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Mains Manthan

- The ingredient to turn around nutrition outcomes (Page No – 8)
- Drinking to death (Page No – 8)

Prelims Saarthi

- International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The ingredient to turn around nutrition outcomes

Why in News?

- PM- POSHAN Abhiyan

Syllabus

- GS Paper 1 – Indian Society
- GS Paper 2 – Governance & Social Justice

The ingredient to turn around nutrition outcomes

The analysis of India's free foodgrain programme for 800 million people underscores a grim reality: that hunger and malnutrition remain pressing concerns. Yet, in India's long battle against malnutrition, women and girls remain the most overlooked section. Despite steady economic progress and numerous welfare schemes, nutritional inequality continues to be deeply gendered. Launched in 2018 with the vision of a malnutrition-free India by 2022, the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyan has the aim of improving nutrition for pregnant women, lactating mothers, adolescent girls, and young children. However, stark disparities persist.

Structural failures

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 reveals that 57% of women in the age group 15 to 49 years are anaemic, in comparison to 26% of men; nearly one in five women are underweight. In other words, women are far more likely to be malnourished than men in India. These figures point to structural failures in how we address nutrition. Even after merging schemes into 'POSHAN 2.0' and investing heavily, the needle has not moved enough for women.

Indeed, POSHAN Abhiyan is India's largest nutrition programme with a hefty budget. In 2022-23, the Ministry of Women and Child Development was allocated nearly ₹24,000 crore for Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, but by December 2022, only 69% of those funds had been utilised. Despite such spending, the prevalence of anaemia among women actually rose from 53% to 57% between the last two NFHS rounds, and about 18.7% of women remain underweight.

This contrast suggests that just pumping in resources into a women-centric nutrition scheme is not enough. In many Indian households,



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especially the poorer ones, women's nutritional needs are literally last in line. Entrenched cultural norms often mean that when food is scarce, women and girls eat least and last. Thus, malnutrition is not just a biomedical or food-supply issue; it is a social justice issue. If a woman lacks economic independence or decision-making power, she may have little control over her diet and health. Even government data underscores this link: the NFHS-5 found that 49% of women lack decision-making power over how their own earnings are spent. This financial dependence often translates into compromised nutrition – a result of gender-based deprivation.

The issue of empowerment

Studies have shown that empowering women financially is one of the most effective ways to improve nutrition. Nobel laureate Esther Duflo, for instance, finds that when women control extra income, they are more likely to spend it on nutrition and children's well-being. In a study we conducted among low-income communities, we observed that women with even a modest independent income or control over household spending were far less likely to be undernourished.

The missing piece in India's nutrition puzzle is women's economic and social empowerment. The state of women's employment suggests that female labour force participation has risen from about 23% in 2017-18 to around 33% in 2021-22 – a positive shift on paper. But a vast majority of working women are in insecure, low-paying jobs. According to the Periodic Labour Force Surveys, as of 2021-22 only 5% of working women held a regular salaried job, while nearly 20% were self-employed (mostly in small-scale or informal activities). Moreover, self-employed women earned on average 53% less than men in similar work. In effect, many women who do work are

barely earning enough to survive, employment has not yet translated into the power to make decisions or invest in their own nutrition and well-being.

Thus, it is not enough to get women into the workforce; the quality and security of their jobs matter just as much. Without skills training, equal pay, and access to stable employment, women remain economically vulnerable even when they work.

As a result, even well-intentioned nutrition programmes such as POSHAN will have limited impact if women cannot afford or are not empowered to consume the nutritious food being provided. Government reports praise Poshan Abhiyan for creating awareness and a "Jan Andolan" around nutrition, but awareness alone cannot fill an empty stomach.

Need for convergence

If POSHAN 2.0 aims to eliminate undernutrition, it should work in tandem with schemes that boost women's incomes and status. First, it must set measurable targets not just for reducing anaemia or stunting, but also for increasing the proportion of women with independent incomes and decision-making power. Second, it must break the silos, making sure that nutrition, health, and livelihood departments work together on joint interventions in high-malnutrition districts. Third, it must use Anganwadi centres and health workers to not only distribute food and supplements but also to connect women with skill training, credit schemes, or job opportunities. An Anganwadi can double as a one-stop hub for women's welfare (meals, antenatal care, financial literacy workshops).

