Zero Hunger With Langar

What is the issue?

- ‘Zero hunger’ is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations that aims to end extreme hunger and malnutrition, especially among children, by 2030.
- Guru Nanak’s ‘Langar’ is contributing to achieving this goal and reducing malnutrition in African countries.

What is Langar?

- Langar refers to a **system of developing a community kitchen**, where people irrespective of their caste, religion and social status sit together on the floor and have food.
- The institution of langar finds its roots in two **teachings of Sikhism** -
    1. ‘Naam japo, kirat karo, vand chako’ (pray, work and share with others whatever you earn) and
    2. ‘Sangat aur pangat’ (eat sitting together in rows on the floor).
- The word ‘langar’ has its origin in Persian and it means a **public eating plac**e where people, especially the needy, are given food.

What is the link between Guru Nanak and langar?

- It is said that when Guru Nanak was a boy, his father gave him Rs 20 and sent him to buy goods, sell them and return with some profit.
- However, on the way, he met some hungry holy men. He used the Rs 20 to arrange food for them.
- He made them sit on the floor and served the food with his own hands.
- When Nanak returned home, his father was furious as he had returned empty-handed.
- But Nanak said that he did a ‘Sacha Sauda’ by feeding hungry men, which he said was ‘the most profitable deal’ for him.
- Currently, Gurdwara Sacha Sauda stands at Farooqabad (Pakistan) which is where Guru Nanak is believed to have fed those sadhus.
- Later in his life, Guru Nanak strengthened the practise of langar at Kartarpur, his final resting place, where he had established a dharamsal for prayers and everyone was served food without any discrimination.

What is the UN's 'Zero Hunger' goal all about?

- The goal of 'zero hunger' is specified under 17 SDGs of the UN.
- Extreme hunger and malnutrition remains a huge barrier to development in many countries.
- There are 821 million people estimated to be chronically undernourished as of 2017, often as a direct consequence of environmental degradation, drought and biodiversity loss.
- Over 90 million children under the age of 5 are dangerously underweight.
- Undernourishment and severe food insecurity appear to be increasing in Africa and South America.
- In 2017, Asia accounted for nearly 63% of world's hungry and 22% of the children under the age of 5 who were stunted across the world.

What is its aim?

- By 2030, **end hunger** and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.
- By 2030, **end all forms of malnutrition**, including achieving, by 2025, internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under the age of 5 and address nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

How are Sikh organisations using langar to reduce hunger?

- Several Sikh organisations are now branching out to other countries where langar is used to provide nutritious meals to the undernourished.
- One such organisation is 'Zero Hunger With Langar' which is specifically working in two African countries - Malawi and Kenya.
- These are among the countries with the highest malnutrition rates among children and feature in the UN's target list.

What does 'Zero Hunger with Langar' do?

- 'Zero Hunger With Langar' was found in 2016 by Jagjit Singh.
- It is working under its parent body 'Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha'.
- It is currently serving over 1.50 lakh meals a month to malnourished children in Malawi and nearly 8 lakh meals a month in Kenya.
- It started serving from Malawi first. They target children in primary schools, nurseries as these children are made to work in return for food.
- It is serving highly nutritious porridge meals with maize, soya etc. rich in carbohydrates and other vitamins, minerals to them.
- Since 2016, they have served more than 3 million meals in Malawi.

- In Kenya, they are cultivating 300 acres of land and aim to serve 10 million meals a year.

What has been the impact of this movement in Malawi?

- Attendance in primary schools and nurseries has improved considerably.
- They are more than 90% malnutrition-free across its centers where we serve in Malawi.
- **UNICEF report (2018)** - In Malawi, malnutrition still remains a serious challenge and contributes to preventable children deaths.
- 23% of all children deaths in Malawi are related to under-nutrition.
- 4% of under-5 children here still suffer from acute malnutrition.
- There is occurrence of anaemia in 64% of children from 6 to 59 months.
- 37% children are affected by stunting. Just 8% children from 6 to 23 months of age meet the minimum acceptable diet.

In India, which are the largest kitchens serving langar?

- The langar kitchen at Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar feeds nearly a lakh people a day.
- In Delhi, Sri Bangla Sahib gurdwara kitchen serves langar to 45,000-50,000 persons a day.

Source: The Indian Express

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