

Despite its transformative potential, the mid-day meal scheme is perceived as charity, not a civic responsibility. Comment.

Two decades passed since Mid-Day Meal Scheme, under MHRD, was implemented. It was well recognized & praised by world organisations such as WHO, UNICEF etc for its transformative nature. However recent incidents like mixing 1 litre milk in a bucket of water to serve 80 children, serving chappathis with salt etc tells us the real situation we are in.

Mid day Meal Scheme as Civic Responsibility

This scheme has transformed thousands of lives as enshrined in the Art. 21 A (Right to Education) of Indian Constitution.

- 1) Enrollment ratio: It has enhanced the enrollment in all level of education as it evident census 2011.
- 2) Improved Nutrition level & reduced hunger
Among school going (Class I to VIII) it had a positive health impact.
- 3) Tool to Right to Education: Used as tool to include socio-economically backward communities in the education system.

4) Model for the world: Recognized, Praised & awarded by many world organisations for its Inclusive nature

Middle meal Scheme as Charity

Government Schools are seen to be for poor people - even the public institutions & State officials take it as a scheme to reduce poverty.

5) Cheap food $\Rightarrow$ Bad food $\Rightarrow$ food poisoning

11th grade variety of vegetables, good grains are allocated under National Food Security Act which leads to bad foods & food poisoning

6) Inadequate Infrastructure

Underpaid cook, unavailable helper & bad infrastructure leads to compromise in the quality of food being served.

7) Caste bias & discrimination: Children from higher class were asked, by parents, to have food separately, brought by them.

To make this scheme a real transformative one, we have to make it in the curriculum as well as in the day routine as Tamil Nadu schools were used to display the foods for the entire week in a display and feedback by children to the Head Staff. And School, ~~let~~ is not a place for discrimination, it should be handled under Prevention of Atrocities Act 1986