Poverty, Migration
&
National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

A case study on Sahariya Primitive tribal group in Madhya Pradesh

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1
Background

Community -`Sahra' is being used as a synonym for the word `forest'. One of the scheduled tribe has been named as `Sahariyas' only because it was totally dependent upon forests for its very existence in terms of its society, family, livelihood and everything else. The people of `Sahariyas' tribe never used to bother about their future, because they were confident that forests, which they respect and protect, would never leave them hungry. However, the other groups of Society have exploited the forests to the tilt, for meeting their own self-interests. Consequently, the very source providing the food security to the families of `Sahariyas' tribe has been irretrievably damaged. Left with no alternative, the people of `Sahariyas' tribe had to look out for labour work in the local stone mines to earn their livelihood. Slowly and slowly, they were becoming a tool of exploitation in the wider perspective of our social system.

Livelihood issues - Caught within the web of constant shrinking of forests and strict provisions of various forestry laws, the people of `Sahariyas' tribe were left to face an unending state of hunger. Not even the symptoms of guaranteed basic rights of human being i.e. Respectability, Equality and Education, as enshrined in our Constitution, are visible in this area and neither these people have any high expectations from the Society. However, the only thing they expect from the Society is a provision of respectable source of livelihood for them. Like earlier, when the forest area was available in plenty, there was no need for them to migrate to earn their livelihood, similarly, they do not want to migrate even now for this purpose. But unfortunately, they have not been freed from fear and exploitation.

Health & Nutrition - All combined, the very fiber of the life of this community has been weakened – their children faced malnutrition and women folks have been rendered weak and feeble. We cannot even properly assess the age of a person of this community standing in front of us. For example, Sewa Ram of Singhrai village, looks around 60 years old as against his actual age of only 40 years. Even otherwise, the average age of `Sahariyas' people is much less than the average age of people belonging to general category and in such a scenario, when they are faced with calamities like draught or non-availability of water for irrigation, their lives are rendered totally miserable.

Right to work - Although the Government claims to undertake relief work, but the fact remains that in spite of resorting to hard labour work with empty stomach, they have not been paid their wages for about two years now. No body knows as to who is responsible for scuttling their rights. The situation is further aggravated by the sheer fact that their inner strength to stand for and demand their rights has been so badly shattered and weakened by the prevailing political and social system that they can not even stand together and fight against the injustice being meted out to them. Of course, in these circumstances, the provision of legal right to employment is of utmost importance to the people of `Sahariyas' tribe. In this context, this right not only save them from resorting to migration but will also play an important role in tackling the problem of their under-nourishment and mal-nutrition.

The people of `Sahariyas' tribe are possessed with fields of smaller sizes. Some of such fields are part of their ancestral property and some have been provided by the Government. As such, it is rightly expected by these people from this Employment Guarantee Act, that it will help them for putting their fields into proper/best use, making them irrigated ones and possibly to undertake community-based agriculture.

What the Minimum wage means? - In the State of Madhya Pradesh, wages are being determined on the basis of Schedule of Rates (SoR). As such, in case of a flat surface, the digging of 100 cubic feet of land has been considered as the minimum target, while for hard soil or with murram contents, the minimum wages are paid only upon digging 64 cubic feet of land. However, while linking SoR with minimum wages, it has been lost sight of that SoRs are applied where the construction work, under various Government Schemes, is being got executed through the Contractors, where the prime objective was only to get the work completed and not to ensure employment or to provide any relief against poverty to the workers so engaged by the respective contractors.

However, under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), the objectives of public welfare and rights of workers and the unorganized sector are of utmost importance – rather backbone of the Act. In this given scenario it has to be considered whether it would be physically possible by the already weak workers to meet the strict standards and measurements for labour work, so fixed by the Government to determine the amount of wages payable to them. The situation has to be viewed in the background of the fact that many of Dalits and Adivasis are physically so weak that it is just not possible for them to earn their minimum wages by achieving the targets so fixed for labour work. On the other hand, the Government Officials, in their sheer attempt to show the targeted progress of work, apply the fixed standards with all possible strictness, with the result that workers are deprived of their full day's wages. Consequently, the status of their mal-nutrition, hunger and poverty remains unchanged without any improvement whatsoever.

The irony is that while fixing the SoR, the Government has completely overlooked the varying geographical and regional conditions. For example, while digging under soft soil conditions of Hoshangabad and commonly hard surfaces of Badwani districts, same labour standards are made applicable in both places, despite the prevailing conditions being just contrary to each other. When those of the workers who are working on hard surface land are not able to provide similar output, as compared to their counterparts engaged on land with soft soil surface, the formers are branded as lazy ones, conveniently ignoring the divergent conditions in which they are operating. In case, even under the Employment Guarantee Act, if the minimum wages are going to be determined on the basis of task performed, then the women workers shall be deprived of their right of equal wages as compared to their male counterparts. A clear-cut distinction is being made with women workers and accordingly they are being paid lesser wages, thus violating their fundamental right of `Equality'. As such, there is absolute need to start the process of determining the minimum wages, based on prevailing geographical conditions, community involved and principles of social welfare. Not only this, the Minimum Wages has also to be linked and defined as the fundamental right so that the respective rates may be revised in such a manner at least to meet the basic needs of workers.

Here it is also important to notice that the process involved while determining the wages is more demanding on the quantum of labour input, as compared to such average demand, while a section of labour work force faces with handicapped ness, mal-nutrition and food insecurity. For this section of people, making task-based payment of wages, is nothing but a source to exploit them. Thus, the need of the hour is to break the nexus between technologies and mechanization and for this the first and foremost important task is to evolve a process for determining the rates of wages in such a manner so that human angle is not lost sight of. The more we link the wages with productivity, the more it will establish the need of preference for mechanization and thus it will be proved that since workers are not able to contribute enough in the process of development and, therefore, instead of actually providing them with the labour work, the Government, for the sake of completing the formality of its 'social' responsibility, may provide them with compensation in lieu of wages. Such a situation will, of course, inherit serious repercussions in itself.

In view of the foregoing, it is of utmost importance to analyze the Right to Employment Act in the background of poverty and social conditions prevailing in the society.

Obviously, the purpose of this Act is not only to provide a right for minimum wages, but the State Government also has to ensure development of permanent sources of livelihood and creation of community assets to enhance the political and social strength of people of `Sahariyas' community. In the absence of these objectives, the basic right of a respectable living cannot be achieved.

