Society & Social Justice · GS - II

There is a growing divergence in the relationship between poverty and hunger in India. The shrinking of social expenditure by the government is forcing the poor to spend more on Non- Food essential items squeezing their food – budget.- Elucidate.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2019	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

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Answer Hint

Multidimensional poverty; food insecurity; household expenditure; social expenditure; healthcare costs; education costs; nutrition; public distribution system; social protection; inflation; welfare delivery

Model Answer

Introduction

Poverty and hunger are closely connected, but they are not identical. A household may experience some improvement in income while remaining vulnerable to hunger because essential non-food expenses consume a growing share of its budget.

How the Divergence Occurs

- **Healthcare expenditure:** Medical emergencies and out-of-pocket treatment costs reduce the money available for food.
- **Education costs:** School expenses, transport and educational materials can place pressure on low-income households.

- **Housing and utilities:** Rent, electricity, cooking fuel and transport costs reduce disposable income.
- **Food-price inflation:** Rising prices of nutritious foods can force households to substitute cheaper, less nutritious diets.
- **Inadequate social protection:** Gaps in pensions, employment support and welfare coverage expose vulnerable households to financial shocks.
- **Hidden hunger:** Calorie consumption may remain adequate while protein, micronutrient and dietary diversity requirements go unmet.

Policy Response

The government should strengthen affordable healthcare, public education, food security programmes and targeted social protection. The Public Distribution System, nutrition interventions and employment support can help protect household food budgets. Better monitoring should assess dietary quality and nutritional outcomes, not merely income or calorie availability.

Conclusion

Poverty reduction does not automatically eliminate hunger. Affordable essential services and effective social expenditure are necessary to prevent non-food costs from undermining nutrition and to ensure that economic progress improves food security.

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