

# **Village Seechewal**

## **District Jalandhar - Punjab**



**--Thematic Area of Documentation--**

# **Rural Sanitation**

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# Documentation of Best Practices on Rural Sanitation

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## Gram Panchayat Seechewal District Jalandhar - Punjab

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## Abbreviations

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<b>PRI</b> s	Panchayati Raj Institutions
<b>TSC</b>	Total Sanitation Campaign
<b>CAA</b>	Constitutional Amendment Act
<b>NBA</b>	Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan
<b>SBM</b>	Swacch Bharat Mission
<b>MGNREGS</b>	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
<b>GP</b>	Gram Panchayat
<b>CRRID</b>	Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development
<b>NIRD&amp;PR</b>	National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
<b>ER</b>	Elected Representatives
<b>SLWM</b>	Solid and Liquid Waste Management
<b>IHHL</b>	Individual Household latrine

## **Executive Summary**

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The present village of Seechewal, have been a obvious selection for the documentation of best practices under the thematic area of Rural Sanitation from the state of Punjab, as it has been already established itself as a milestone in the country for being the unique model for community led drive for Rural Sanitation and Solid & Liquid waste management in the state of Punjab. This village and its voluntarily community led movement for the rejuvenation of local water bodies and treatment of liquid waste and other such eco-friendly activities under the able leadership of Saint Balbir Singh Seechewal has garnered a commendable recognition from the world over.

### **Methodology**

A two member's field team led by the study coordinator visited the village and interacted with the elected members of the panchayat, members of gram sabha and village level functionaries in order to assess and document the process through which this best practices have been achieved by the village. Focus Group Discussions and meeting were held with various stakeholders to gain first hand impressions of the motivation and key activities which has not only led the entire community to actively participate in the drive but also to sustain this model throughout the last 17 years. The research team also visited the schools in the village and interacted with the students. Team also verified the usage of toilets by visiting many households in the village particularly of Scheduled caste and backward classes

### **Situation before**

Seechewal village was plagued with numerous problems & issues related to sanitation, solid and liquid waste management, dying ponds, poor outlet of waste water and drains, poor cleanliness and other such maleficent factors of poor sanitation all around the village. It was the period when rural development and Panchayati raj system was in its childhood stage and TSC and other rural sanitation programme was in their infant stages. Moreover, very little emphasis was given on rural sanitation and only few funds were allocated on this issue. One of the main hindrances was also the mindset of the government machinery as well as the rural masses as they were very ignorant of these factors.

### **Activities carried out for Best Practice**

Sant Seechewal has devised an underground sewerage system which is low-cost and indigenously modelled, but very effective, durable and easy to install have been laid in the village to facilitate the villagers. The Treated water is being used in 17 acres of land in the village itself for irrigational purpose. Sant Seechewal has devised an underground sewerage system which is low-cost and indigenously modelled, but very effective, durable and easy to install have



been laid in the village to facilitate the villagers. The Treated water is being used in 17 acres of land in the village itself for irrigational purpose.

The Seechewal village has also taken specific measures to manage its solid waste by installing a solid waste management plant outside the village. The location of this plant was specially designed in way that no harm would be done to nearby habitations. A specially designed machine has been installs in the parameter of this plant, which segregates solid wastes into inorganic and organic material. Further, segregated organic material would later used as manure by the villagers. The inorganic material such as plastic, iron, or other such items which cannot be converted into manure, segregated for further treatment and disposal. Apart from these, several other initiatives with regards to toilets construction in village, overall cleanliness in village and plantation works have been also carried out in the village.

### **Learning outcomes**

The village Seechewal has been a marvellous example of role of community participation in the development of any area. However, the evidences collected through the study of this village have suggested that panchayats with the assistance of government machinery and civil organisations, can approach religious and spiritual figures to led and participate in their local sanitation movement. It is also recommended that exposure visit of teams consisting of PRI members and functionaries, members of civil society organisations and other stakeholders such as prominent gram sabha members and youth should visit the Seechewal village in order to observe and learn the best practice for replication with minor changes or additions as per their local needs and suitability.

