

# LIGHTING UP THE HILLS

प्रदान  
Pradhan



Pahariyas- A special project implemented by PRADAN

# INDEX

A new lease of life

Life interrupted

A peek into the past

Pradan's intervention

Co-operative with a Mission

Grassroots Mobilisation  
Through Self Help Groups

A Green Step Forward

Save Tree Corpus

Community Centres

Dispelling the darkness

A New Prescription

Preventing Malaria

Services at their doorsteps : SANJIVANI

Challenges ahead

Road to the future



## A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

1

Reaching Doriyo is difficult. It takes almost twenty hours by train to reach Jasidih from Delhi. Jasidih, the nearest railway station from Doriyo, is 80 kilometers from Godda, a small district town in Jharkhand bustling with activity. Doriyo is another 80 kilometres away from Godda. Roads, or the vestigial remains of whatever was once perhaps an attempt at making one, exist till Damruhaat, post which the pretence too completely vanishes.

The two and a half hour walk of about nine kilometers to Doriyo begins from Damruhaat. The climb seems treacherous at first, but the landscape of Rajmahal hills is so amazingly beautiful that it becomes easy to forget the hilly and difficult path one is treading on.

Doriyo, a village inhabited by Pahariyas, lies peacefully on the hilltop. This village is far away

from the modern civilisation, and basic facilities like water, electricity and roads look like distant dreams here. The small and poorly thatched huts in this village are in stark contrast to the natural beauty this place is endowed with.

Despite living with this remoteness forever, residents, especially women of Doriyo look like a cheerful and confident lot. The eyes that have

seen and experienced the hardships, while surviving in a village with no basic amenities, now look back with renewed hope.

The confidence that is almost infectious seeps through the words and gestures of women of Doriyo's as they troop in for a weekly Mahila Mandal meeting. These women assemble in a



husband would have to take loans from the moneylender to buy seeds. In case of illness or any other emergencies, they had no other option other than going to the moneylender.

But the Self Help Group that was formed four years ago in her village has changed her life for better. During the current season of Cowpea



2 courtyard to take stock of their savings. With their weekly savings and pictorial passbooks they seem to have no regrets in life. Their faces beam with excitement as the accountant opens his ledger and starts collecting their savings into a cash box.

One of them is 45 year old Punya Paharin, who looks extraordinarily happy today. "I have more than two thousand rupees as my savings now. It's incredible", she says.

It's not hard to believe. Four years ago Punya and her husband Dukna Pahariya would have to run to the local moneylender whenever they were unable to sustain themselves. Punya's family owns a small cowpea farm of about two bighas, and the harvest would hardly pull them through. For every season of cultivation, Punya and her

cultivation, Punya has taken a loan of Rs 1,500/- from her group. She hopes to have a good harvest this year and plans to return the loan as soon as possible.

This is not the first time the SHG has come to her rescue. When her young son fell ill last year, she took a loan of Rs. 200/- to buy medicines for him. She had also taken a loan of Rs 500/- to repair her house. Punya says with self-confidence, "I have paid off all the small loans taken from our group's saving box. The season before this too, I had taken a loan of Rs. 1200/- for cowpea farming and returned it with interest to the group."

*The other Pahariya women in Doriyo have similar stories to narrate. Today, this isolated village has two self-help groups – Laharipur Mahila Mandal and Son Pup Mahila Mandal - with 20 active members. Both the groups have separate accounts in State Bank of India's Damruhaat branch, with a total saving of around Rs. 50,000/-.*



*The Pahariya tribe officially belongs to the Primitive Tribe Group (PTG) notified by the Government of India, and is mainly concentrated in the Santhal Pargana division of Jharkhand and it consists of Godda, Dumka, Pakur, Sahibgunj, Deoghar and Jamtara districts.*

*Out of nearly two-lakh population of primitive tribal groups in Jharkhand - such as the Asur, Birhor, Birja, Korma, Pahariya, Parttlaya, Sabar and Hill Kharia, more than 60% are Pahariyas. As the name suggests, Pahariyas live in villages in and around the hill slopes surrounded by jungles - mostly in remote, inaccessible areas like Doriyo.*

# Life INTERRUPTED

A trip to Doriyo makes one realize that most of the villages on the Rajmahal hills are without roads, any means of transport, schools, hospitals or even dependable means of livelihood. Basic facilities like proper roofs overhead, sanitation, electricity and even potable water are considered luxuries in these villages.