Ultimately, a malnutrition-free India will be possible only when women are not seen as passive beneficiaries of nutrition schemes but as active agents driving the health and the prosperity of their families.

Empowering women financially is an effective way to improve the nutritional outreach in India



Key Takeaways from the Article

• Nutrition Status and Gender Gap

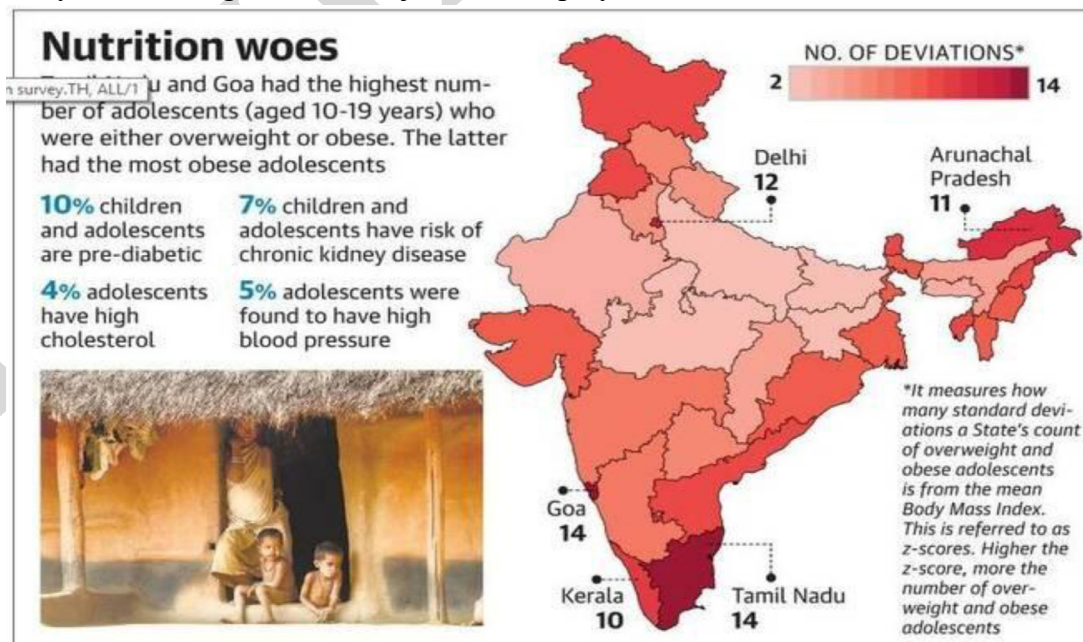
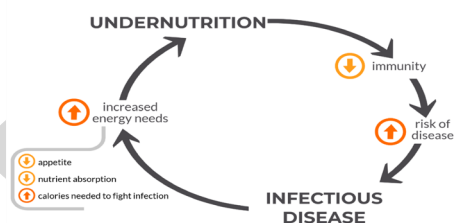
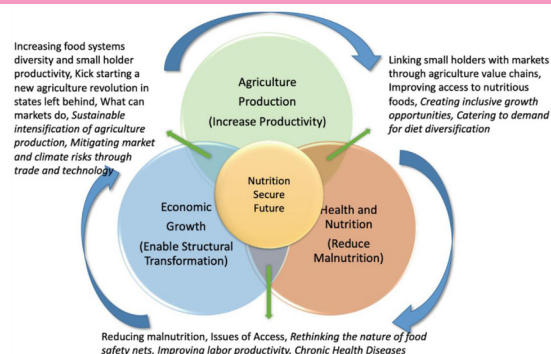
- ◆ NFHS-5 data: 57% of women (15– 49 years) are anaemic vs 26% of men; nearly 1 in 5 women are underweight.
- ◆ Despite increased government spending (₹24,000 crore on Saksham Anganwadi & POSHAN 2.0), anaemia prevalence rose from 53% to 57%.