**Introduction:**

The Indian state of Punjab lies in the northern part of country. It is bordered by the Indian states of Jammu and Kashmir to north, Himachal Pradesh to the south and southeast, Rajasthan to its southwest and it also share its international border with Pakistan to its western part. Punjab means the Land of Five Rivers ('*PUNJ*' means five and 'AAB' means river) which refers to the five rivers flowing through the erstwhile joint Punjab before the partition of India in 1947; Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Satluj and Beas. Punjab state covers an area of 50,362 square kilometres which is hardly 1.5 percent of the total geographical area of country. It has a population of 2.77 crores with more than 62 percent of them concentrated in the rural areas with Sikhism as its main religion with the highest number of Sikh population in the nation. The state has more than 13 thousand gram panchayats. Geographically and culturally, the state is divided into three regions: Malwa (region south of river Satluj), Bist Doab or Doaba (region between the rivers Satluj and Beas) and Majha region (west of river Beas).

Agriculture is the largest occupation in Punjab and it is the largest provider of wheat in the nation. The state has led the country's Green Revolution of the 1960s and earned for itself the distinction of becoming 'Granary of India' or 'India's bread- basket'. However, Punjab like other states of India and the whole world today is facing a great environmental crisis. With the continuous rotation of wheat & paddy cropping pattern, the soil and water of Punjab have been degraded and depleted. The ground water level of Punjab is depleting rapidly due to ongoing indiscriminate tapping of it for irrigation purposes. All the natural water sources are polluted due to dumping of untreated and poisonous industrial and domestic wastage into them. As a result of this, people and the land, at large are suffering from various problems. The same scenario was common in a village where land and water was polluted and

people were indifferent to the prevailing situation. However, things were about to change when a Spiritual leader along with his followers decided to change the ongoing course of actions and established a role model for the entire country.

Around 2000-2001, a mass movement going in the central part of the rural Punjab in India, caught the attention of nation, when thousand of self-less volunteers (*Sangat /Karsewak*) flocked the Seechewal village and its nearby areas to contribute their services in the cleaning of the Holy Kali Bein river. This community driven movement has since transformed an entire region into an eco-friendly paradise. An unknown religious leader namely Saint Balbir Singh Seechewal had been the main inspiration of this drive with a vision ahead of his time and sheer determination which has achieved the unthinkable and has since marvelled with the passage of time. The unprecedented transformation of village Seechewal and Kali Bein river has created a landmark in the rural India with no parallel contemporary example in the liquid waste management and rejuvenation of dying local water bodies. The outcomes and other activities resulted from this movement has shown the world that a dedicated flocks of volunteers can create an ecological heaven with their bare hands without any government aid and machinery.

The village Seechewal became the headquarter of this movement and thus all the major activities itself became integral part of the village like Solid waste management plant, community forestry and plantation, waste water treatment plant, organic manure, proper outlay of drainage/sewer and other such instrument of safe sanitation procedures in any developed area and for the well being and healthy environment for any society.



### **Selection of Village:**

To select a village for the documentation of best practices under the thematic area of Rural Sanitation from the state of Punjab, several villages were identified with the consultation of Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Government of Punjab. The present village of Seechewal, have been a obvious selection under the study as it has been already established itself as a milestone in the country for being the unique model for community led drive for Rural Sanitation and Solid & Liquid waste management in the state of Punjab. This village and its voluntarily community led movement for the rejuvenation of local water bodies and treatment of liquid waste and other such eco-friendly activities under the able leadership of Saint Balbir Singh Seechewal has garnered a commendable recognition from the world over. The efforts done and their outcomes have been well documented by various organisations of repute and has inspired many other villages to adopt and replicate this model all over the country as per their suitability. .

### **Methodology:**

A two member's field team led by the study coordinator visited the village and interacted with the elected members of the panchayat, members of gram sabha and village level functionaries in order to assess and document the process through which this best practices have been achieved by the village. Focus Group Discussions and meeting were held with various stakeholders to gain first hand impressions of the motivation and key activities which has not only led the entire community to actively participate in the drive but also to sustain this model throughout the last 17 years. The research team also visited the schools in the village and interacted with the students. Team also verified the usage of toilets by visiting many households in the village particularly of Scheduled caste and backward classes. The team also visited ponds, parks, playgrounds, plantation work, Anganwari centre, community

places and solid & liquid waste treatment plants in the village during their visit. During this, all the activities were well documented through videography and photography. The efforts to make village unique and a role model on sanitation purpose, the contribution of each and every stakeholders has been recorded and discussed in this report. The team examined the factors which led the initiatives in terms of a community-based conservation and to understand the village's initiative and its participatory nature. The study also assessed the initiative in terms of environmental, economic and social dimensions, and examined the opportunity of extending the positive impacts of this best practice to other areas of Punjab and country.

