PREFACE

Malnourished children are more likely to grow into malnourished adults who face heightened risks of disease and death. The age group of school-age children suffers from levels of stunting and underweight, and in some regions, wasting, that are comparable with pre-school children. Stunted children enroll late into school and are probably less likely to complete their schooling. The impact of school feeding, particularly the provision of Mid-day-Meal has been shown to result in increased attendance and cognitive function among already undernourished school children thus conferring the most benefit to those most in need.

Children of school age face health and nutrition problems that may affect their individual physical development, their capacity to attend school and their ability to learn. Health and nutrition problems are closely related to socio-economic status. The present study is a humble attempt to explore the bearing of socio-economic aspects on nutrition and health problems of school going children.

The locale of the study has been confined to Meerut city and outskirt rural areas only. The sample of 400 school going children is selected on a random sampling basis from children studying in schools up to junior high school standard situated at Meerut. Out of four schools, two are from urban areas and another two are selected from outskirt rural areas.
The study reveals that majority of the mal-nourished respondent belongs to the group whose dietary intake is less or below the standard requirement, children having short height or stunted are cent percent mal-nourished and more than three-fourth of the respondent children, who are under-weight for height or wasted, found mal-nourished. The nutritional status is downward with the growing age of the children, majority of the children from higher birth-order are mal-nourished, there is higher nutritional problem among females in comparison to male Childs, almost two-third children from lower castes are mal-nourished and this trend is down-ward in higher castes, majority of children are mal-nourished from rural back-ground. It is more prone in joint families. The mal-nutrition in children is increasing as the size of the family increases.

There is a significant association between educational status of parents and more than two-third of moderately mal-nourished children belong whose fathers are either illiterate or educated up to High school level, eight out of every ten moderately mal-nourished children are among them whose mothers are either illiterate or educated up to High School level.

Nutritional status is also affected with routine habits of the children. The children whose any one of the family member is suffering from the infectious disease or mental retardation are more prone to mal-nutrition. The quantum of mal-nourished children is more among the respondents who are taking treatment from quakes of their nearby areas. Children whose parents were irregular, casual or careless against vaccination are mal-nourished in majority.
Nutritional status has a greater significance over family income, children whose fathers are either labourer or engaged in agricultural work are mostly mal-nourished, the cent percent children whose mothers doing job as labourer are found mal-nourished, so the occupation of the parents also has a greater significance over nutritional status of children. The facilities in living standard and life style are also playing major roles.

The consequences of mal-nutrition as per responses from class teacher also confirm their poor performance in the class room. The mal-nourished children are irregular in classroom, not taking proper interest in their study, less curious about things, not active in sports, very poor in extra curricular activities in their school. They are poor in creativity and their motivation ability is also poor.

The study shows that family income, education of parents and above all the occupation of the parents have greater significance on nutritional status. Improper calories intake in the diet is the main cause of the mal-nutrition among children. There is a lack of awareness among parents regarding proper vaccination and periodical heath check-ups at growing age. Children, who are not regular in their habits in personal hygiene and sanitation, are more prone to mal-nutrition. In the Mid-day-Meal programme children are reluctant due to the quality of the food provided. There is a need for the close monitoring of Mid-day-Meal and other Governmental programmes related to health of children.
(iv)

(SADHANA SAXENA)