## A PEEK INTO THE PAST

Pahariyas are originally from South India but they travelled northwards and finally settled in the Santhal Pargana region. As per the earliest available record, after the victory in the battle of Plassey, British gained control over Bengal including the Santhal Pargana, which was a part of Bengal at that point in time. But, the British had not had expected to face stiff opposition from a band of simple and determined tribe - Pahariyas, who were not willing to tolerate any intrusion in their homeland. It is said that Warren Hastings, the Governor General of India in the late 18th century organised a special team of 800 men to curb Pahariyas. When all their efforts proved futile, Santhals, another tribe was brought in the foothills of the Rajmahal hills to fight the Pahariyas.

Santhals pushed Pahariyas on the hilltop and since then, Pahariyas are known to be suspicious of people living in the plains. Pahariyas are slowly losing out to the other dominant tribes on the Rajmahal hills. Despite being one of the earliest tribes to have settled here, years of poverty, debt, disease and death have made them weaker.



A major impediment towards the development of this community happens to be a lack of sustainable livelihood options. On an average a Pahariya family owns about 5 to 6 acres of land. But the primitive farming practice followed by the Pahariyas leads to very little returns. They resort to Jhoom Cultivation wherein the vegetation is left to grow totally under nature's care. In this obsolete method of cultivation a piece of land is left to regenerate while cultivation happens on some other patch. Due to menace of wild boars and monkeys the meagre production that they manage to get does not reach their homes fully.

Other livelihood options include collecting forest products like leaves and mahua flowers, and preparing country liquor known as Hariya. With these few livelihood alternatives, Pahariyas can barely fulfil their basic needs.

5

*A study done in the area in 1970s by SN Roy shows that the average distance of a Pahariya village is 11.7 km from the nearest road, 8.2 km from hospitals, 6.9 km from school and 2.3 km from the nearest small permanent markets. A visit to these hills proves that three decades later, life hasn't changed much in the hills.*

*The annual income of a Pahariya family is estimated to be between Rs. 5,000/- to Rs. 6,000/- (National per capita income annually is Rs. 20,734/- and Jharkhand's is Rs. 14,990) (Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics of state Governments and Central Statistical Organisation. PIB Press Release as on 25th November 2007)*



## PRADAN'S INTERVENTION

*Bringing about a meaningful change in the lives of Pahariyas was a mammoth task and Pradan, an NGO with years of experience realised it quite early.*

6

It was in 2001 that the professional staff of Pradan while working on a Tasar Sericulture Programme in Godda decided to extend their presence to the Pahariya villages. Pradan started off this project by interacting and making informal visits to these villages. Gaining the trust of the tribe members was imperative to initiate any meaningful intervention. It was clear that to work with a community with such high vulnerability, the level of involvement and intervention had to be very intense.

To begin with, Pradan studied the life and livelihood patterns of Pahariyas to understand their skills, resources and opportunities available.

It was discovered that as a Primitive Tribal Group, the Pahariyas had no dependable source of livelihood and were highly vulnerable to health risks. Also, they did not have any marketable skills, were left with depleting natural resources and had an abysmally low literacy rate of 10%.

Given such a situation, Pradan took up a multi pronged approach which included community mobilisation and capacity building programmes through women's Self Help Groups and co-operatives, installing systems to reduce endemic risks and vulnerabilities through health interventions and insurance schemes and initiating various income generation programmes.

# Co-operative with a Mission

*All the Self-help Groups in Sundarpahari have been linked to a co-operative known as SUNDARPAHARI ADIVASI VIKAS SWAWALAMBI SAHKARITA SMITI or SAVALA. SAVALA is the name of one of the hills in the region, which also finds mention in the Mahabharata. The co-operative has been formed with the broad objectives of providing sustainable livelihoods through agricultural development, mobilisation of health services, conservation of ecological security and empowerment of women.*

Due to the good relationship built by Pradan at the administrative levels and also due to the path breaking nature of the work, the co-operative has received a lot of support from the government. SAVALA has mobilized financial assistance from the Government of Jharkhand to a tune of Rs 60 lakhs.

