



Isha Gramotsavam Expands To 10 States, 40,000 Villages In India. UP, Haryana, Odisha, Himachal and Maharashtra Join Rural Sporting Spirit

Over 80,000 players from 40,000 villages across 10 states and one Union Territory will compete for a prize pool of over Rs 1 crore.

July 15, 2026: Isha Gramotsavam, the largest annual rural sports festival of the country organised by Sadhguru's Isha Outreach is expanding to northern Indian villages with 10 states and 1 union territory participating, making the 18th edition the biggest-ever. For the first time, the sports tournament, which is the most sought after event in rural belts of South India, will be conducted across Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Maharashtra, along with Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Puducherry. The event is set to bring together more than 80,000 players from over 40,000 villages through an estimated 7,000 teams, including nearly 15,000 women players.

While men will compete in volleyball, women will participate in throwball. Winning volleyball and throwball teams at the Grand Finale will receive ₹5 lakh each, while runners-up will receive ₹3 lakh. Third and fourth-place teams will receive ₹1 lakh and ₹50,000, respectively. Cash prizes will also be awarded at the Cluster and Divisional stages, with dedicated awards for the Paralympic category, reinforcing Gramotsavam's commitment to inclusive participation. With a prize pool of Rs 1 crore, the tournament offers a grand platform that keeps the grassroots players motivated.

Swami Pulaka, Gramotsavam Coordinator, said: *"With every edition, Isha Gramotsavam continues to grow not just in scale but in impact. Bringing together more than 80,000 players from villages across India, the tournament offers a rare platform where grassroots talent is recognised and celebrated. We invite every eligible village team to participate and experience the joy, camaraderie and transformative power of sport."*

A multi-stage format comprising Cluster-Level matches, Divisional rounds and the Grand Finale will be followed. Cluster matches will commence from the second week of July, while the Grand Finale will be held on September 6 in the presence of Sadhguru in front of the iconic Adiyogi at the Isha Yoga Center Coimbatore.



In Uttar Pradesh, the Cluster-level matches will be held across five locations. The first round will take place on July 25–26 at Lucknow, Varanasi, Muzaffarnagar and Meerut, followed by matches at Gautam Buddha Nagar on August 1–2. The state level matches will be held at Lucknow on August 9.

In Haryana, cluster-level matches will take place on July 25 and 26 in Panipat, Karnal, and Ambala. The next round of cluster matches will take place on August 1 and 2 in Hisar and Kurukshetra. The state level matches are scheduled for August 9 in Karnal and will bring together teams from Haryana.

Isha Gramotsavam, which is recognised as a National Sports Promotion Organisation by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India, has been encouraging rural sports for over two decades.

"By intentionally excluding professional athletes, Gramotsavam creates a rare opportunity for village players to experience structured competition and showcase their abilities on a national platform," said Swami Pulaka.

The transformative impact of the tournament is reflected in the voices of its participants.

"Before Gramotsavam, there were very few opportunities for rural women to play sports. Most women didn't even step outside their homes. Through Isha Gramotsavam, many women have gained the confidence to come out, play, and showcase their talent. My biggest challenge was travelling every day for practice. While I was away for training, my husband took care of my daughter and the family. Isha also supported us by providing transportation, food, balls, nets, and coaches, which made a huge difference. My village has produced 37 Physical Education teachers, each of them inspired to pursue sports because of Isha Gramotsavam" says Nandhini Duraisamy, 36-year-old throwball player and captain of the PG Pudur team from Devarayapuram village. A mother and a PE teacher, she has led her team through an impressive three-year journey, securing the championship in 2023, finishing runners-up in 2024, and earning third place in 2025.

Rajeshwari, a throwball player and homemaker, says, *"For us housewives who are at home all day, it is a commitment; no matter where we are, we make sure to be here at the set time. Even if we travel to our village or anywhere else, we make sure to be back by 5 pm to practice. We*



have tremendous support from our husbands. Though it wasn't easy for us and we had to struggle to reach this point... When we play, others try to pull us down or look for ways to stop us. We have overcome all our fears and our focus is to play well."

www.instagram.com/reel/Dab0i_2zs8j/

"No one will ever say that people from villages cannot succeed. You certainly can," Manikandan, 33, from Uthamasolapuram village of Salem district of Tamil Nadu, a fisherman by livelihood and a volleyball player by passion, said. For Manikandan, Isha Gramotsavam became the turning point where talent met recognition. "In the 2025 Isha Gramotsavam tournament, we won the trophy and I was adjudged the Most Valuable Player of the tournament. With the prize money, I was able to upgrade sports facilities in my village, buy new shoes for all the players, also renovate my home," he said with a winning smile on his face.

"This has also led to my selection for trials with the Chennai Blitz franchise, and I am set to begin training with the first team shortly," he shared.

Once a village outcast, Manikandan is now the village hero.

Over the past two decades, Isha Gramotsavam has grown from a regional sporting festival into one of the country's largest community-driven sports movements. Since its inception, the initiative has engaged over 2.6 lakh rural players, representing more than 35,000 villages, while inspiring participation from tens of thousands of women and first-time players. Gramotsavam also celebrates the rich cultural heritage of rural India through vibrant displays of traditional art, folk performances, music, dance, games, and regional cuisine. Visitors and participants can experience captivating folk traditions such as Mangai Valli Kummi Attam and participate in classic village games.

Speaking about the deeper role of sport in shaping individuals and communities, Sadhguru says:

"The most responsible way to live is that you are playful with life. It's absolutely irresponsible to carry a long face and walk around on this planet. Being playful is being very responsible and responsive to life. Only when you are playful, you can pay attention to everything. You can truly respond to everything in the world only if you are playful otherwise you cannot - just the burden of it will kill you."



www.instagram.com/reel/DZJnYsWzCWn

Conceived as more than a sporting event in 2004, Isha Gramotsavam seeks to address some of rural India's pressing social challenges.

“While over 60% of rural India is of working age, many young people face limited livelihood opportunities, unviable agriculture and non-inclusive growth, often leading to poverty and addiction. Gramotsavam has rekindled the spirit of village communities. Over the years, it has emerged as an effective platform for encouraging healthy lifestyles, breaking caste barriers, empowering women, strengthening community bonds and reviving the resilient spirit of rural India,” Swami Pulaka added.

Gramotsavam 2026 is supported by committed partners who share its vision of rural upliftment and nurturing grassroots sporting talent. These include Mobility Partner Gravton Motors, Sports & Equipment Partner Nivia Sports, Bronze Partner TATA AIA Life Insurance Company Limited, On-ground Support Partner Wonder Cement, and CSR Partners CG Power and Industrial Solutions Limited, Varindera Constructions Limited, Royal Infraconstru Ltd, and Agilisium Consulting.

Registrations for Isha Gramotsavam 2026 are now open. Eligible rural players can register at ishagramotsavam.sadhguru.org.

For further information, please contact: 8300030999.

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