### **Location of the village:**

The Seechewal village is situated in the Lohian block of Jalandhar District in the state of Punjab. It is located 12 kilometres from Sultanpur Lodhi, 30 kilometres from district headquarter Jalandhar and 174 kilometres from state capital Chandigarh. Agriculture is the main profession of the people of village and majority of them follows Sikhism with great devout.

### **History of the village:**

The villagers during FGD conducted in the village reported that the village has its historic origins but any conclusive evidences on the history of the village are not available at any platform. However, the village has been situated near the Kali Bein river, which has its religious significance among the Sikh followers. A religious place (Math) namely, **Nirmal Kuteya** is also being situated nearby the Seechewal village, which has a rich history and tradition of spiritualism and ascetics preaching. However, It is difficult to know the detail of times when *Nirmala* saints who came to be associated with the place from old times. Saint Balbir Singh Seechewal is the present Nirmal Kuteya head, who has played a central role in accomplishment of best practices by this village.

### **Demographic Portfolio:**

The Seechewal is a medium size village and it is located in the Shahkot tehsil of Jalandhar district, Punjab. There are total 238 numbers of households in the village. Village has a total population of 1270 and out of which 626 are males while remaining 644 are females. The schedule caste population constitutes a 23.78 percent of total population in the village. The average sex ratio of village is 1029 which is higher than Punjab state average of 895. Literacy rate of village is 74.98 percent as compared to state average of 75.84 percent. In the village, out of total population, 330 (93.94%) were engaged in a farm related work activities, which is quite common in the region as RNFE activities are very few in the village and adjoining areas.



**Gram Panchayat Details:**

The present gram panchayat came into being after the election in the year 2013. There are five ward members (Panch), and one Sarpanch in the gram panchayat body. Ms. Rajwant Kaur has been elected as Sarpanch of the village in 2013. Before her term, Saint Balbir Singh Seechewal was the Sarpanch of this village, who had led the eco-sanitation movement as discussed before in the area. He was twice unanimously elected as Sarpanch of the village. But in last panchayat elections, the seat got reserved for the women candidate, Hence, 23 years old, Ms. Rajwant Kaur, who is young and a post graduate and has been elected unopposed ahead of the scheduled panchayat elections by villagers in 2013.

**Financial Outlay used for Best Practice:**

Since the mass movement of cleaning of river kali bein along with related ecological and sanitational activities had its epicentre at Seechewal village and since it was totally driven by community participation, hence, the financial resources used for this drive were mainly came from volunteer funds. All the activities carried out in the movement have its deep religious sentiments among the hearts of volunteers hence majority of them had donated and financially helped in this drive. The movement leader, Saint Balbir Singh Seechewal, had carried out all the activities, whether it was related to management of liquid waste or solid waste or any other related activities, it was largely met with the donated funds given by the volunteers. It may also be noted that large number of volunteers provided free labour which decreased the cost outlay of all the activities carried out within this drive. The gram panchayat has not received any funds from the SBM (G) within the last three years as per the records of the GP. This is also further to be informed that the activities related to the best practice have been duly completed long before (2001-2010) the duration of present context.



### **Situation before the Best Practice:**

Before 1999-2000, Seechewal was just another sleepy village like elsewhere in the country with its traditional setting of rural households and extended farmlands in the Doaba region of the Punjab. The entire region and nearby areas of this village has no industrial development, hence, avenue of employments are very few and majority of population is solely relying on agriculture.