**Head quartered in Chewo Tetariya village, this co-operative's area of operation spreads over entire Sundarpahari block. There are 514 women members (Pahariyas and other**

**Scheduled tribes) in the co-operative with a governing board consisting of 9 elected members elected for a one-year term.**

The co-operative functions in a very democratic manner, wherein a new governing body is elected every year. The groups nominate their own candidates for the posts of President, Secretary, Treasurer and other members of the governing body. In the annual general body meeting of the co-operative, the board is voted in by the members.



One of the first success stories and in many ways the foundation of the Pradan's intervention programme in Sundarpahari was the creation of women's Self Help Groups or SHGs that were instrumental in providing immediate financial independence to Pahariya women.

# GRASSROOTS Mobilisation THROUGH SELF HELP GROUPS





Rami Paharin, a 70-something resident of Ghaghri village exudes energy and optimism when she breaks into a traditional Pahariya dance. Her energy is evident when she comes to attend her weekly Mahila Mandal meeting.

Says Rami Paharin in her native language, "Mahila Mandal has really changed things for us. I have seen the toughest of times, and have lived in these remote hills forever.

We have no money, no contact with the world beyond these hills. But now, not only do we have our savings, but also have a financial support system."

Rami has truly seen some of the worst days of her times. With a landholding of only about ten bighas between a family of seven and no other source of income, it wasn't easy to bring up her

children. Struggle for survival against poverty, diseases and sometimes, nature has been an integral part of her life. The oldest woman of the village, Rami doesn't have the luxury of sitting at home and watching her great grandchild grow. She has to contribute towards the income generated by her family for which every single morning she goes to the jungle, scouring the earth season after season for mahua flowers, cowpea or some leaves to make plates.

But, despite the huge responsibilities that she carries on her frail and old shoulders, Rami has never missed a single Mahila Mandal activity. She derives her self-confidence and financial independence from her Self Help Group.

**Though the SHGs did not have a smooth sailing from the start, after a few initial hiccups they became so popular amongst the Pahariya women that at present more than 60 such SHGs have come into being with a total strength of about 800 members spread over 40 Pahariya villages. The SHG's support the members to take up livelihood activities such as cowpea farming, kitchen gardening, horticulture and commodity trade.**

*With the help of her group, Rami and her family has managed to systematise their collective income and savings. Five years ago, the annual income of the family never exceeded Rs. 5,000/-. But now, with Rami and her daughter-in-law Raji Paharin working in the fields, her granddaughter-in-law Sunita Paharin taking care of the livestock that the family owns, it is no longer a hand-to-mouth situation for them. Three generations of women of the family are active members of the Mahila Mandal here. In fact, Rami's grandson Jama Pahariya is also the accountant and caretaker of their Mahila Mandal for which he receives a monthly stipend of Rs 550/-.*

10

*The family now sells their harvest through the group, which helps them fetch a better price for their products like cowpea, mustard and mahua. The family's annual income is now around Rs. 14,000/-, far beyond their expectations. The three women have their collective savings of Rs. 1,440/- in their group's box as well.*

*Apart from this, Rami and the other members can borrow money for medicines, education of their children and sometimes for social gatherings like marriage or festivals.*





12

Rupi is a relatively new member of her Self Help Group. This is her second year of interaction with the other women of the Group which provides them with a platform to share their ideas and problems. Rupi says, "Last year I had taken a loan of Rs. 900/- from the moneylender. I even sold my cowpea to him because this has been the tradition for as long as I remember. But even after selling my entire harvest to him, I owed his Rs. 150/-. So, we were unable to save anything, we were actually running in losses. But this year, by the grace of God and nature, the harvest has been good. So, I hope to have a better income."

Rupi and women like her have been trained in various aspects of cowpea cultivation. To begin

with, farmers are trained in seed selection and treatment. Seeds selected carefully are put through Trichoderma Viride Treatment (TVT) to protect them from fungal attacks. The co-operative has created a seed bank in which 10% of the product is held back for the future.

Once the seeds are sown, it is important to save the crops from wild animals and pests. While the farmers keep a watch on the farms to keep animals at bay, they also receive training from Pradan on selection of bio-pesticides and spray schedules.

When the crop is ready for harvesting, the farmers are trained in cleaning and drying the product. Once the cowpea is cleaned of foreign materials,



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the product is stored either in the godown in Chewo Tetariya or at the community centre in Ghaghri, both built by the co-operative. Under Pradan's guidance, farmers have been taught to do the grading, sorting, packaging, weighing and labelling of the product all by themselves.