• Structural Failures

- ◆ Women's nutritional needs are deprioritized in households, especially poor ones.
- ◆ Entrenched social norms result in women eating last and least.
- ◆ 49% of women lack decisionmaking power over personal earnings (NFHS-5).

• Link Between Empowerment and Nutrition

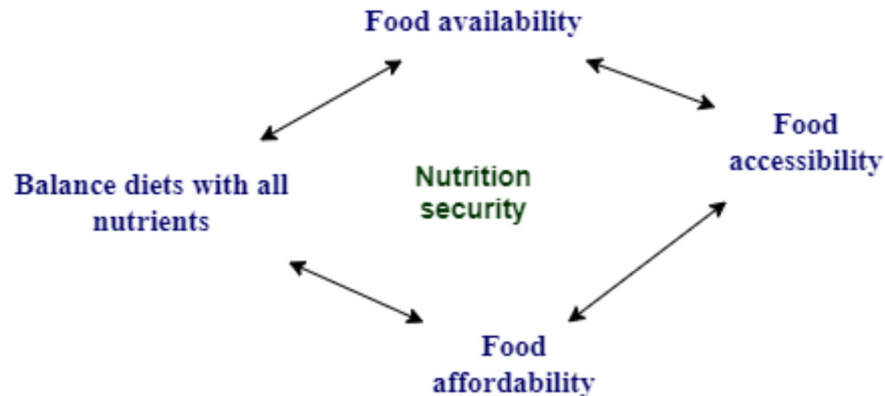
- ◆ Evidence shows women's financial autonomy improves nutrition for themselves and their children.
- ◆ Despite rising female labor participation (from 23% in 2017-18 to ~33% in 2021-22), most women work in insecure, low-paid jobs.
- ◆ Only 5% hold regular salaried jobs; selfemployed women earn 53% less than men.





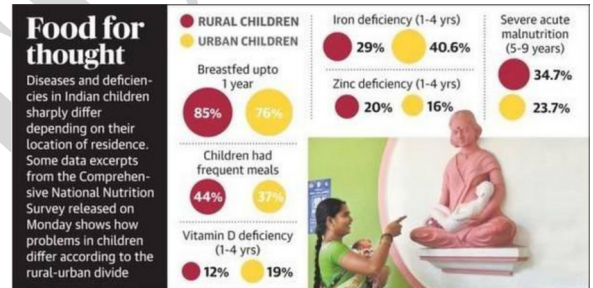
• Limitations of Current Schemes

- ◆ POSHAN creates awareness but cannot address hunger if women lack resources to access nutritious food.
- ◆ Underutilization of allocated funds (only 69% spent by Dec 2022).



• Need for Policy Convergence

- ◆ Nutrition programs must be integrated with livelihood, health, and women's empowerment schemes.
- ◆ Anganwadi centers should act as hubs for nutrition, antenatal care, skill development, financial literacy, and credit access.



Drinking to death

Why in News?

- ◆ Spurious liquor in Amritsar

Syllabus

- ◆ **GS Paper 1 – Indian Society**

Drinking to death

Illicit liquor trades expose systemic corruption and regulatory failure.

Who described its taste as "sweet" or "spicy liquor", the increasing incidence of fatal alcohol poisoning across India – most recently near Mumbai, Punjab, which claimed at least 23 lives – follow a grimly familiar pattern of poverty, greed, and regulatory failure. Each tragedy is eerily similar to the previous one, be it in terms of the socio-economic profile of the victims or the motivation of the perpetrators. The victims are typically poor, daily wage earners, seeking respite from the harsh realities of everyday drudgery. They are drawn by the lure of cheap alcohol, a miserably regulated by bootleggers, who are at the tail end of a long supply chain.