In such scenario, Seechewal village become a motivational model all over the country for rejuvenating a local river namely Kali Bein which is a tributary of Beas river and it is a sacred river for many of the Sikh devotees in entire region. The River and its adjoining areas were literally a dustbin and dumping site of solid and liquid wastes from nearby villages from many of the last decades. This situation has not only destroyed and devastated an entire ecological balance in the region but it has also adversely affected the mindset of Sikh devotees as this river is sacred to them as their First Guru, *Guru Nanak Dev Ji* had spent their few years nearby this river. As like any other nearby village to Kali Bein river at that time, Seechewal village was also plagued with numerous problems & issues related to sanitation, solid and liquid waste management, dying ponds, poor outlet of waste water and drains, poor cleanliness and other such maleficent factors of poor sanitation all around the village. It was the period when rural development and Panchayati raj system was in its childhood stage and TSC and other rural sanitation programme was in their infant stages. Moreover, very little emphasis was given on rural sanitation and only few funds were allocated on this issue. One of the main hindrances was also the mindset of the government machinery as well as the rural masses as they were very ignorant of these factors.

### **Key Person Responsible for the Best Practice:**

Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal widely popular as “Eco-Baba” and “Welfare Baba” has a key role in making Seechewal village an exceptional model in implementing various activities concerning rural sanitation, solid and liquid waste and eco-friendly activities and social work related to education etc. He was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1962 at this very village of Seechewal in district Jalandhar, Punjab. He has multiple achievements to his credit in the fields of environmental conservation, social reform, and extension of education and economic development of backward areas of Punjab. His work in all these fields is of great dimensions and being totally welfare in nature without any biased and any self-interest.

He mobilized numberless people (Sangat) round the globe for the voluntary kar sewa of rejuvenation of Guru Nanak Dev Ji’s historic river Kali Bein, 160-km long tributary of the Beas, flowing through Doaba, the fertile central part of Punjab, known as the Granary of India. When Sant Seechewal began the kar sewa in July 2000, the Kali Bein river was on the verge of death due to worst type of domestic and industrial pollution. Sant Seechewal, with the help of his Sangat, has cleared hyacinth and silt out of the bed of river, restored flow of clean water in it and beautified it with flowers and fruit trees, bathing ghats and bricked roads on its banks, transforming it into a ecological heaven where religious pilgrims, students and tourists from India and abroad come daily in large numbers to have a glimpse of its beauty.

With restoration of its water flow thousands of hectares of land have been reclaimed from water-logging in Tehsil Dasuya of Hoshiarpur District, from desertification in Kapurthala district, and from floods in the Mand area of confluence of Beas and Satluj rivers. It has also improved the quality of ground water and promoted recharging of water table in whole Doaba area. Sant Seechewal’s kar sewa of the river, thus, has proved significantly beneficial for the people of Punjab, both economically and environmentally.

One more important offshoot of this movement has been the formation of Holy Bein Project Committee, a joint venture of Punjab Government and Sant Seechewal for making the river totally pollution-free by making alternative arrangements for the sewage waters of villages and towns in Doaba on pattern of Sant Seechewal's recommendations.

Convinced by originality of Sant Seechewal's eco-friendly model of development, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the former President of India, came twice (in April 2006 and July 2008) to visit the main sites of kar sewa of Kali Bein river. In his many national and international speeches, he praised Sant Seechewal's for his efforts for eco-friendly activities and his by and large contribution to the nation. He counted it as one of the nine greatest achievements of India. Applauding Sant Seechewal's work as a "Noble Mission," he extended an invitation to Sant Ji for leading a similar campaign for the renovation of utterly polluted Jamuna river.

Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal has been able to do wonders with the cooperation of masses for whom he has become an immense source of inspiration. His religious appeal also leads people to the service of suffering humanity and conservation of environment. In order to awaken the people for the protection of natural waters sources, Sant Seechewal led an Inter-State Awareness March (in Punjab and Rajasthan) in 2009, in which a large number of people marched along the rivers of Punjab and Rajasthan Canal to make the people aware of the causes of water pollution and solution to the problem. In 2008 and 2011, he organized a large mass movement for making pollution-free the utterly polluted Kala Sanghia drain of Jalandhar. with a view to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance, superstition, poverty and atrocities against women, he has established schools, technical centres and degree colleges at different places (Seechewal, Talwandi Madho, Sultanpur Lodhi etc.), where not only advanced and technical education is provided at a very low cost to the girls and the poor slum dwellers, but moral and religious values are also

taught to the students in order to make them better and balanced human beings

Patron of many sports organizations in Punjab, Sant Seechewal is a great promoter of sports. Regularly does he hold national and international level sports tournaments at Sports Stadium of Seechewal to take part in which teams of Volleyball, Kabaddi, Hockey, Wrestling, tug-of-war and other games come from far and wide. Such sports activities of Sant Seechewal are proving extremely useful in turning youth away from drugs and other evils, making them aware of their positive energy and leading them towards a better and bright future.

