like-minded organisations. Its engagements have mostly been with youth and children. It carried out its activities entirely out of voluntary contributions received from individual donors.

The Foundation in Bihar

Yuva Samvad-1 (युवाओं की नजर में समाज, देश और दुनिया)

The first major initiative was on 28 January 2024. Nineteen organisations, including the Foundation, came together to organise the First Sarita-Mahesh Yuva Samvad. It was held at Jagjivan Ram Institute of Parliamentary Studies and Political Research, Patna.

Yuva Samvad has been conceptualised as a platform for the youth to express themselves creatively. The theme of this Yuva Samvad (in English, “dialogue with the youth”) was “Society, Country and the World from Youth’s Point of View” (“युवाओं की नजर में समाज, देश और दुनिया”).

A total number of 130 youths, aged between 15 to 30, participated in the programme. They came from rural as well as urban areas of Patna and other districts of the state. They were from marginalised communities; some were former child labourers.

A total number of 70 youth submitted their short videos and reels in response to a call by the organisers, out of which 17 videos were displayed during the programme. A discussion with the video-makers followed up.

In another session, youth participants expressed their opinions on the challenges youth are facing today. An open session allowed many boys and girls to express their life experiences, work, and concerns. A highlight of the Yuva Samvad was that the youth participants conducted it themselves.

A booklet entitled “सामाजिक, आर्थिक और सांस्कृतिक बदलाव के अनूठे प्रयोग” focusing on the life and works of Sarita and Mahesh was released on this occasion. The booklet was jointly published by Xavier Institute of Social Research (XISR) and the Foundation. Mr. Anil Chamadia, a Delhi-based senior journalist and editor of the Mass Media, addressed the participants. He lamented

the lack of communication among the youth and the gradual disappearance of societal concerns from their discourse, increasingly making them alienated and self-centred. Platforms like Yuva Samvad can enhance dialogue amongst them and with them. Prerna staged a play. Vrati Kumar, a Trustee of the Sarita-Mahesh Foundation, spoke about the newly formed family Trust and its future programmes to fulfil the dreams of Sarita and Mahesh.

Yuva Samvad-2: Masterclass on Ambedkar's Writings

The second major programme under the platform of Yuva Samvad was celebrating the 133rd Ambedkar Jayanti, for which the Foundation collaborated with 20 organisations. Patna Women's College hosted the programme and picked up part of the cost of the programme.

More than 220 youth participated in the programme. It was held at the Patna Women's College. The programme began with paying tributes to Babasaheb Ambedkar and an oath-taking of the Preamble of the Constitution. A youth group staged a play while others presented songs and dances.

For this occasion, ActionAid India Association and the Sarita-Mahesh Study Centre of the Xavier Institute of Social Research printed a 116-page booklet entitled "डॉ. भीमराव आंबेडकर की वैचारिक धरोहर" comprising six articles by Ambedkar and some material on his life and works and distributed amongst the participants.

The highlight of this programme was the masterclass on two key writings of Baba Saheb Ambedkar – "Annihilation of Caste" and "Basic Features of the Indian Constitution". Prof. Pushpendra, a Trustee of the Foundation took the master class. The objective of the masterclass was to encourage the youth to read Ambedkar's writings and help them understand his two important writings. A 30-minute video, a collection of clips taken from films and documentaries on key moments of Ambedkar's life, was shown to the participants. The participants

Support to Individual Students

The Foundation helped two girls with their studies.

1. In May 2024, at the request of the SOS Children's Village of India, Begusarai, the Foundation donated a laptop to a student who was then studying in the 2nd year of her engineering diploma in Varanasi.
2. It supported a BA LLB student from Vanasthali Vidyapeeth and the daughter of two well-known activists by contributing towards her semester fee in April and November 2024. To support her semester fee, in March 2025, the Foundation appealed to a select number of individuals to donate. The response was overwhelming. Her entire fee of Rs. 1.07 lakh for the semester starting in April 2025 was paid from donations received in the Foundation's and her mother's accounts. It is heartening to see that donations

exceeded the semester fee. The additional amount will be used to pay the next semester's fee in November 2025.

Theatre Workshop at SOS Children's Village of India, Begusarai

In June 2024, a two-week theatre workshop was conducted at the SOS Children's Village of India, Begusarai, Bihar.