In order to get the best prices for their produce, farmers have also been given training in scanning the local markets in Sundarpahari, Godda and Pakur districts. To get a better price, farmers are encouraged to go for bulk marketing after manual sorting and cleaning. For cowpea marketing, traders have been identified by the co-operative who offer a better and competitive price. Depending on the quantity sold, income is

distributed proportionately among the farmers. These interventions at the community level has started to bear fruit and farmers have been getting better price for the hard work and investments.

Rupi Paharin of Porkani village has already worked on the lists of things she wants to buy this year. Apart from clothes for her family, she also wants to buy some ornaments for herself. "My silver ornaments will work as a long-term investment. Last year my income was around Rs. 13,000/-, much higher than the year before, which was only Rs. 8,000/-. Last year, my husband bought a cycle for himself. I also saved Rs. 1,900/- in my Group's account," says Rupi.



## SAVE TREE CORPUS

14

*Sometimes, even a good harvest is not enough to bail the Pahariyas out of a sudden financial crisis. In such difficult times, Pahariyas in need sell their mango, jackfruit, semal or mahua trees to the timber sellers for a price as low as Rs 1500 to 2000. The traders then cut the tree into planks and sell the planks in the markets, earning a profit of 10 to 15 times more than what they paid for the tree to the owner. This not only deprives the Pahariyas of the most important of their meagre resources but also affects the environment.*

To solve this dual dilemma PRADAN initiated the creation of Save the Tree Corpus Fund – an ingenious idea aimed at freeing needy Pahariyas from debt traps of moneylenders and timber traders while also saving their precious natural habitat.

Now, instead of selling their trees to unscrupulous timber traders in moments of deprivation, Pahariyas in need of money can mortgage their trees at prevailing market rates to SHGs who maintain the trees and sell the produce to recover the mortgage value and buy more such trees for the Corpus. The trees are restored to the original owner once he pays

the mortgage amount along with 12% interest annually.

This Corpus was piloted under the Social Mobilisation Programme supported by the United Nations Development Programme and Ministry of Rural Development. Subsequently it has also been funded by the Department of Welfare, Government of Jharkhand, which has sanctioned Rs 10,00,000 to Sundarpahari Adivasi Vikas Sahakarita Samiti. Each Pahariya SHG has received Rs 25,000 as a Save Tree Corpus which has been subsequently pooled into the co-operative for better management.

# COMMUNITY CENTRES

Another invaluable task successfully completed by the co-operative under Pradan's guidance has been the construction of four community centres in four Pahariya villages - Ghaghri, Asripara, Sidler and Paharpur-S. Each centre caters to a cluster of 8 to 10 SHGs.

The total fund of Rs 20 lakhs for these four community centres came to the co-operative directly through Department of Welfare, Government of Jharkhand. The co-operative undertook the task of constructing it, and now the centres have been handed over to the community.

The caretaker of one such community centre in Ghaghri is Jama Pahariya, a young man full of energy and a lot of new ideas. Concentrating on his computer screen, Jama looks like any other youth of his generation. The only difference being that he comes from a background where they did not have the luxury or the means to get acquainted with these machines. Learning to work on one of the 'modern machines' wasn't an easy task for him either. But when he was sent to Godda by Pradan to be trained in computer operations, he made the best of the opportunity available.

Now he types on the keyboard with confidence. Apart from taking care of the community centre, which houses the computer installed for him to work on, Jama is also employed as the accountant of his village's SHG.

Printing the group's weekly report on the laser printer installed with the computer, Jama says with a gleam of pride in his eyes, "We also have an

internet connection here. Though the phone rarely works because of bad network, it still gives us a satisfaction of being connected to the world. I am just about learning to send e-mails."

This computer also doubles up as a TV in the night. Children gather here to watch their favourite Cartoon Channels and Discovery whereas elders love to watch films or sports. The community centre is equipped with a gas generator, battery, Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFL), computer, printer, Direct to Home TV receivers, mobile phone and internet connection. Ghaghri community centre is also equipped with a Microscope and other accessories for the diagnosis of Malaria and has medicines for treatment.

The community centre works on a revenue model in which income comes from rent paid by Pradan for using the training facilities, TV viewing charges, medical lab fees and medicine sale. The profit margin may not be very high here, but it gives enough financial strength to the community centre to be able to run smoothly.