A crusader for environment, Sant Seechewal has established plant nurseries at Seechewal and Sultanpur Lodhi where one lakh plants are distributed annually free of cost among the people as Prasad of the Guru, which the people receive and plant with reverence and religious devotion. As a result of these efforts Doaba area is turning into a lush green belt. Recognizing the significance of Sant Seechewal's attempts at environmental conservation, U.N.O. invited him to Copenhagen conference on Climate Change. He was also invited to attend Windsor conference on Global Warming.

A saintly figure, Sant Seechewal is not averse to use of science for the benefit of society. He has been using the modern technology (computers, machines such as tractors, cranes, boats, etc.) to complement the manual kar sewa. For spreading environmental awareness among the people, he has started a community radio, Avtar Radio FM 90.4 at Seechewal. He has also established a Multi-Media Museum at Sultanpur Lodhi. Both these projects are proving very useful for spread of awareness among the masses.

Many national and international organizations have showered honours on him for his achievements in different fields of environmental upgradation and public welfare. Internationally renowned magazine Time has acclaimed Sant



Seechewal as "Hero of Environment". He is the only Indian and only Asian to get this honour. Indian media (including Jalandhar Doordarshan, Dainik Jagran, Punjab Kesari, Dainik Bhaskar and many other groups of newspapers) have also felicitated him with their prestigious awards.

The President of India bestowed on him "Nirmal Gram Puraskar" for his distinguished work as the Sarpanch (Head) of his village Seechewal. Punjab Govt. honoured him with the State Award. Punjab Pollution Control Board has also honoured him for his outstanding work in the field of environment. For his charitable activities, Various universities and educational institutions have also honoured him for his unique contribution to environmental conservation. Punjabi University Patiala has bestowed on him honorary degree of D.Litt. for his achievements. Guru Jhambeshwara Univ. of Science and Technology Hisar honoured him with prestigious "Madhu Bhasin Award". Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College New Delhi gave him "Shan-e-Sikhi Award." Punjab Academy of Sciences has also honoured him with its Fellowship.

Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal, thus, has made a unique contribution to environmental upgradation (by cleaning and renovating a river and setting up a role model and also spreading awareness among the people for control of pollution through community radio and multi-media museum), education (by establishing educational institutions for the poor and needy), development of indigenous techniques, building of roads and opening the way for fast economic growth in the country. His kar sewa practice has also promoted communal harmony, peace and prosperity among the people. Dr. A.P.J. Kalam is justified when he says that every state of India needs a Sant Seechewal.

# Initiation of Activities in village

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In July 2000, the volunteers having been inspired by the immortal Teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, decide to purify and rejuvenate the Kali Bein river as it has religious significance for the Sikhs. Thus, this small drive led by Saint Balbir Singh Seechewal, transformed itself into an mass movement as more and more disciples of Sikhism, environmentalists, non-government organisations, social workers and other like-minded people joined it. All the volunteers with harmony assembled daily in thousands to clean the river and adjoin areas, extracting silt, hyacinth and cleaning all the areas. Later, all the activities and *Kar Sewa* were focused on Seechewal village as it became face of the movement with initiation of following activities at this village;

## **STRATEGIES USED FOR MANAGING LIQUID WASTE IN VILLAGE**

### **Sewerage system**

Sant Seechewal has devised an underground sewerage system which is low-cost and indigenously modelled, but very effective, durable and easy to install have been laid in the village to facilitate the villagers. The efficacy of this system has been attested by its practical installation in more than 50 villages and towns. In this system, sewage waters are stored in a pond, treated in natural way and, then, supplied for agricultural use. This process promotes organic farming and saves farmers' money on fertilizers and irrigation. The farmers of the area who, being crop less and poor, were compelled to commit suicides, are now glad to have a taste of prosperity as a result of transformation of kali Bein river now being effectively used for irrigation purpose.