2
Factum of prevailing Poverty

Faced with social ignorance, anger, deprivation and inhuman treatment inherent in the system, the people of `Sahariyas' tribe are once again in the miserable condition. In the absence of sources of livelihood, this tribal group is again forced to resort to migration. One Lachhu of scheduled tribe, belonging to Kolaras block, says that not a single person is capable of purchasing wheat from the Ration shop at Rs.2/- per kilo. The owner of Ration Shop in Bharota village is creating such conditions so that people migrate to other places and while migrating they hand over their respective Ration Cards, provided to them under the Antodaya Scheme, to him and in turn, he can sell the wheat meant for these people, in the open market at higher rates. Quite often, silence spreads in about 125 villages of `Sahariyas' dominated scheduled tribe in District Shivpuri. In most of these villages, only aged ones in the families are left back to look after the already weak cattles and to save the roofs of their respective Kuccha houses during the absence of their family members. There was a time when the colourful festival of Holi brings the message of joy and happiness amongst the people of `Sahariyas' community, but now it indicates the time for migration to them. In the past, these tribals were totally dependent upon forest produce. They not only extracted their livelihood from these forests, but also protected them with full sincerity and dedication. However, the forest policies of the Government and continuous exploitation of forests have posed the problem of very existence before these tribes. The resultant situation today is that between end of February and beginning of June, not a single village will be found where the people have not migrated from their places leaving only deafening silence behind them.

Three families of village Gudaar of Tehsil Pichhor in District Shivpuri, during sowing season, each of them borrowed 60-kilo bran for sowing in their respective stony fields of 5 Bighas. But nature did not co-operate and they could not reap any crop thereof even to meet the needs of their families. Consequently, they again looked towards forests and the women of these families started collecting dry woods from there. On an average, to collect and sell a bundle of 25 kilos of wood, they used to walk about 20 kilometers, taking two days in the process and in return they earn only Rs.20/-. Geographically, the areas of district Shivpuri are full of diversities. While the area covering Pichhor Tehsil is full of forests and greenery, but just opposite are the areas of blocks Kolaras and Pohri.

Since long the food items for these people remains Kakora, Makoh, Plums and vegetables of Phang and Pamar. But due to continuous draughts, even these items are not available to them. In such a situation, the people of Sahariya tribe totally depend upon labour work to sustain their livelihood. However, because of non-availability of sufficient sources of labour work at local level, these people, along with their family members, had to migrate to places like Bhind, Datia and up to Jaipur in Rajasthan. 80 of the total 120 families of Pipraunia village had already migrated to Bhind district where they receive the wages between Rs. 35 and Rs. 40 for reaping mustard crop. The people of Sahariyas tribe face extreme exploitation during migration. They are promised to receive equivalent to 5% of total reaping of wheat and bran crops, as their wages, but actually they receive only 3% of the same. Being in the habit of keeping themselves away from any dispute, they surrender to the situation as it comes. On an average, a family of 6-

7 members earns about 3.5 quintals of wheat during *Chait* harvesting season i.e. equivalent to Rs. 2,700/-, out of which about Rs.2, 400/- account for their expenses.

This is the post-migration scenario. But during their preparation to migrate, the situation is more pitiable. They had to leave their elders behind who alone had to look after the cattles and take care of the huts. The condition of families, without any elders, is still worse, because upon their return they find their huts without roofs; wooden poles are taken away and other household goods missing. They start re-setting their respective houses all over again and in the process the people of Sahariyas tribe become debtors. During one of the study made in Shanker Garh village of Kolaras block shows that total of 23 families there are indebted to Bankers alone, out of which 22 are land owners and only one family is landless, meaning thereby that land owners require more funds. This also means that people of scheduled tribes with small land holdings are bereft of any planned protection due to which, although they receive loans from the Banks, but the same is not being put to proper usage. Therefore, to repay these loans, they had to resort either to sell their land and animals or are forced to work as bonded labour with the affluent farmers.

During the study of village Labhera in Pichore block, it was revealed that 92 members of 20 families of this village had already migrated and remaining 61 members of 15 families are ready to migrate. On an average, there are only 5 clothing per family to wear in this village and the availability of food grains is only 65 kilos per year i.e. 180 grams per day/ per person. For other items like salt, pulses, vegetables, spices etc., they had to manage within Rs.160/- only. The question is whether any human being can survive in such conditions. As per Regional Medical Research Institute, this was the sole reason of mal-nutrition amongst the 93% children of Sahariyas tribe and the average age of this community is 45 years, which is 25% less than the general average. Still, the health of children is not an important factor with the administration. There was no distribution of nutritious food amongst the Aangwaris for the last about one and half months in Pichore block, where 9 out of 10 children of Sahariyas tribe were suffering from mal-nutrition. The only reason being that the Self Help Group (SHG) who provides the nutritious food, had not been paid its arrears by the Government.

As per the available statistical data, although 26% people of Sahariyas tribe possess 5-8 Bighas of land, but 70% of it is non-irrigated, stony and situated at mountainous slopes. Unless these lands are developed properly, they cannot be put into any useful purpose. But the Government for its development has initiated no long-term plan. During the last years, more than 60 hunger deaths of Sahariyas tribe were reported from the District of Shivpuri. Although some temporary measures were taken by the Government at that time, but not a single long term solution was initiated. Not only this, even the Government staff in the area leave nothing to spare to exploit these people who are already victims of prevailing feudalism here. To given an example of such exploitation, the bicycles belonging to scheduled tribe people of 30 villages of Kolaras block, including Bairasia, Sanwara and Gugwara, were confiscated by the staff of Forest Department and demanded a penalty of Rs.200/- each, on the pretext that they were carrying the dry and dead woods from the forest area for selling, although they were duly authorized to do so. The plight of their financial condition was such that they could not secure the release of their bicycles for about six months and only upon intervention of some local organizations, the Administration has instructed the Forest Department to return the bicycles. Out of total land (on lease/pattas)

provided by the Government to people of Sahariyas tribe, 30% of the same is completely non-productive being stony and as such, no agricultural activity is possible there. In the given circumstances, when the people of Khairvas village, after securing loans to purchase tools like crowbar (sabbal), heavy hammer (Ghan) and spade (Kudali), and started extracting stones from their respective lands, then the employees of forest department, for not greasing their palms, had forcibly seized the tools of these people.

