PREFACE

In this study I have tried to probe into the aspects of health culture among the slum dwellers with the understanding that slum is a sub-cultural group of the larger socio-cultural milieu. Individuals and households of the slum setting practice their health activities with different sets of economic, social, and cultural resources. In the face of a new socio-economic and physical environment, the slum dwellers perpetuate the cultural and institutional health care resources available and accessible to them and develop a particular health behavioural pattern of coping with urban life. The main objective of the study is to focus upon the dynamics of health culture and to investigate and analyse how the different social forces are determined within the larger socio-economic conditions leading to a change in the slum environment and more precisely the quality of life of the people. Within this context, quality of life is considered in terms of it’s social and physical dimensions.

An attempt has been made to identify the process through which the slum dwellers overcome their socio-economic disadvantage. This is considered a vital element in their development process of health culture. In their struggle to overcome the obstacles in the way of such development the slum dwellers establish their existing health cultural pattern as a transactional relationship with the larger social system of the city through the medium of values, traditions, behaviour pattern and network of social relationships which they perpetuate in the context of health care activities. It is in the way of their economic activities that they develop to the functioning of the urban health system development on a mixture of modern and traditional lines which meets the health needs of the majority of the population. This is how they become a sub-system of the total health system of urban settings and not marginal to its functioning.

The relevance of the study does not lie only in the perpetuation of health culture. The significance rests upon the analysis of the process through which the slum dwellers, in the complex urban environment, strive to achieve a better quality of life, if not for themselves, then, at least, for their children.