This helped boys and girls theatre groups to stage their plays on the SOS Children's Village Foundation Day on 24 June. Rohit Rahi, a theatre personality, facilitated the workshop.

Sarita Mahesh Fellowship

Starting in July 2024, the Foundation decided to give a one-year fellowship to Prabhakar Prajapati, a Patna-based activist. The fellowship comprised a monthly payment of Rs. 10,000.

During the fellowship, Prabhakar carried out his usual social work activities and contributed as a coordinator of youth-related activities of the Foundation. More specifically, his role was crucial in organising all three Yuva Samvads in 2024 and 2025, conceptualising the Sarita-Mahesh Leadership Development Programme, and organising consultations on its concept note. However, Prabhakar had to leave the fellowship after seven months to join a full-time job.

Yuva Samvad-3 (न्याय, शांति और बंधुत्व के लिए युवा)

The third Yuva Samvad was held on 9 February 2025. Bihar Vidyapeeth hosted it at its Teachers' Training College premises in Kurji, Patna. The programme was jointly organised by 22 organisations, including the Foundation, and attended by around 150 youth from Patna and a few other districts, from rural as well as urban areas.

The theme of this Yuva Samvad was "न्याय, शांति और बंधुत्व के लिए युवा". On this occasion, Prerna Natya Manch staged a play, "Sawa Ser Genhu", based on Premchand's story.

The participants were asked to send their entries on the three themes of the Yuva Samvad in any of the following art forms: story, poetry, sketch, painting, poster, play, script, dance, article, singing, and video/reel. Amongst a large number of entries, some of them performed their plays, songs, and dances. Some recited poetry and read their article. Sketches, posters and paintings were displayed at the venue. A few videos were also displayed. Some youth participated in four separate panel discussions which were held on: a) Concerns of the youth in rural areas; b) youth for justice; c) youth for peace; and d) youth for fraternity. In a brief open session, some youth expressed their views on the theme of the Yuva Samvad. Towards the end of the programme, Prof. Pushpendra, a Trustee of the Foundation, delivered a brief orientation lecture on "counter-culture".

Yuva Samvad-1



The Foundation in Mumbai

In May 2024, on the initiative of the Foundation's active member, Dr. Nisha Bharti, the Mumbai Chapter of the Foundation was launched. The Chapter organised several programmes in 2024-25 under the rubric of 'The Imagination Hub'.

Theatre Workshop 1

In collaboration with Sujata English School at Dahisar, the Foundation conducted a two-month theatre workshop for children aged 10-17 from May to June 2024.

Sessions were held every Saturday and Sunday for three hours, amounting to 33 hours of immersive theatre training. 10-12 children attended the workshop.

The sessions were facilitated by Mridul Sharma, an actor (known for his role in Delhi Crime) and Foundation's Dr. Nisha Bharti who is also a theatre practitioner. The workshop aimed at familiarising children with imagination and creativity, voice and expression, teamwork and trust-building, improvisation and acting games, and character and scene work. Children learnt skills in these areas.

Theatre Workshop 2

In June 2024, the Foundation partnered with Asthana Academy, Mira Road, to deliver a three-hour theatre workshop for 20 children aged 10-17. Hardik Shah, an NSD Alumnus and the Founder of Five Senses Theatre Group, facilitated the workshop. The workshop focused on building imagination and creativity, voice and expression, and teamwork and trust building.

Painting and Story Reading Workshops

Continuing its collaboration with Sujata English School, Dahisar, the Foundation organised creative art-based activities for children in August 2024. The sessions were held every Saturday and Sunday for two hours, totalling 36 hours. The workshops were conducted on painting and story reading. Vaijanti Makhija facilitated the workshops. Ten children from 10-17 years old attended the workshop.

Mental Health Awareness Session

In October 2024, the Foundation hosted a session on mental health for adults in collaboration with One's Pace in Mira Road, Mumbai. Another collaborator, the Aarogya Vaibhav Foundation, provided the venue.

The workshop focused on understanding emotional well-being and mental health challenges. Saumya Nigam, a Counselling Psychologist and a Visiting Faculty at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, facilitated it. A total of 10 adults attended the workshop.