Moving a step forward reflects the contradictions between the schemes and ground realities being faced by the people of Sahariyas tribe. The Governmental schemes provide for immediate bank loan to these people for the purposes of digging well or tube-well, and/or to purchase bullocks. But the question here arises whether for those people whom the very availability of land or absence of it, is of prime importance, then the provision of providing loans for digging wells/tube-wells etc., appears to be self-defeating and only reflects upon the absence of any ground-level realities in the Government working. Also the middle men active in the area, have taken full advantage of the helpless situation of hunger-dying people of this tribe. They had approached these people, taken their thumb impressions on papers and collected loans from the banks on their behalf. While the people had received only a fraction of this loan amount, but in the Bank records the full amount of loan was standing in the names of these Sahariyas tribe people. With the result, they became indebted, without actually receiving the loan amount, and in the event of non-repayment thereof, had been declared as defaulters – for no fault. Today, 130 and 36 families of Bairasia and Shankergarh villages respectively, are bank defaulters. Thereafter, under the Small Irrigation Project launched by the Government, it was provided that in case a group of five families jointly apply for boring purposes to irrigate their land, then the financial assistance shall be extended by the Government, but with a rider that none of the applicants in the group shall be a defaulter in respect of loan repayment, meaning thereby that people of Sahariyas tribe, for whom this project was meant for, shall not be able to take advantage thereof.

The good monsoon means nothing to 4.5 lakhs people of Sahariyas tribe, because they have nothing that the good rains can improve upon. On the contrary, in the name of good monsoon, the Government will not declare it a draught affected area and no relief work will commence. As such the people will be deprived of even the wages for labour work. Therefore the Government and its administration, instead of quantification, should look at the human aspect of the prevailing situation. The problem has already reached at a level where no Government scheme shall prove to be effective enough, and as such, the need of the hour is a joint movement by the Government as well as the political parties.

3
Ways to live in Poverty

In the life of a poor, poverty is not the only curse. Along with lack of affluence, he also faces food deprivation, unemployment and social disrespect. In this India's centrally located State of Madhya Pradesh, a large section of Society is living a poverty stricken life of this magnitude. Facing untimely hunger death has become a part of its fate. Though sarcastic but it is a fact that they are not only worst sufferers during droughty conditions but also had to toil hard to sustain themselves. Further, the constant ignorance on the part of Government towards these people had dithered their life and coupled with insensitivity of the society had made them completely miserable. Now they have reached to a point where they are at a loss to understand as to from where to start – with no ray of hope apparently visible to them.

Of late it is being constantly heard that about 4.5 lakhs of people living in Gwalior-Chambal belt, are facing hunger deaths. But the fact is that they are not 'facing' but are actually dying from hunger. This section of society had always remained dependent upon forests. They had never damaged their forests as it was the source of their livelihood and had never let them down. The people used to barter forest produce like Gums and Chironji with that of cereals and also used to prepare baskets out of `Siari' wood to store their half yearly requirement. However, the Government by taking over the control of forests, had passed them over to the contractors, who totally wiped them and thus depriving the people of Sahariyas tribe from Gums, Chironji and `Siari' wood. However, for few years the people of Sahariyas tribe used to get labour work in the stone mines, but never thought of migrating due to their attachment with their respective places. But, as a after-shoot of developmental process, the people of Sahariyas tribe had to migrate from their respective places in districts of Shivpuri, Guna, Sheopur etc., to distant places like Delhi, Jaipur and other big towns to earn their livelihood. Not that they had not tried the alternatives in their own villages and the affluent farmers and Money lenders of their villages had given them loan for about two years, on the condition that they will work as a bonded labour in their fields and mines, but with the dry fields and closed mines, the loan was stopped to them. Thereupon, to sustain their lives, they started eating bread made out of `Sama' grass and Dalia out of its seeds. But here also, the nature was not kind enough to them. Due to draught, the seeds of `Sama' grass remained unripe that the children and elders could not digest and while struggling for life, were forced to embrace death.

In these circumstances, the relief process was initiated both by Government agencies as well as by various organizations, but their efforts were not sufficient vis-à-vis the magnitude of the problem. Looking at the conditions of Shivpuri and Sheopur districts, it was admitted by the Administration that though they are prepared to supply water through tankers, but the fact remains that the people did not have utensils/tanks to store the water. In Karahal Tehsil, the women used to collect woods from forest and sell them at Sheopur. For hundreds of people this is the only source of their very sustenance. These women used to travel without ticket up to Sheopur – they are rather forced to do so. Realizing their condition, and to avoid ticket-less traveling, one of the Officer of Girdhar Railway Station took an initiative and suggested them to purchase ticket on credit by registering their name, but it was turned down by the traveling

women because for an income of Rs.10/- per bundle of wood they just could not afford to purchase a ticket costing Rs.8/-.

The roots of *Shatavari and Gangru herbs* are available out of a river emanating from Girdharpur. For months together, the people of Sheopur tried to survive by extracting these roots and selling them out. But, by now, after extracting these roots up to few kilometers, they may not be available any more. However, the stark reality remains that they could extract only about 3-4 Kgs. of such roots in a day and in return receive Rs.10-12 only.

For animal husbandry also this draught is posing a problem for their very existence. In Sheopur district no green patches are visible. The tanks and ponds are without a drop of water and on either side of the road, one cannot avoid the sight of remains of cows and buffalos. In such a prevailing condition, the attitude of the Government further aggravates the situation. Under `Garibi Hatao Yojna` the five Self Help Groups in Gurabal village, were provided loans to purchase five pump sets for irrigation purposes. But the fact remains that in that village the ground water level had gone down quite deep, 23 out of 24 wells are dry and within 15 days about 70 animals died due to draughty conditions. In such a scenario, by providing loans for 'irrigation' purposes, without any drop of water available, the Government is only acting as a moneylender. Similarly, in Shivpuri many poor people were provided loans for goat keeping enhancing their income, mindless of the fact that there is neither any availability of goat-feed nor the water and even the ponds had completely dried down. But the Government is bent upon eliminating poverty at least on paper.

During this period, about 60% people from many villages of Sabalgarh Tehsil had already migrated leaving behind only the children and the elders or those who are incapable of doing any work. The problem of draught is bound to aggravate further, because people may survive by eating bread made out of `sama' grass, Birchan or Laltena, but where is water - there is no alternative to it. People had to travel 2 - 5 kilometers to fetch water, particularly in a situation when they need to devote more time in search of labour work to earn their livelihood.

There is one Mushar tribe in our society who after chasing the rats, reach up to their holes, dig them up and collect the cereals so collected by these rats. Upon cleaning, they prepare their meals out of such cereals. Similarly, cow-dung also contains some undigested grains of wheat and after cleaning the same; these people use them simply to avoid death from hunger. This in itself speaks of the appalling situation prevailing in this region. Once this Mushar tribe was known in the society for its expertise in assessing the conditions of soil and earth and people used to solicit their assistance for making a pond/tank or water reservoir, but today they are left to chase rats for their very survival.