## Dispelling the darkness

16 *Out of the innumerable utilities that can be attributed to a community centre, one of the most important would be the fact that it serves as a night school for children. Children of varying ages from the neighbouring villages gather here for a few hours of learning.*

Soni Paharin, all of 8, is all set to leave for her night school. Though she has been looking after her young siblings all through the day, she is not at all tired. The two hours that she spends in her night school take her to an entirely different world altogether. Repeating in unison with her other classmates, Soni follows her teacher's words with rapt attention. Here, she has learned not only to write her name, but also the names of months and days.

The night school uses the solar lamps that have been provided to the villagers. These solar lamps have also made lives much simpler for the women. They are not dependent on sunlight for completion of their household chores. Various social gatherings take place under these lights now. These lamps have also provided a support system for productive activities like Sal plate making, crop watching and cooking. These lamps are being used by trained birth attendants and paramedics as well.



# A NEW PRESCRIPTION

*Basanti Paharin and her husband Jaleshwar Pahariya, residents of Chewo Tetariya are getting ready for a long day ahead. After fetching two pots of water from the stream which is two kilometres away, Basanti is busy preparing lunch for her family. Her four children have left for a nearby school and it is time for the couple to leave for work as well.*

In between chopping vegetables and making rice, Basanti keeps talking. "One of my neighbours and a close friend died while giving birth to her son. I myself have gone through a difficult pregnancy. It's not easy to live in these hills. And, life is all the more complicated for women like us. We have to run the household and contribute towards family income, irrespective of the physical condition that we are in."

To help ease pain of numerous women suffering like her, Basanti decided to take up the opportunity of being trained as a birth attendant. She let her husband take care of her small children for a month and volunteered to go for an intensive training to Chandragodda hospital, some 90 kms away from her village and then to Chakradharpur in West Bengal. This training was organized by Pradan for three Pahariya women who now work as trained birth attendants.

Apart from mid-wifery, Basanti was trained in mother and child health care. She is the person every woman from nearby villages turns to when they are on the family way. Her husband Jaleshwar has also received basic training in diagnosis and treatment of diseases like malaria, kala-azar and other water-borne diseases.

Rajmahal hills happen to be one of the most endemic zones of a number of tropical diseases like Malaria, Kala-azar, Tuberculosis and Diarrhoea. Data collected from the nearest Primary Health



Centre of Sundarpahari shows that out of 4,912 blood samples taken from the patients in the period January to September 2007, 516 suffered from Malaria, 38 from Tuberculosis and 149 from Kala-azar. The data collected by a Pradan trained health worker shows a much bleaker picture. Out of 2900 samples taken by him, 34% were malaria positive, which means 986 suffered from malaria. These figures portray the dismal picture of the non-existent health facilities at Sundarpahari.

To make matters worse, there is no hospital nearby. The health sub-centres that exist on paper look abandoned and deserted. With no other accessible options, Pahariyas rely either on their ojha (witch doctor) or the quack available in the nearest Haat (local market).

A study done by Pradan in 2003 in the PTG areas of Godda, Sahibganj and Pakur revealed that 28% of the deaths occurred were due to fever, 17% due to maternal complications and 8% due to Tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases. Analysis of loans in Pradan promoted SHGs in the area showed that 60% of the loans were going towards treatment of illnesses. Thus, in 2003, a three year pilot project on Basic Health and Services was also initiated under the UNDP-MoRD supported Social Mobilisation Programme.

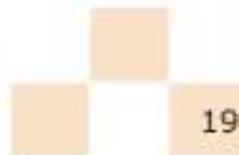


As is believed, prevention is the best cure of a disease. That's why Chandi Paharin of Balami village doesn't forget to put up her mosquito nets before going to bed. Chandi believes in taking every possible step in preventing Malaria because she herself has suffered from it a number of times.

## PREVENTING MALARIA

But Chandi also adds with some concern, "It was not easy to change our habits. We have been used to living with these diseases. It took us a long time to understand the utility of these nets...."

For prevention of malaria, Pradan has undertaken the responsibility of mosquito net treatment in association with the District Malaria Office. Around 7,000 medicated nets have been distributed in the villages on the hills.