The Imagination Hub mostly focused on creativity for children and mental health for adults. Children's participation in the theatre, painting, and storytelling workshops demonstrated marked improvements in the areas of self-confidence and self-expression, creative thinking and imagination, teamwork and communication skills. The mental health session for adults provided them a safe space to reflect on their emotional well-being and share personal challenges.

Theatre Workshop



Painting Workshop



Acknowledgements

The Foundation collaborated with several organisations and individuals in Bihar as well as Mumbai. In Bihar, it worked with the following organisations:

ActionAid India Society, Alba Educational Foundation, Alliance Dalit Forum, Bihar Dalit Adhikar Manch, Bihar Mahila Samaj, Bihar Vidyapeeth, Campaign Against Child Labour, Dalit Vikar Abhiyan Samiti, Democratic Charkha, DEVISE Charitable Trust, Ekta Parishad, Good Hope Alliance Foundation, Integrated Development Foundation, Jagjivan Ram Institute for Parliamentary Studies and Political Research, Jan-Nyaya Abhiyan, Koshish Charitable Trust, Nari Gunjan, National Alliance of People's Movement (NAPM), National Youth Equity Forum, Prerna (Janwadi Sanskritik Morcha), Rainbow Foundation, Samagra Shikshan Ewam Vikas Sansthan, Samar Charitable Trust, Samvedna Social Service Pvt. Ltd., Shahari Garib Vikas Sangathan, TISS Alumni Association (Bihar), TISSA Foundation, Vithi Foundation, Woodpackers Initiative Foundation, and Xavier Institute of Social Research.

In Mumbai, the Foundation worked with the following organisations:

Aarogya Vaibhav Foundation, Asthana Academy (Mira Road), One's Pace, Sujata English School (Dahisar).

In addition to the organisations mentioned above and their leaders and workers, the Foundation also received valuable support from some individuals. While it is not possible to acknowledge every individual's support, the Foundation would like to mention a few names. Prabhakar Kumar deserves special mention for coordinating the Yuva Samvad Programmes. For the Bihar initiatives, the Foundation received valuable support from Anil Chamadia, Rohit Rahi, Rajeshwar Mishra, Sharmistha Goswami, Ibrana Naaz, Ananye Krishna, Priyaswara Bharti, Pronita, Saurabh, Shakeela, Sunil Jha, Vijoy Prakash, Narendra Pathak, Vikas Kumar, and Kamlesh Sharma. For the Mumbai initiatives, the valuable support received from Salman Mujawar, Lalita Asthana, Urmila Sawadekar, Saumya Nigam, and Hardik Shah is acknowledged.

Special thanks to Manikant Pithi, brother of Mahesh Kant for his support. The Foundation also acknowledges the financial support from Dipak Kumar Singh, Mridula Kumari, and Mukesh Kumar Srivastava.

The Foundation thanks all the participants in various programmes in Patna and Mumbai and hopes to continue working with them in future.

Income and Expenditure Report FY 2024-25

I. Donations Received (2024-25)

Serial No.	Donor's Name	Total Amount
1	Ajit Kumar Singh & Meena	25,000
2	Dipak Kumar Singh	30,000
3	Gautam Kumar & Priya	6,000
4	Mridula Kumari	20,000
5	Mukesh Kumar Srivastava	1,000
6	Nisha Bharti & Mithilesh Priyadarshi	55,000
7	Pallav Kumar Sinha & Shruti Prasad	27,500
8	Prasanjeet Kumar & Pratiksha Jain	50,000
9	Sushila Devi (Pushpendra Kumar Singh & Vrati Kumar)	1,00,000
10	Samvedna Prasad & Shishir Gupta	35,000
11	Vivek Anand & Priyanka Kumari	35,000
Total		3,84,500