Hunger supersedes everything. During the relief operations being organized by the Government by way of providing work to the people, many cases were seen where people, despite suffering from high fever, were engaged in digging 100 cubic feet of pits to meet the target as set by the Government, so that they could secure some cereals for their very survival. Ironically, the fact is that under the relief operations, only 10 Kgs. of wheat is provided against the labour work, but no cash is being paid to purchase other provisions like salt, oil, sugar, fire wood, match box etc.

In such circumstances, after making wheat atta they mix 100 gms. of it with 250 gms. of water, put some borrowed salt and take such mixture.

The curse of draught is no less than death and in such circumstances; the methods being adopted by the suffering people for their very survival are beyond any imagination either by Government or the Society. One Tairasa Bai of Bhathadand Panchayat in Shahdol district had surrendered her 10-year old son to an affluent neighbour who works for grazing his animal and in return she gets some bread to eat and old clothes to wear. According to her, there is nothing to eat in the house and after remaining hungry for few days, she travels up to her parents - about 10 kilometers away, to fetch something to eat. Upon receiving some rice, she cooks it and give rice to her another son while she herself consumes only the rice water.

There is no Government scheme for a 70-year old Ram Sahai Gond of Beni Behra Panchayat, who can neither see or hear properly and as such, have resorted to begging. The condition is still worse for handicapped and incapables living in the village, who are being totally ignored. There are more than 65 such cases in 10 panchayats of Kotma block of Shahdol district, who are deprived of any pension scheme. The problem further aggravates when the Sarpanch and Secretary wriggle out of their responsibilities by simply branding the person as 'insane'. Here the question arises whether there is any responsibility of either Panchayat or Society towards such persons?

Now a big question mark is looming large on the sensitivity of the Government towards its people. This is clearly reflected from the arguments being put forward by them. In one of the meetings, one Officer, engaged in 'Garibi Hatao' scheme, stated that during the prevailing draught conditions, the sale of Axe had shot up almost three times, thereby implying that people of `Sahariyas' tribe are damaging the environment by resorting to forest cuttings. In other words, in the opinion of the Government, a tribe who nourishes the forests like its own child, is damaging its very source of survival – this is called `passing the buck'! As such, the Government is somehow bent upon proving that people of scheduled tribes are damaging the forests. Continuing their insensitive approach, during one of the Public meetings, one Panchayat Officer of Shahdol district stated that village people are evicting their elder parents simply to grab their pension of Rs.150/-. Continuing his accusations, he said that schemes meant for people's welfare are being used as a source of their livelihood. He expressed his anguish that instead of becoming self-supporting, why people demand food or pension from the Government. This Officer has completely lost sight of the fact that it is the Government alone who deprived the people from their sources of living. Till now the people have not been paid an amount of Rs.200/- for the work they have done 4 years back, but on the contrary, the Contractor received Rs.3.00 lakhs even before completion of his work. These Officers since, in their opinion, have also not appreciated the people's growing dependence upon Government; it is not a sign of a good society. But it is none of their concern if in a village, to survive from hunger, some people resort to begging and some suffer even insanity. Obviously it requires change in circumstances and respective attitudes.

4
Migration and its Arithmetic for Sahariyas

After the festival of Holi, the people of Sahariya tribe migrate for about 75 days between March 15 and June 30. During these 75 days neither they get full employment nor they earn sufficient enough to meet his livelihood requirement during coming monsoon season.

Statistics of migration period:

-	**Total period of migration**:		**75 days**
-	No.of days preparatory to migration:	5-7 days	
-	Days spent to secure work:	5-7 days	
-	Period of unemployment/holidays:	5-7 days	
-	Sickness or emergent days:	3-4 days	
-	Preparing to return back:	5-7 days	
	Total No. of non-productive days :		**23-32 days**

Upon reaching the place of work, the people of Sahariyas tribe had to make a temporary shelter for them by arranging `Besaram' wood and some polythene etc. and the time spent for this purpose has been included in the above statistics of non-productive days. In other words, out of total 75 days of migration, they receive work only for about 48 days.

Income scenario:

During *Chait* period, the maximum wages earned by Sahariyas people are for harvesting the wheat crop. But instead of cash payment, they receive a part of total crop. As per prevailing practice, they receive about 5% of the total crop as their wages i.e. in return of harvesting one quintal of wheat, they receive 5 Kgs. of wheat as their wages. Here also they face exploitation. In return of harvesting 21 Pooras (local measurement: 1 Poora = 2.33 Kgs.), he receives 1 Poora as his wages. The determination of wages is as under:

-	After harvesting full 21 pooras:	1 Poora of wheat	(2.33 Kgs.)
-	3 Pooras equals:	1 Dhoka	(7.00 Kgs.)
-	1 Dhoka (30 bundles of wheat packs):	7 Kgs. of wheat	
-	Time taken to earn 1 Dhoka of wheat:	5-6 hours	
-	Total earning during one day:	1.5 Dhoka of wheat	(10 Kgs.)
-	Equivalent cash income per day:	10 Kgs. of wheat @ Rs. 6 per Kg. **= Rs. 60/- per day**.	

Total Income during migration period:

During his actual employment period of 48 days (out of total 75 days of migration period), each of the Sahariyas earns about 4.8 quintals of wheat, which is equivalent to Rs. 2,880/-. When two

adults of a family work together, their total income is just doubled i.e. 9.5 quintals of wheat equivalent to Rs. 5,760/-.

Expenditure during migration period:

The following expenses are incurred by Sahariyas during their migration period:

S.No.	Heads of expenses	Amount
01	Interest on loan taken for migration (@ 5% on Rs. 500/-)	Rs. 50/- as interest
02	One way travel fare (from Shivpuri or respective village, up to Datia / Bhind) – Fair for one person = Rs. 50/-	Rs. 150/- (for two adults and two children)
03	Return fare	Rs. 300/- (additional charges for wheat freight)
04	Cost of care taking arrangements of their huts and animals during their absence	Rs. 50/-
05	Daily expenses during migration period i.e. two adults and two children @ Rs. 25/- per day x 75 days:	Rs. 1875/-
06	Bidi and matchbox @ Rs. 5/- per day	Rs. 375/-
07	Sickness and other emergency expenses:	Rs. 125/-
08	Expenses on alcohol	Rs. 150/-
09	Repair of huts upon their return	Rs. 350/-
10	**TOTAL EXPENSES DUIRNG MIGRATION**	**Rs. 3,425/-**

Expenses upon return from migration:

1. In the event of all the members of the family migrate, then upon their return, they had to spend on repair of their hut. Because the fast blowing summer winds damage their huts are damaged badly and to repair the same cost them about Rs. 350/-. Therefore, as per details given above, about Rs. 3,425/- is already spent i.e. out of total earning of 9.50 quintals of wheat (equivalent to Rs. 5,760/-), about 5.80 quintals (Rs. 3,425/-), they are left with only 3.80 quintals of wheat (equivalent to Rs. 2335/-), which they carry along with them.