## Liquid Waste management Plant

- Construction of village sewerage system and its proper outlay to pond outside of the village;
- A filter mash is used to remove objects floating on the surface of water;
- Then the polluted water is taken into three separate wells. In the first, the silt from the sewerage is removed. In the second, fats, oil and ghee are taken away;
- The third well conveys the thus cleaned water in to the main pond;
- The water collected in the pond is cleaned with sun rays;
- On the bank of the pond, on opposite side of the three wells, a motor pump is installed to lift the treated water to send it to fields for irrigation
- The Treated water is being used in 17 acres of land in the village itself for irrigational purpose;
- Plantation has been done around treatment plant;





## **STRATEGIES USED FOR MANAGING SOLID WASTE**

### **Solid Waste Management Plant**

One of the main indicators of sanitation is to manage solid waste with its effective scientific disposal causing minimal harm to the environment and humans. The Seechewal village has also taken specific measures to manage its solid waste by installing a solid waste management plant outside the village. The location of this plant was specially designed in way that no harm would be done to nearby habitations. A specially designed machine has been installs in the parameter of this plant, which segregates solid wastes into inorganic and organic material. Further, segregated organic material would later used as manure by the villagers. The inorganic material such as plastic, iron, or other such items which cannot be converted into manure, segregated for further treatment and disposal.



**Team Visiting Solid Waste Treatment Plant**



### **Rain Recharging Under Seechewal Model;**

Depleting water Table is a matter of major concern today. Most of the Punjab are has been declared as black zone. The Seechewal Model offers and easy solution to the problem of desertification. In the past, drain were constructed to take out the surplus water from the water-logged areas and also to recharge water table in the water scarce ones. But now both these processes have been blocked due to negligence of government and responsible people. The Seechewal model can be very useful in solving this problem. According to this model, thick layers of silt which keep depositing at the river beds over years are removed with collective efforts to promote seepage of water under subsoil layers. It saves the land turning into desert. The removal of silt deposits obstructing water flow in the river also accelerates the speed of flowing out of excess water from wet areas. Saint Seechewal has successfully implemented this model on the Holy Bein for the last about two decades and now in May 2017 on Sultanpur Drain. It has shown very positive results as water table in the area around this drain is coming up fast.





### **Tree Plantation and Community Forestry;**

Human life cannot be imagined without trees. They are the very basis of our life. But today man has become so selfish that instead of planning more trees he is rather felling them down thus disturbing the balance of eco-system. As a result various diseases have started engulfing men, animals and crops. To solve this problem, villagers with the blessings of Baba Ji have initiated a mass drive for planting trees in the Seechewal village and adjoining areas. At village, high quality horticulture nurseries have been established where fruit and flower saplings are prepared and distributed among the people free of cost. Villagers has executed large scale programmes for planting trees on the roadsides and river banks and in other waste lands such as cremation grounds, and even in the courtyard of the houses of people.



Team visiting sampling nursery in the village

### **Construction of Parks**

Throughout the village Seechewal, barren land and other community land, Shamlat land has been transformed into beautiful parks. A unique feature was found by the visiting team when they visited the Shamsan ghat of the village and to their pleasure; it was loaded with mango trees all around and was very beautifully constructed.

### **Educational Institutes**

In April 1999, a school was started in the newly established building in the precincts of Nirmal Kuteyan in Seechewal village. The number of students went on increasing gradually. The school is affiliated from Punjab School Education Board. A large number of poor, needy and orphan students are availing of boarding and lodging facilities.

### **Sports Complex**

Saint Balbir Singh Ji believes that a comprehensive personality is a necessary precondition for man's communion with the Almighty. He values very high the overall development man for which man is required to be healthy both mentally and physically. It is well said that a sound mind can live only in a sound body. While Baba Ji has done a lot for creating mental and spiritual health among the *Gursangat* steps have also been taken for the improvement of their physical health.



