

Q. The measures against poverty cannot be realized with looming water scarcity in the country. Explain.

(200 words)

Water is fundamental to life and without water, <sup>security</sup> any measure taken to fight poverty will not be fruitful. Unfortunately a water crisis is looming in our country and currently over 600 million Indians face high to extremely high water stress. <sup>(CWM 2019)</sup> 2 lakh people die every year because of lack of access to safe drinking water.

Some of the factors that contribute to this water stress are - <sup>Firstly</sup> the unscientific use of land and the overexploitation of water resources. This happens because of poorly planned development, rapid urbanization, deforestation, population explosion etc. Secondly, environmental pollution has caused the deterioration of river, lake, ponds' water quality, further exacerbating the water crisis. Further, Climate Change has lent an unpredictability to climate phenomenon that makes developmental planning for water use difficult.

This has resulted in a situation of declining groundwater levels, drying of patches of even perennial rivers like Godavari and Ganga, <sup>(as a result)</sup> and falling levels of per capita availability of water, which is expected to become half by 2030 (World Bank). In 2016, a drought affected 25% of Indians <sup>in 10 states,</sup> severely affecting Gujarat and Maharashtra.

In such a severe crisis, our efforts in poverty alleviation programmes and progress made will be lost. Because scarcity of water increases <sup>its</sup> expense, limits accessibility, and will play a role in exacerbating <sup>social and economic</sup> inequalities. Moreover, permanent damage to the ecosystem ~~balance~~ <sup>ecological cycle</sup> will reduce ecosystem services such as forests, waterbodies, etc. <sup>biodiversity</sup> services that money cannot replace (like water and air filtration, food and nutrition from forest etc).

To avert this crisis, the government must teach people the importance of 'Valuing Water' (Theme of 2020 World Water Day), and the three Rs - Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Sustainable and water efficient irrigation methods, <sup>and adopt cropping patterns suitable for agro-climatic cond.</sup> in agriculture and water use in industry will help. Apart from strengthening a policy of preventing pollution, we must revive waterbodies. If we treat the issue of water management in a timely, informed and participatory manner, then we can secure 'sustainable' development, <sup>SDG 1 (Zero Poverty),</sup>