2. Out of these 3.80 quintals of wheat they had to manage themselves during the monsoon season. To meet their other requirements, they sell about 2 quintals of wheat in the market, which fetches them about Rs. 1200/- and from the remaining 1.80 quintals of wheat they had to feed their 6-member family for 4 months. In other words, in case they do not sell their wheat, then about 15 Kgs. of wheat per person/per month is available with them, but in case of sale of wheat, they are left with only 7.50 Kgs. of wheat per person/per month and a cash amount of Rs. 50/- per person.

3. The aforesaid income is available to the people of Sahariyas tribe in most favourable conditions and this is only available source with them to sustain themselves during this period. Out of this amount they had to manage other requirements of the family i.e. health, children's education, social expenses, wheat flour and other provisions. Thus, if this availability is considered as a standard one, it means that during this long period they had to manage and survive without any Dalhan, vegetables and salt.

Social effects of migration:

1. The fact remains that during migration, the tribal women are exploited to the extreme.

2. Children had to leave their studies during migration.

3. Elders of the family, handicapped members and pregnant women had to suffer problems beyond words without any safety arrangements for them.

4. Migration in itself becomes a web of indebtedness to moneylenders.

5. Many a times they had to sell their animal husbandry and their temporary huts are totally destroyed.

6. They are unable to use their entitlements such as Public Distribution System, ICDS and Mid Day Meals.

5
Migration of Sahariya PTG
A theoretical section

Profile of Migrant Sahariyas:

Although males predominate in most labour migration streams, but in a number of other cases, both men and women migrate together for work and are concentrated in different types of work in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, agricultural labour work is the predominant activity and in urban sectors, they work as unskilled construction workers. As per NCRL report, Sahariyas with too little or no land, have a high propensity to migrate as seasonal workers. The surveys[1] show that a significant clustering of migrants is in the age group of 16 to 40 years. Migration rates are high among least educated, while there is a high preponderance of illiterates among seasonal migrants.

Trends and Patterns:

Seasonal migration for employment has become one of the most durable components of the livelihood for Sahariyas and increasingly has become an accumulative option for almost all Sahariya population. The migration patterns are determined by people's access to resources, environment, intra-household relations, and wider social relations and not alone by demand of labour in an area. Caste emerges as an important determinant as to who is excluded from positive migration streams. Although millions of poor labourers are in circulation for the best part of the year, but the related policy continues to be ill equipped to deal with this phenomenon and consequently, the migrants being outside their home areas, have o entitlements to livelihood support systems or formal welfare schemes. They are not even paid their full wages and the burden posed by a lack of access to basic facilities is borne mainly by women and children. A significant proportion of woman also migrates along with their male counterparts.

Migration continues…!

A common element of migration being a push created by a lack of employment opportunities at home and the pull from work availability elsewhere. As a rule, the older, better established migration streams offer high returns and predictable employment for migrants. These are often streams where particular castes and communities have built up stable relations with employers over a long period of time.

However, for Sahariya tribals, more negative kinds of migration streams exist, which involve a more opportunistic search for work. Often, there is no stable relationship with any particular employer – particularly for relatively new, poor and unskilled migrants and as such they are subjected to discrimination. In Shivpuri and Baran areas, migration has also been on the increase

[1] Study conducted by actionaid India in Shivpuri and Baran district titled- MIGRATION: PATTERNS AND TRENDS AND ITS IMPACT ON LIVES OF SAHARIYA PEOPLE

in areas where the draught has been severe during the years of 1999-2002 and 2004-05. Wages can be reasonable, but work is not available all the time. As such, these groups, needing work, often travel for days based on rumors of work, but only to discover that it is either non-existent, no longer available or there is long queue waiting before them. Even if they get work, there is often no guarantee for payment.

Identifying causes for Migration:

The causes of migration amongst Sahariyas are varied in terms of space and time. It reflects household subsistence strategies in the face of social, cultural, demographic and other constrains and is also influenced by the demand for migrant workers and development pattern (NCRL 1991). In tribal regions, intrusion of outsiders, settlements in tribal areas, displacement and deforestation have also contributed significantly to the seasonal out-migration of tribals.

'Pull' and 'Push' factors work in most of the migration cases and they do not operate in isolation. Mobility occurs when workers in source areas lack suitable options for employment/ livelihood, and there is some expectation of improvement in circumstances through migration and they look for better employment opportunities, higher wages and maximizing employment for their family members.

Generally and in most cases, migration is voluntary but of limited choices. The growth of intensive agriculture and commercialization of agriculture have led to peak periods of labour demand coupled with non-availability of local labour. But in some cases, the migrant workers are locked into a debt-migrating cycle through some form of labour bondage and earnings thereof are used to repay debts incurred at home or in the destination areas. Thus making migration an essentially involuntary and forced by debt relations or other coercive factors.

Individual as well as household characteristics and social matrix, influence migration decisions. Factors such as age, education level, wealth, land ownership, productivity and job opportunities influence the participation of individuals and households in migration along with social attitudes and presence of supporting social networks. In many cases, migrant workers are preferred because they are, as compared to local labour, easy to discipline and less expensive.

Impact of migration:

The Sahariya migrant workers are crowded into the lower spectrum of the labour market and have little entitlement in regard to their employers or the public authorities and suffer from deprivations. They usually live in deplorable conditions with inadequate provision of drinking water and other basic services. Seasonal migrant labourers live in open spaces or makeshift shelters and being non-registered are not entitled for temporary ration cards and as such are forced to spend more on food and other basic necessities[2].

Obliged to work in harsh and unhygienic conditions, the Sahariya migrants become vulnerable to diseases and occupational health hazards and because of their temporary status, have no access to

[2] Study conducted by actionaid India in Shivpuri and Baran district titled- MIGRATION: PATTERNS AND TRENDS AND ITS IMPACT ON LIVES OF SAHARIYA PEOPLE

various health and family care programmes. They carry their children to work place where they are exposed to most unhygienic conditions leading to various health problems, apart from no educational facility for them.