II. Expenditure Statement (2024-25)

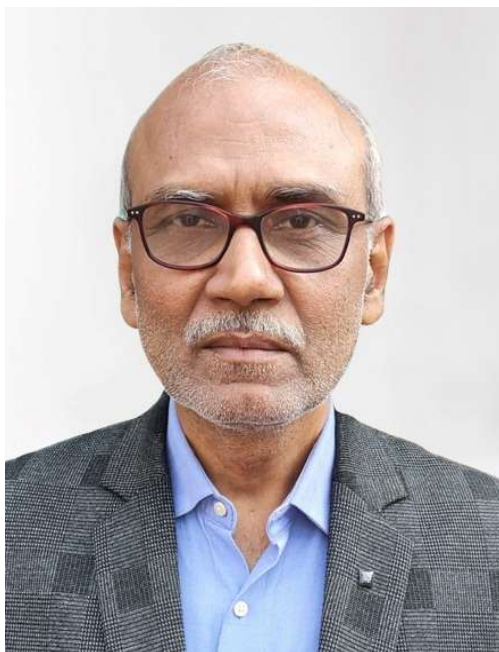
Activity	Place	Expenses
Donation of a laptop with a bag to a Polytechnic studentt from the SOS Children's Village of India	Bihar/UP	27,973
Drama Workshop at SOSCVI	Bihar	24,000
Fellowship to Prabhakar Prajapati	Bihar	70,015
Audit fee for FY 2023-24	Bihar	5,000
Bank charges (for account keeping)	Bihar	649
Support for a BA LLB student (semester fees)	Bihar/Rajasthan	40,000
Recharge of the mobile linked with the bank A/C	Bihar	1,999
Printing of letterhead and receipts	Bihar	1,000
Subtotal (expenses in Bihar)		1,70,636
Expenses in Mumbai		19,945
Total Expenses in the FY 2024-25		1,89,581

Total Income in the FY 2024-25 Rs. 3,84,500

Total Expenses in the FY 2024-25 Rs. 1,89,581

Closing Balance of the FY 2024-25 Rs. 2,04,894

Management of the Sarita-Mahesh Foundation



**Pushpendra Kumar Singh
(Settler and Director)**

Prof. Pushpendra brings a unique blend of experiences of working with grassroots organisations, UNICEF, international NGOs, government institutions, and academia. He is former Professor and Chairperson of the Patna Centre of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). A sociologist by training, he has served as a professor at TISS, Mumbai, Dean of TISS Tuljapur, and Director, Centre for Social Studies, Surat. He has also worked with the Swiss Red Cross, LBS National Academy of Administration, UNICEF Planning Division, ActionAid International (India, Belgium, and Sri Lanka), and the National Institute of Rural Development. He was a visiting fellow at the Asia Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science in 2011-12. He has served in various committees, including the Planning Commission Committee for Revision of the Guidelines of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). From 2000 to 2005, he served as the Bihar State Advisor of the Commissioners of the Supreme Court of India to monitor Government food and work-related schemes.

Prof. Pushpendra has seven books to his credit from leading national and international publishers such as Oxford University Press, Sage Publications, Orient BlackSwan, Routledge, and Aakar. Besides, he has contributed to academic journals and edited volumes as well as newspapers, magazines, news portals, and radio. He is also the Former Editor of a bi-annual, peer-reviewed online journal, Journal of Migration Affairs. His research interests include rural development, migration, informal labour, agrarian relations, and social policy. He serves on the boards/committees of several academic institutions and non-governmental organisations



Ajit Kumar Singh (Managing Trustee)

Ajit Kumar Singh, a 63-year-old resident of Jamaluddin Chak, Khagaul, is a retired Indian Railways Loco Pilot with over 35 years of service. A lifelong advocate for worker's rights, he has been deeply involved in social movements and served as the elected director of the Railway Worker Cooperative Bank. Mr. Singh continues to support social causes and community initiatives for the needy in his locality. He is now focused on strengthening the Sarita-Mahesh Foundation to promote critical thinking and community engagement among both rural and urban youth.



Vrati Kumar (Trustee)

Vrati Kumar is a law graduate, film director and an alpinist



Prasanjeet Kumar, Finance Committee

Prasanjeet kumar completed his graduation in Electronics and communication engineering in 2014 from Oriental University , Indore. Currently, he is working as Assistant Accounts Officer under Controller General of Accounts, Government of India.



Samvedna Prasad (IT Committee)

Samvedna Prasad is a Technical lead in HCL technologies. She has a 10 years of experience in IT sector. She has completed her engineering in Electronics and Telecommunications from College of Engineering, Osmanabad, Maharashtra



Prateeksha Jain (IT Committee)

Prateeksha Jain is a Lead Software Engineer in UKG Inc. She completed her M. Tech from TMU Moradabad (2021-2023). She did her B.E. from Oriental Institute of Science and Technology Indore (2010-2014). She has 10 years of experience in software development.



