How Chunni Bai’s death exposes the lie about Aadhaar

On September 27, 2018, a day after the Supreme Court’s Aadhaar judgment, Chunni Bai of Panton Ki Anti, Rajsamand district, Rajasthan died of starvation. She and her husband Uday Singh, both over 75 years old, had not eaten a meal in five days. For two months, they had not received their pensions or rations.

Every time Uday went to the ration shop, the dealer would send him back empty-handed saying his biometrics weren’t working. The Aadhaar-linked “foolproof” POS machine would fail to authenticate Uday’s fingerprint. Even more tragically, Chunni passed away on a day when activists from the MKSS (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan) visited their home and helped them procure their rations — through a “bypass” (special exemption granted to individual beneficiaries by the sub-divisional magistrate), obtained after a long and complicated process.