Family migration implies the migration of the younger members of the family leaving the elderly behind, who have to cope with additional responsibilities. Exposure to different environment and the resulting emotional stress, affect the attitudes, habits and awareness levels of migrant workers.

Exploitation:

The migrant Sahariyas are generally exploited and are made to work for long hours and paid wages less than the local labourers, even below the prescribed minimum wages. Taking advantage of their illiteracy and poverty, middlemen practice exploitative recruitment practices and retain a major portion of their wages as their own commission. Moreover, wages are adjusted only at the end of the season and workers are paid some advances, which are not at all sufficient to meet even their basic requirements. The condition of women labourers are far more unsatisfactory, who are invariably paid lesser wages as compared to their male counterparts. Sexual exploitation of women migrant labourers is a matter of deep concern. Most of the migrant workers live in conditions below the minimum accepted standards without adequate shelter and toilet facilities. In most places, migrants stay in make shift shacks or in the open and have no access to safe drinking water. In the urban areas, shortage of open space and harassment by local musclemen add to their misery[3].

The non-inclusion of migrants in the electoral rolls also deprives them of political patronage and results in their extreme political marginalization. The employers and contractors also adopt exploitative practices against the migrants and employ various methods to circumvent the provisions of Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (ISMW) in such a manner to escape from the purview of such Act.

[3] Study conducted by actionaid India in Shivpuri and Baran district titled- MIGRATION: PATTERNS AND TRENDS AND ITS IMPACT ON LIVES OF SAHARIYA PEOPLE

6
SINGHRAI
A village under the dark shadow of Poverty

According to one 50-year old Khasi Ram of Sahrane (Sahariyas hamlet) of Singhrai Panchayat in Kolaras block of district Shivpuri, during last 30-40 years the way the forests were exploited by the people of vested interests, it has not only polluted the environment but also the sources of livelihood of Sahariyas were reduced to such a level that people started facing hunger deaths. We, the people of Sahariyas tribe used to depend upon various forest products like wood, eatables and medicinal plants to such an extent that not only we feed ourselves but also meet other basic needs of our life through forests only.

Khasi Ram lives in Singhrai village where there are 60 families of Sahariyas tribe, with a total population of 259. Due the repeated draughts for last 3 years coupled with unplanned development, what to say of being benefited even marginally, but on the contrary they were even deprived of their basic rights which has left a deep negative impact upon the employment opportunities. The level of uncertainty is such that despite being residing in this village for last many years, none of its families have received any official lease of their respective residential plots. Although plot-wise list of families residing there, is available at Panchayat level. The question of ownership of land (Bhuswamy) not only relates to residential plots, but the Sahariyas people of Singhrai village also face problems in respect of ownership of their agricultural land. On an average, the Sahariyas people of this village possess between half and five bighas of land, but even these small pieces of land failed to bail them out in recent years. During last two years, somehow and with great difficulty, they managed to sow their fields in the hope of reaping some food grains to sustain themselves, but alas! All their hopes were dashed to walls due to adverse conditions and they could reap nothing from their respective fields.

Not only in Singhrai village, but in all other localities of Sahariyas tribe of this region, none of them have ploughed and sown their fields, mainly for two reasons i.e. (1) problem to purchase seeds because neither they have money nor can take the risk of borrowing and (2) the fertility of land is so poor that farming itself is an extreme task there. The lease deeds provided by the Government consists of either mountainous or stony/rocky land. Although possibilities can be explored for community farming – which is also possible looking at the prevailing cooperation between Sahariyas tribe, but the problem persists that agricultural lands of tribal people in villages like Singhrai, are neither adjacent nor touching each others land and as such the possibility of community farming appears to be a difficult proposition.

The problems being faced by Sahariyas tribe people are because of destruction of forests, because of which the soil conservation was affected adversely and consequently the people were not able to meet their basic requirements from forests. In this given scenario the Government accepted the need for social reform by way of water conservation programme but, by invoking his authority, this opportunity was used by former Sarpanch, Mr. Badri (a Thakur), only to meet his self interests high ups. Consequently, the advantage of such water resources remained limited only up to irrigating the fields of such people, defeating the very purpose of this social reform. The status of various Government schemes is such that out of a total grant of Rs. 25,000/-, earmarked for one Kalla, under the Indira Avas Yojna, he only received Rs. 7,000/- and nobody knows as to where the remaining amount has gone. And the remaining amount never arrived to his account. About 70% children of Sahariyas tribe are suffering from mal-nutrition and the

prevailing conditions of ICDS Center (Aaganwaris) are extremely miserable, where the nutritious food is distributed hardly for about 3-4 days in a month that too only to meet the formality. One Aanganwari worker – Ms. Jyoti Mathur resides in Shivpuri and rarely visits this place. However, upon receiving information about any official visitor, she becomes regular and completes the formality by staying for about 2-3 days in the village.

As far as the ground reality of school education is concerned, although there is a primary level school up to class V, but according to villagers, the level of education is such that hardly there will be any person, who had studied up to class V in this school, is even able to count properly what to say of reading or writing. The reason is not far off to find i.e. when the teachers themselves do not attend the school, then why should the students come to their classes. However, for studying beyond class V, there are Higher Secondary schools in Kolaras and Rai, but based on their experiences in terms of level of education, none have shown any interest thereof and with the result, there is no person in Singhrai village who had studied even up to middle class.

During draughts, the most important question facing the people is that of securing means of livelihood. Even otherwise, the farming always remained a difficult proposition for the people of Singhrai village and during last 3-4 years there was absolutely no relief in terms of any alternative help to these people. For the first time, during mid-June of 2003, a relief work was started to prepare 2-kilometer long approach road, but looking at the number of labourers involved in the said work, it would not have lasted for more than 8 days. In this relief work also, the payment of wages was determined on the basis of completion of a particular task and not on number of hours worked. The stark reality of this hard and rocky land on which the road was being constructed, was such that to make a `Khanti' of 100 cubic feet (this task has to be completed in any circumstances by the laborers to earn minimum wage), which takes about 3 days for one person to prepare i.e. equivalent to one day's work for three persons, but the wages for this entire work is only Rs.52/-. In other words, after toiling for the whole day, the one worker earn only about Rs.20/-. Compelled by such circumstances, the entire members of a family, mostly including women and children, engage themselves to achieve the set target and only then they are able to earn some tangible amount. Thus, the provisions of Minimum Wages Act and other labour protective laws were just thrown into wind and it appears that these people are destined to exploitation.