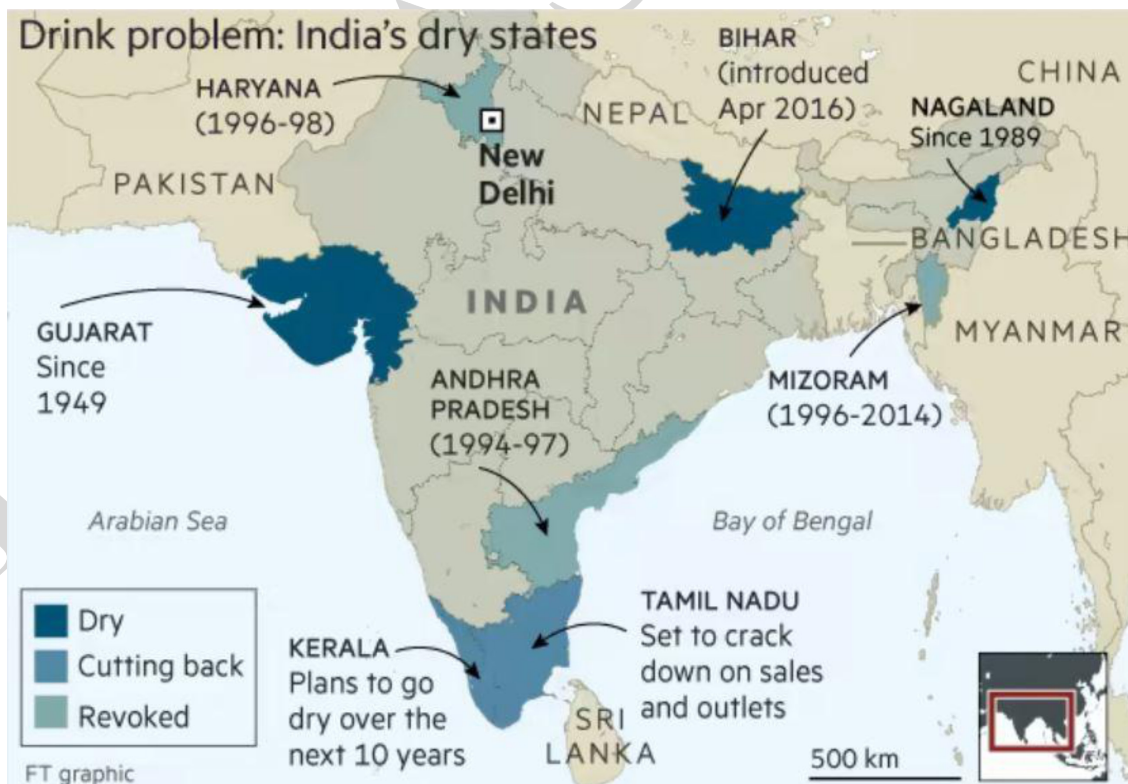
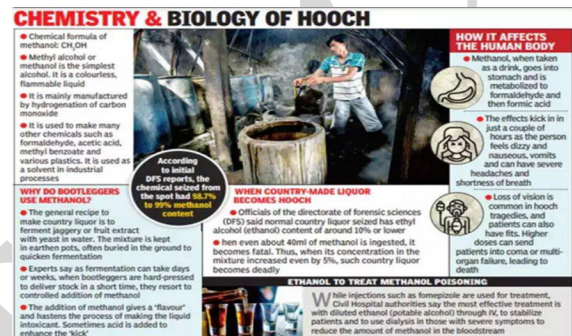
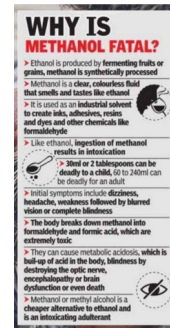
These illicit beverages involve dangerous distillates, from incorporating toxic substances such as lead or mercury in distilling industrial wastewaters, a poisonous chemical that is deceptively similar to commercial ethanol. Methanol, easily pillaged and inexpensive, becomes a deadly profit source for bootleggers who may mislabel distillates as rum, leading to fatal consequences. The nexus among bootleggers, the police, and lower-level politicians is often apparent. While police negligence in Punjab has not to be overstated, bootleggers are more often regulated by bootleggers, who are at the tail end of a long supply chain.

Legal proceedings in illicit liquor cases often involve murder and attempted murder charges, including those under provisions like, for instance, as seen in the 2015 Mahesh case, can be shaken. A case against 49 of the 100 of the last year, now was found guilty of violating the Prohibition Act. Since methanol production and delivery are inter-state affairs, there is a case for a central framework, on methanol transport for preventing such pillage as well as stringent state regulation. The nation set true and teeth to the prohibition case, but what is more important is to ensure that the lawbreaker-enforcer shield is impermeable so that illicit methanol distribution is impossible. Eventually though, it is the socio-economic, social and educational situation of victims that creates a market for unscrupulous trade in methanol. This can only be addressed by tackling poverty, social inequality, and the lack of access to education alongside systemic corruption within law enforcement.