20

## SERVICES AT THEIR DOORSTEPS: SANJIVANI

*Today Chandī Paharin has walked down to the Sundarpahari Primary Health Centre all the way from her village Kusumaha, which is more than 20 kms from here. Sundarpahari PHC is the closest medical centre to her village.*

Though Chandī's village is 20 kms from Sundarpahari PHC, she would still be considered fortunate. There are villages in the hills from where it takes a whole day to get to the health centre on foot. Pradan was aware of the problems Pahariyas

face because of inaccessibility and distance from these services. So, the approach was to build local capacity, train people from their own community and encourage them to be as close to the disadvantaged as possible.

For that, an association of seven community health workers and para-vets called Sanjivani was formed. Sanjivani works towards providing basic health services in Sundarpahari villages at a very nominal cost. It consists of, Dharmendra Pahariya, Haradhan Sah, Mahadeo Pahariya, Bhamna Pahariya, Jaleswar Pahariya, Etwari Hembrom and Dominique Soren, all of whom have received formal training in diagnosis and treatment of fever and water-borne diseases in Centromap, Kolkata.

The members of Sanjivani work from their villages and take care of the patients even from the neighbouring villages. They also run two weekly outdoor clinics. In case of an emergency, the health workers visit the patients, collect their blood samples, diagnose the disease and provide first-line treatment to patients accordingly. Referring serious patients to hospitals in Godda also falls under their list of duties.

The health workers receive their remuneration according to the services provided and number of hours worked. Apart from receiving 25% commission on the medicines sold, they also

receive 110/- or more per day depending on the work undertaken. All of them have been provided with mobile phones by Pradan, so that they can be in touch with each-other during any emergency.

Apart from these health workers there are three para-vets – Jome Pahariya, Chandrashekhar and Shivalal Tudu. These para-vets have been trained in treatment of animals and are well aware of immunization schedules for the cattle. These three were trained in Hazaribagh. The para-vets charge nominally towards providing treatment to the cattle from the owners.

Particulars as on December 31 2007	No.
Population Outreach	12,000
Village Outreach	100
Families Outreach	4,000
Community Health Workers	7
Para-health Staff	52
Drug Distribution Centres	107
Fever Treatment Depots	10
TB microscopy Centres	4
Malaria Microscopy Centres	2
Outdoor Clinics	2
Treated Mosquito Nets distributed	7,000
Mosquito bars distributed	1,000
DDT-IRS monitoring villages	200



These years of PRADAN's exclusive commitment to Pahariyas is showing results of hope and change. But there are broader challenges to address. It will require years of dedicated efforts to bring about behavioural changes, to uproot superstition and to create more livelihood options for them.



## CHALLENGES AHEAD

A. Siddique P, the Deputy Commissioner of Godda district believes that the administration and civil society organisations need to work in tandem to create a better life for Pahariyas who have lived forever on the periphery. "The basic priority areas that we have fixed are the basic facilities like food, shelter, health and education. While providing these basic facilities, we also look forward to empower as well as strengthen their community," he adds.

To strengthen the community, a number of recommendations have also been made by Pradan to the Planning Commission. These ideas have been well-received by the policymakers, and if implemented, can bring about positive changes in the lives of the Pahariya community, and the other Primitive Tribal Groups as well. These recommendations include building road networks, creating drinking water facilities, providing infrastructure like community centres, emphasis on livelihood generation, and special attention to health and primary education.



## ROAD TO THE FUTURE

Whatever PRADAN has managed to achieve in the past few years is merely the beginning. More than the facilities and conveniences that the Pradan initiatives have brought for the Pahariyas, it is the change in thinking and attitude towards life which has been the most significant.

Today, they have hope. Today they believe that tomorrow can be much better.

Jameshwar Pahariya and two of his neighbours get ready to meet the Deputy Commissioner with a memorandum demanding basic infrastructure like roads and drinking water. There is no hesitation as they voice their concerns confidently.

"For the first time we have understood our rights as citizens. We also deserve roads, hospitals and schools", says Ganesh Pahariya.

Bhamna Pahariya adds with pride, "We are getting our rations cards and voter identity cards made. We know about Antyodaya Yojana and Birsa Awas Yojana, thanks to the community meetings that are held every now and then."

And Jameshwar Pahariya sums it up in a few words, "We are learning to stand up for ourselves. The future looks better."

Jameshwar's words definitely do seem prophetic and he can now dream of a future which is doesn't seem too far off, now!