Basically, the people of Sahariyas tribe used to collect dry and fallen woods from the forest and bundles of such woods are sold in the market to sustain their life. Normally, it takes about 2 days to collect and sell a bundle of such wood and in return they receive about Rs.10/- per bundle, which is also subject to heavy negotiation for its quality and quantity. In this process, many a times the women are exploited to the extent that they are able to receive only Rs.6/- for one bundle of their wood. With the beginning of Chait (Harvesting season during the month of March to May is called Chait), the people of this community migrate from Shivpuri district to places like Morena, Dabra, Gwalior and up to Datia. Not only this, once not used to leave their places, but also now these Adivasis are rather forced to migrate even up to distant places towards Delhi and Jaipur in search of sources and opportunities for their livelihood. Clearly, uncertainty is looming large in the lives of these 60 families of Singhrai village.

7
Reality of Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Singhrai

During the initial phases of implementation of Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Madhya Pradesh, many anomalies have surfaced in this legal right of employment. Therefore, based on such ground-level experiences, it may not be improper to insist for due attention towards removal of such anomalies to stop the process of drifting of this legal right of employment from its objectives. In the `Sahariyas' tribe dominated Singhrai village of Kolaras block in District Shivpuri, Mr. Sita Ram, along with his family members, used to migrate, for last 10 years, during *Chait* harvesting season, to distant places like Jhansi and Agra in search of labour work with the affluent farmers of that area.

This is a fact that migration, to some extent, has become a part of the system. While on the one hand, the affluent farmers are on the look out for cheap labour and on the other hand, the people of `Sahariyas' tribe, who are victims of exploitation both by Government as well as by Society, are in need of labour work to earn their livelihood at any cost. A middleman who deals in human labour meets the respective requirements of these two divergent groups of Society. They supply the tribal labour to meet the agricultural needs of the affluent farmers and in return earn their commission. However, this time i.e. after the enactment of Employment Guarantee Scheme, the Sarpanch of Singhrai village has requested Mr. Sita Ram not to migrate because, he was told, that now it is his legal right to get employment and he can demand for the same. He was also informed that not only he, but also all the 60 families of the village would have similar right. This was a pleasant surprise to the people of `Sahariyas' tribe, because basically, in the past, these people were not used to migrate from their village, but due to depleting forests and diminishing employment opportunities, they were rather forced to resort to migration in search of labour work to earn their livelihood.

Consequent upon people's movement, when the enactment guaranteeing the rural employment at National level came into force, the Government declared that now the unemployed ruralites need not to migrate in search of their livelihood and this Act will sort out the problem of unemployment. Believing these pronouncements, Mr. Sita Ram felt as if this right has been provided only to save him. As a result of this enactment, none of the families of Singhrai village have migrated in search of labour work, during *Chait* harvesting season this year to earn their livelihood. But it was not a pleasant experience for them. Although, while formulating the State level Employment Guarantee scheme under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, it was declared that one able bodied member of every family, willing to undertake labour work, shall be provided at least 100 days of work at the minimum wage rate of Rs.60/- per day. However, when Mr. Sita Ram, along with members of 60 families of Singhrai village, approached to work in a road scheme – being constructed from Mohra to Singhrai village, they were told that they will be entitled for the minimum wage rate only upon their digging pits of size 10 ft. long, 10 ft. wide and 1 ft. deep. As per this pre-condition, when Mr. Sita Ram started work, then it was realized that due to stony/rocky earth, it will take at least two days to dig a pit of given size. Thereafter, Sita Ram, with the help of two other members of his family – Anarkali and Ramshree, started working together and all three of them jointly were able to meet the given target of the Government, but in return they received the minimum wages only for one person.

This was their first experience contrary to expectation of Sita Ram, because after putting 11 hours of continuous hard work by three members of his family, their average wages comes to Rs. 40/- only.

While analyzing the system of migration, according to one 50-year old Sewa Ram of the village, it is revealed that while engaging themselves in harvesting work for one month, they earn about 6 quintals of food grains with comparatively lesser hard work as required for cutting the hard rocks. He poses a question – as to what `right' I have received. Being constantly ignored and fighting against continuing exploitation, the people of Sahariyas tribe have physically gone so weak that a 40-year old person appears to be just double of his age. That is why, even after putting-in some work, the chest of Sewa Ram starts paining, but it is of no concern for the authorities while framing the respective rules and regulations. The Government have never cared to assess the performance of its bureaucrats in terms of their contribution towards development of State and its Society vis-à-vis their fat salary package, who like termites are in fact weakening the very system. They work only for 180 days and receive salaries for full year, but on the contrary, when the people of Singhrai village, irrespective of their putting in hard work in scorching heat for whole day, but at the time of payment of wages, their work is microscopically measured – inch by inch and if the depth of their work is less by two inches, an amount of Rs.10/- is deducted from their already meager wages.

The Government, on its part, attempted to make clear provisions in some places of Employment Guarantee Act, but it is the implementing agencies that have negated the same. The Act provides for payment of minimum wages of Rs. 60/- per person for working 7 hours a day, but while looking at the various schemes operating under this Act, it is revealed that labourers work from 8'0 clock in the morning till 6'0 clock in the evening and tried to complete the target fixed for day's work, meaning thereby that even after working for 10 hours daily, they do not get the minimum wages. To give an example, on 23rd March one Angad of this village, along with his wife Gurhia had worked for the whole day but in their respective job cards, only half day's wages was entered.

Although, with a view to strengthen the Gram Swaraj, this Employment Guarantee Act provided sufficient autonomy to the Gram Sabhas and Panchayats with sufficient rights and authorities, and have been empowered to decide upon the pattern of development of their respective villages and also to plan the required construction work there. However, the work, which is being carried out in Singhrai village, has been decided by the administration without even any involvement or consultation with the Gram Sabha. Further, no body in the village knows that an amount of Rs.4.05 lakhs has been sanctioned to construct this 2-kilometer long kachi (temporary) road. However, when they were informed about this, then most of them were of the opinion that this road will be completed in just half of this sanctioned amount and wondered as to whom and on what basis, has prepared the costing of this construction work. This is not an isolated case of one single Panchayat, but the story is not any different in other 667 works being undertaken in district Shivpuri to provide employment under this Act.

Under the Employment Guarantee Act, the Gram Sabha should have been effectively empowered, to take its own decisions. The people of Sahariyas tribe in this village have their small land holdings but the same require proper treatment and means of irrigation to make it

fertile and productive. This requirement can be easily met under the Employment Guarantee Scheme, just by linking it with water and soil related work, which is an approved parameter under the Scheme. But the people of this village have not been given any right, under the Employment scheme, to decide as to which work is to be done in their village. The Agencies, responsible for implementing the scheme, has to rise above the dotted lines of the Scheme that by simply providing labour work to the people of Sahariyas tribe, they can be freed from constant hunger and poverty. But unless some serious efforts are made for ensuring permanent sources of their livelihood, this Scheme will not be able to achieve its desired inherent objective.