Vivek Anand (Programme Committee)

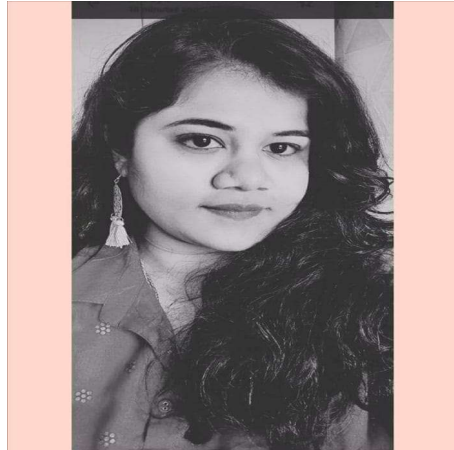
Vivek Anand is a development professional with 15 years of experience in rural development.

He specialises in social protection, rural livelihoods, rights-based programmes, and strengthening rural institutions. He is trained in social work. He has worked across grassroots, state, and national levels with government and non-government organizations. Since 2021, he has been associated with GIZ. Presently, he is contributing to the Adaptive Social Protection, Climate Resilience, and Sustainable Agriculture through Strengthening Resilient Public Infrastructure, Agroecology and Food System Transformation approaches.



Priyanka Kumari (Programme Committee)

Priyanka Kumari has over 14 years of experience in development sector. She holds expertise in health and education. She completed her MA in Social Work from Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi in 2010.



Shruti Prasad (Programme Committee)

Shruti holds a Master's degree in Development Studies from the Central University of South Bihar, Gaya. She was awarded the gold medal for securing the top position in her department. She is currently working as a Project Associate with the Eklavya Foundation under the Schools 2030 project. With over seven years of experience in the development sector, her work has been primarily focused on adolescent health, education, and livelihood. Her work experience has enabled her to build a strong foundation in program implementation, training, and community engagement.



Mr. Pallav Kumar Sinha (Programme Committee)

My name is Pallav Kumar Sinha. I have completed my Master's in Social Work (MSW) from IGNOU and am currently working as a Senior Development Organizer with Aga Khan Rural Support Programme – India under the Aruna Project. I have over seven years of experience in the social sector, particularly in livelihood, agriculture, and education.



Gautam Kumar (Programme Committee)

Gautam Kumar is currently working as Loco Pilot Goods, South East Central Railway, Bilaspur.



Trishala (Programme Committee)

Trishala holds a Master's degree in Development from Azim Premji University, Bangalore.

Over the past six years, she has been working with Eklavya in the field of education, collaborating with existing community structures and schools. Her work centers on developing systems that enhance community participation in academic processes within schools, fostering stronger school–community convergence.



Dr. Nisha Bharti (Programme Head, Mumbai Chapter)

Nisha is a program head-research at RATI Foundation for Social Change. She has done her PhD in Labour Studies from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. She has over 8 years of experience as a researcher. Over the course of her career she has been part of diverse research assignments with renowned organisations such as Disha Foundation (Delhi and Maharashtra), HomeNet South Asia (New Delhi), Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis (Bhopal), TISS (Mumbai) and Aajeevika Bureau (Mumbai).

Her research interest spans Online safety, Digital Divide, Livelihoods, Women's Issues, Migration, Informal Sector Labour, and Youth Employment Opportunities. She has written extensively for Migrantscape, National Herald, Junputh and the Citizen. In addition to research she has also served as a guest faculty at the Centre for Labour Studies, TISS. She has taught courses on Sociology of Work, Women and Work, Management Functions for Trade Unions, and Qualitative Research Methods.



Dr. Mithilesh Priyadarshi (Mumbai Chapter)

Mithilesh Priyadarshi is a media scholar and writer with a Ph.D. in Media Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. He taught Media and Cinema at Bilaspur Central University from 2010 to 2012. His short story collection "Lohe Ka Baksa Aur Bندوق" was published by Lokbharti Prakashan in 2022. He also works in story and screenplay writing.

Art, Research and Publication Committee

Dr. Mithilesh Priyadarshi

Mr. Pushpendra Kumar Singh

Dr. Nisha Bharti

Mr. Vrati Kumar

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