Key Takeaways from the Article

- **Systemic Issues Behind Hooch Tragedies:**
 - ◆ Poverty & Vulnerability
 - ◆ Methanol Misuse
 - ◆ Weak Regulatory Oversight
 - ◆ Corruption Nexus
 - ◆ Ineffective Legal Enforcement
- **Who is accountable for spurious liquor deaths?**
 - ◆ Bootleggers and illicit manufacturers are directly responsible.
 - ◆ Corrupt law enforcement enables illicit trade.
 - ◆ Regulatory authorities fail in the oversight of methanol distribution.
 - ◆ Political protection complicates enforcement.
- **Legislative Framework:**
 - ◆ **Poisons Act, 1919:** Regulates poisonous substances like methanol but enforcement is weak.
 - ◆ **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Controls methanol supply to prevent diversion.



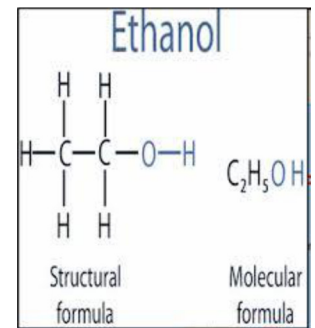


- **Challenges in Conviction**

- ◆ Weak application of strong laws; cases mostly under prohibition or general criminal laws.
- ◆ Poor evidence collection and forensic delays.
- ◆ Lack of inter-state tracking of methanol hampers accountability.

- **Way Forward**

- ◆ Centralised Methanol Monitoring System
- ◆ Tighten Regulation & Licensing
- ◆ Criminal Liability for Supply Chain Negligence
- ◆ Inter-state Coordination
- ◆ Strengthen Law Enforcement & Judicial Processes



How is Ethanol and Methanol Procured?

Ethanol is legal liquor for consumption and is produced biologically. Methanol is produced from coal and other fossil fuels. Even very low concentrations of methanol can be toxic, often fatal.

During ethanol production in responsible distilleries, methanol is also produced but is carefully removed since the processes are highly controlled.

Mains PYQs (2024)

Q. Explain how narco-terrorism has emerged as a serious threat across the country. Suggest suitable measures to counter narco- terrorism. (2024)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- ◆ The **IMF is a specialised UN agency**, established in **1944 at the Bretton Woods Conference** to ensure **global monetary stability** post the **Great Depression**. **HQ?**
- ◆ It promotes **monetary cooperation**, ensures **financial stability**, facilitates **international trade**, supports high employment, and works to **reduce poverty**.
- ◆ **Member Countries - ?**
- ◆ **SDRs - ?**

Prelims PYQs (1995)

Q. Which of the following constitute the World Bank?

1. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
2. International Finance Corporation
3. International Development Association
4. International Monetary Fund

Codes:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3
- (b) 1 and 2
- (c) 3 and 4
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4





Prelims PYQs (2001)

Q. Consider the following organisations:

1. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
2. International Finance Corporation
3. International Fund for Agricultural Development
4. International Monetary Fund

Which of these are agencies of the United Nations?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) 2 and 3
- (c) 3 and 4
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Prelims PYQs (2011)

Q. Regarding the International Monetary Fund, which one of the following statements is correct?

- (a) It can grant loans to any country.
- (b) It can grant loans to only developed countries.
- (c) It grants loans to only member countries.
- (d) It can grant loans to the central bank of a country.

Prelims PYQs (2016)

Q. 'Global Financial Stability Report' is prepared by the:

- (a) European Central Bank
- (b) International Monetary Fund
- (c) International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- (d) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Prelims PYQs (2016)

Q. With reference to the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC), consider the following statements:

1. IMFC discusses matters of concern affecting the global economy, and advises the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the direction of its work.
2. The World Bank participates as observer in IMFC's meetings.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