It is a popular sight at the place of construction, that in the scorching heat of summer, little children, numbering no less than 56, spent their day in the shelter less open place, while their respective parents are engaged in labour work. For people of Singhrai village, the employment/ labour work is a matter of life and death for them. Almost all the 140 children of this village are victims of mal-nutrition and the condition of their women folks is still worse. Although, the law provides that where 5 children accompany their parents at the work site, then one person shall be appointed to look after these children, but the ground reality is that Sarpanch of the village, Gurpreet Cheema, refuses to abide by any such law and as such, the children are left to wander on their own - unprotected and uncared for. Not only this, while looking at the availability of drinking water at work site – the very basic requirement of every human being, the most unabashed and rather shameless 'justification' for not providing the same, as provided by Hari Ballabh, is that since every worker demand 'personalized service' of water, that is why no water at all has been provided at the work site. Therefore, the Government and more particularly the implementing agencies, has to ensure that legal provisions of the Act, are not thrown into winds, just to suit their personal conveniences.

The village committee is entitled to inspect every work being done under the Employment Guarantee Scheme. However, in Singhrai village, more than 27 days of work has already been done, but the all-important Muster Roll is lying in the safe custody of house of Panchayat Secretary, and instructions have been given to the work supervisor that irrespective of number of members actually working, but in the Muster Roll only one person's wages has to be entered that too in his presence. The question looming large is whether under these feudal tendencies any proper social audit of the system is possible? Clearly, the way in which the larger social objectives of schemes like this are being sacrificed by vested interests to meet their petty political interests, gives rise to the doubts that instead of depending upon Employment Guarantee Act, whether it would be comparatively better and easier for these people facing hunger deaths, to migrate to other places to meet the requirement of their livelihood irrespective of the fact that during migration they face exploitation, but at least are sure to get their due wages and protection.

In village Berkhedi of this block, an example of cruel joke, played with the very objective of providing social security inherent in the Employment Guarantee Scheme, has come to fore i.e. in the name of two elderly women - Balia Bai and Ajjo Bai, who could not even walk properly, have been issued Employment Cards in their respective names. It is only the irony of their fate that, on the one hand no help or support is extended by their children and on the other hand, simply because these elderly and handicapped women have children therefore, are not entitled for any social security pension and as such remain deprived of any benefit. In such

circumstances, they are destined for all-round uncertainty in their life. In the given scenario, question is posed whether for 18 lakhs helpless and shelterless elders, living in Madhya Pradesh, the job cards issued under the Employment Guarantee Scheme are taken as a criterion for entitlement of social security benefits. The families who migrate also have their own problems, as has been boldly and frankly analyzed by Kausa Bai of village Bekheri. According to her, while migrating, they leave their elders behind. Although ration arrangements are made for them, but they had to collect firewood to cook their food. However, even if everything is made available to them, they remain deprived of any social protection. Even the death of such elders, during the absence of their family members, becomes a big challenge, as to who will perform their last rites?

In the face of such grass-root level realities and the irresponsible and unaccountable manner in which this Employment Scheme is being implemented, it appears that very soon people will lose their faith in the scheme and will consider migration as a better option. From the Government point of view, in the absence of strong political wills, this Scheme cannot be implemented effectively. In the very initial stages of its implementation, the Government has started manipulating the figures and started claiming that out of 42 lakhs targeted families, 35 lakhs of them have been provided with respective Job Cards and out of it, and 11 lakhs families have already been provided with the various jobs. But the Government has failed to appreciate that Employment Guarantee has to be based not on figures, but on transparency, mutual cooperation and due social sensitivity.

For ensuring the implementation of Employment Guarantee Scheme as people's oriented, it required extensive training and consultation with the rights based approach, but the irony is that such training programme was reduced to a mere formality. In most of the places, due to other pre-occupations of Officers, trained for the purpose, their clerical staff marked their attendance as Trainers and completed the formality of imparting training within a hour's time. The result of this is clearly visible in villages like Singhrai and Berkheri where not only the provisions of this Employment Guarantee Act, but also the Minimum Wages Act and other Constitutionally provided Fundamental Rights of the people are being violated.

8
CONCLUSION

It has to be clearly admitted that migration is not a voluntarily chosen alternative for the people of Sahariyas tribe for securing employment, but they were rather forced to adopt this out of sheer constant hunger, serious food insecurity and ever increasing mal-nutrition. At the social and political level, leadership of this tribe was never allowed to be encouraged, as a result of which the people of this tribe could not fight for their social, economical and political rights.

On the other hand, the various policies framed by the Government lack long term political commitment with the result none of the schemes could provide any benefit to the people for whom they were meant for. As a recent example, just consider the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Going by the various provisions contained in the scheme, there appears to be wide ranging opportunities, but looking at its ground level implementation, only negative aspects are visible. It may be admitted that during this era of globalization, the public welfare schemes are prepared from the Government point of view and not that of community.

Another aspect is that these days, the process of development is shackled in the clutches of bureaucracy, who are neither responsible to any community nor are interested in their empowerment. For Sahariyas Adivasis, the right to employment is of prime importance, but in the rules, regulations and process made thereunder, any serious contradictions were not visible. However, it is not a good sign that even in the initial stages of implementation of this National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, people have started losing their faith in the scheme itself. On the one hand, the people of Sahariyas tribe consider the migration as comparatively better alternative and on the other hand, the concerned Officers of the Government admit that it is not expected that due to Employment Guarantee Scheme, the tendency to migrate can be either minimized or eliminated. As per the Act, only 100 days work in a year is to be provided but for the remaining period people had to migrate for their livelihood. Strictly from the legal point of view this argument is a valid one, but does it mean that this Employment Guarantee Scheme shall not be able to (1) promote, at local level, any additional permanent sources of employment; (2) there will be no improvement in the land conditions; and (3) No efforts will be made to conserve water and forests. In case the Government attempts to convert this Employment Guarantee Act into Wages Guarantee Act, then it calls for a confrontation on this issue.

The experiences encountered during this study reveal that bureaucracy has completely ignored the social security aspect of the Scheme. At work sites, neither there is any arrangement for drinking water nor any provision for shelter or protection for the children.

In other words, the very objectives of this Act, enacted out of people's movement, are being attempted to be scuttled just because of glaring anomalies / contradictions at the implementation stage of the Scheme.