### **Use of Mass Communication Methods:**

In order to spread the environmental message to the remote and nearby backward areas and other corners of the Punjab satte, Saint Balbir Singh Seechewal has established *Avtar Community Radio* (FM 90.4) on the premises of Saint Singh Memorial College in Seechewal village. This was the first community radio established in the rural area by and for the rural people. Avtar Radio is being run not by professional radio journalists or technicians but by the students of Saint Avtar Singh Memorial College, Seechewal.

This radio channel is by and large dedicated to environment, education and health & sanitation. Avtar Community Radio is playing important role in spreading environmental and sanitation awareness, moral along with technical education, message of eradication of social evils and superstitions, communal harmony and women's empowerment.



### **Renowned Personalities visited Seechewal village;**

As discussed previously, the Seechewal village with its unique features and activities related to the sanitation and environment friendly issues attracted a lot of national and international attention due to which prominent personalities and dignitaries visited the village for studying the model adopted by the village. Some of them are as follows;

1. Uma Bharti, Central Minister of water Resource Development Department, visited Seechewal village on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2015. She was so much impressed by the model that she declared to adopt it in Ganga Mission and also decided to send panchayats of villages situated along the Ganga to see the Seechewal model,
2. Chief Minister of Haryana saw visited Seechewal village on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2016, and he said that the model would be used in Haryana too.
3. A special team of Government of India came to analyse the model on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2016 for studying its viability for replicating in other parts of the country.
4. Chief Minister of Delhi, Shri Arvind Kejriwal came to see the Seechewal village. he was very impressed by the efficiency of Seechewal Model that he declared that his government would prepare a blue-print for cleaning of the Yamuna river on the basis of Seechewal Model
5. Shri S.K. Sandhu OSD to chief Minister of Punjab, made a special visit to Seechewal village for studying the working of the model. After the minute observation of the model, he said that this model could be implemented in all villages of Punjab.
6. Almost 800 village panchayats from five states namely Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal under Ganga mission Project has visited Seechewal village and nearby areas to see the model and learn from it.

7. Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri Nitish Kumar visited the liquid waste treatment plant at Seechewal village during his visit of study Seechewal Model. He declared that he would replicate it in Bihar state. He said that now he has found in Seechewal Model a solution to the problem of polluted waters.

# Learning Outcomes

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Lessons learned in the process of documenting accelerated implementation of evidence-based best practices has compelling results which needs to be replicated at various other similar avenues which are lagging behind in sanitation coverage. The village Seechewal has been a marvellous example of role of community participation in the development of any area. However, the evidences collected through the study of this village have concluded that following two aspects can be replicated at state and national level for achieving comprehensive success in sanitation in country;

## **1. Engagement of Religious Leaders for escalating Sanitation Activities**

*Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal*, whose has been a role model for many and has gained recognition all over the world for his efforts in transforming his native village and adjoining area for rejuvenating traditional water bodies and introducing effective solid and liquid waste management in the village. His innovative efforts and approach now famous as *Seechewal Model* has been rigorously studied and replicated at various places across the globe. One of his main key efforts was to motivate the local community and brought them in numbers to participate with him in his movement without any indiscrimination on the basis of caste, gender and creed. Being a religious leader, his call was accepted by the society on mass scale without any biased approach.

Thus, it is suggested that panchayats with the assistance of government machinery and civil organisations, can approach religious and spiritual figures to led and participate in their local sanitation movement. This in turn, would have long lasting effects on the mindset of the local community and it would certainly motivate them to join this drive with the motivation of their spiritual

leaders. This success story can be spread to larger parts of the country as India being very religious society; the impact and call from religious and spiritual heads of different faiths can trigger the long desired mass community participation in the sanitation movement at ground level.

## **2. Exposure Visits**

The Seechewal village has shown tremendous achievement in overall sanitation process including ODF, solid and liquid waste management, school and community sanitation and other similar eco-friendly activities with the efforts of *Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal ji* and local community motivated by him. Since, the infrastructures and related model created by him in achieving progress in sanitation and eco-friendly activities can be a lesson for others to replicate similar activities in their respective areas, It is suggested that exposure visit of teams consisting of PRI members and functionaries, members of civil society organisations and other stakeholders such as prominent gram sabha members and youth, should visit the Seechewal village in order to observe and learn the best practice for replication with minor changes or additions as per their local needs and suitability.

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