INTRODUCTION

Children are the greatest asset a nation can invest in. They are considered to be the torchbearers and architects of the future. The human resource dimension of the future is determined by the physical and mental well being of today's children. It is lightly said that "Child is the father of Man." The need for nurturing today's child with the most congenial growing environment cannot be overemphasized. The growth and quality of tomorrow's adults must remain the prime concern of every society that envisages a better future for itself.

"A happy child is a nation's pride" was the slogan of the International Year of the Child adopted by the United Nations, which exhorted all member nations to make concerted efforts to improve the quality of life of their children. In several Asian and Latin American countries young children's development and education are being given high priority by the governments. In order to attain full development of a nation all its human resources, which are the ultimate agents of change and development, must be fully trained. It is in this very ideology and spirit that the government of India has committed itself to the investment in young children as a future vital resource of the country.

In today's interdependent world where global competition is at its peak, nations can no longer seclude themselves in cultural islands. Nations, which were once bitter enemies during the Cold War, engage in cooperative ventures not only on earth but even in space. No country can afford the fortune or luxury of isolation. As the global community is becoming closer and closer we want our
young to grow up to meet the challenges of tomorrow and be effective actors in the global arena. The precious resources of any country especially of the third world countries are their children. They are the pride and joy of today and the hope and dream of tomorrow. So the wisest and the most prudent investment of any nation is taking care of its own children, helping them develop as fully functioning individuals while maximising the individual potentialities. As the U.N. Assembly has declared "The mankind owes to the child the best it has to give".

**Significance of the Family**

Throughout history philosophers have speculated at length about the nature of children and how they should be reared. Three such philosophical perspectives are based on the notions of original sin, tabula rasa, and innate goodness. In accordance with the concept of original sin, during middle ages the goal of child rearing was salvation, which was believed to remove sin from the child's life. Tabula rasa view was proposed by the English philosopher John Locke who argued that children are not innately bad, but instead they are like a 'blank tablet'. Locke believed that childhood experiences are important in determining adult characteristics. He advised parents to spend time with their children and help them become contributing members of society. In the eighteenth century, the innate goodness view was presented by the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, who stressed that children are inherently good and that they should be permitted to grow naturally with little parental monitoring or constraint.
During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the growing recognition of the importance of childhood led to new ways of studying children's behaviour. As child development has evolved as a discipline, several issues about the nature of human development have emerged and endured. Interest in the nature of children and the ways to improve their well-being have continued to be important concerns of our society. We now conceive of childhood as a highly eventful and unique period of life that lays an important foundation for the adult years and is highly differentiated from them. In most approaches to childhood, distinct periods are identified in which special skills are mastered and new life tasks are confronted. Childhood is no longer seen as an inconvenient "waiting" period during which adults must suffer the incompetencies of the young. We now value childhood as a special time of growth and change, and invest great resources in caring for and educating our children. During the past few decades a rejuvenated interest has been shown in understanding the interplay of various variables in the wholesome development of the child.

Human development takes place in many forms such as physical, cognitive and psychosocial. Physical development includes changes in the body (in the brain, sense organs, muscles, bones, motor skills, etc.). Cognitive development has to do with changes in reasoning, thinking, learning, etc. Psychosocial development concerns changes in feelings or emotions, relationships with other people such as family members, peers and teachers, as well as development of one's own personality, social skills and competence, self esteem and sense of self.
Nature creates the human organism, but it is society that shapes the person (Balclridge, 1980). A child is born and brought up in a social system. The entire social system is discussed in terms of its subsystems by Bronfenbrenner (1979). He talks of three subsystems, namely, micro, meso and macro systems. The micro system comprises, according to him, the child's family and his immediate neighbourhood. From the time of recognizing his mother, the child slowly gets to know his surroundings including people, values, and rules of behaviour: in short, he or she acquires all the characteristics that are attributed to a social being. Child's development occurs through interaction with people and things. According to sociologists and developmental psychologists this process of getting to know his surrounding and learning from it is called the socialization process. Family is the basic and universal social institution and the structure through which important social needs are met.

George Bernard Shaw (1944) wrote: "Parenting is a very important profession but no test of fitness for it is ever imposed in the interest of children." Since children spend the early formative years with the parents, especially the mothers, the responsibility of the mother in moulding the young into a well-rounded, socially competent individual cannot be understated. In the extended family system parenting was used to be shared by grand parents, uncles, aunts and siblings. In the nuclear family system parenting is becoming a hard task especially if the mother is employed. The double-burden of the working mothers only underscores the changing roles of parents in the upbringing of their children.
The journey through the human life span is indeed fascinating. Scholars around the world are making new discoveries and developing new insights into every period of the human life cycle at a much faster pace than in previous decades. The mainstream theories in child development may be summarised under four headings:

I. Psychodynamic Perspective

The Psychodynamic Perspective is also known as psychoanalytic view. Freud, Adler, Erikson and others represent this perspective.

Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, based his theory on two fundamental premises. The first, the genetic approach, emphasizes that early childhood experiences play a critical role in shaping one’s development. In fact Freud believed that the bare foundations of an individual’s development were laid down by the tender age of 5. The second premise is that a certain amount of sexual energy (libido) is present at birth and thereafter it progresses through a series of psychosexual stages that is rooted in the instinctual process of the organism. Freud hypothesized a series of five sequential stages of personality development: oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital. According to this theory, at any particular point in the developmental sequence, some region of the body seeks objects or activities to produce pleasurable tension. Psychosexual development is a biologically determined sequence invariant in its order of unfolding and characteristic of all persons regardless of their cultural heritage.
The individual's social experiences at each stage, presumably, leave some permanent residue in the form of attitudes, traits and values acquired at that stage. Parental role, especially, the role of mother during these stages is highly emphasized.

The logic of this formulation was explained by Freud in terms of two factors: frustration and over-indulgence. In the case of frustration, the child's psychosexual needs are thwarted by the mothering one and thus fail to be optimally gratified. In the case of over indulgence, the parents provide little or no incentive for the child to master internal functions and thus instill feelings of dependence and incompetence. The child's competence in the social arena depends on his ability to learn the appropriate sex role by identifying with the same sex parent and negotiating well with the opposite sex parent.

Adler began as an ardent supporter of Freud but later moved away from him and developed a full-fledged theory of his own known as the individual psychology. Individual psychology regards the individual as socially embedded. "We refuse to recognize and examine an isolated human being" (Adler, 1956). Paramount to Adlerian theory, then, is the conviction that all behaviour occurs in social context, and the essence of human nature can be grasped only through the understanding of social relationships. The basic tenets of his theory consider the individual as a unified and self-consistent entity, striving for perfection.

Adler stressed the importance of family atmospheres and the quality of emotional relationships among members of the family in determining whether or not the child will react passively or actively, constructively or destructively, in the
quest toward perfection. Adler thought children who are pampered or neglected are particularly predisposed to a faulty style of life. The pampered child is one who is excessively spoiled and protected from life's inevitable frustration. Such a child is being deprived of the right to become independent and the chance to learn the requirements of living within a social order. Indulgent parents make it difficult for the child to develop social competence and to become a useful member of society and culture. The child grows to dislike order and develops a hostile attitude towards it.

The neglected child is one who feels unwanted and rejected. Such a child is virtually denied the right to a place in the social order. Rejection arouses resistance in the child, and the child acquires feelings of inferiority and a tendency to withdraw from the implications of social life, leading him to become socially incompetent. Adler pointed out that child rearing practices frequently consist of a continuing alternation between indulgence and rejection. The pampered child often demands undue attention which eventually leads to parental anger and punishment that are often interpreted by the child as rejection; and the child feels humiliated and defeated causing him to develop very low self-esteem, low self confidence and poor social skills, resulting in poor social competence.

Erikson's theory of development called psychosocial theory consists of eight stages throughout life in which children try to understand and relate to the world and to others. Each of Erikson's psychosocial stages centers on an emotional polarity or conflict that children encounter at certain critical periods. The eight stages are as follows:
1. Trust vs. mistrust: (Hope)
2. Autonomy vs. shame and doubt: (Will)
3. Initiative vs. guilt: (Purpose)
4. Industry vs. inferiority: (Competence)
5. Ego identity vs. role confusion: (Fidelity)
6. Intimacy vs. isolation: (Love)
7. Generativity vs. stagnation: (Care)
8. Ego Integrity vs. despair (Wisdom)

Erikson believed that the eight stages are a universal feature of human development. He also assumed that there is some cultural variation in the way that people deal with the problems of each stage and in the possible solutions to their problems. Of these eight stages, the first five are only relevant to the problem being investigated in the present study.

For Erikson, a general sense of trust is the cornerstone of a healthy personality while others regard this same characteristic as "confidence". An infant with a sense of basic 'trust' experiences the social world as a safe and stable place, and people as nurturant and reliable. Erikson believed that the degree to which infants are able to acquire a sense of trust in other people and in the world depends upon the quality of maternal care that they receive. A sense of trust does not depend on the amount of food or the expression of affection the infant receives; rather, it is related to the mother's ability to give her baby a sense of familiarity, consistency, and sameness of experience. Mistrust, on the other
hand, is attributed to a quality of maternal care, which is unreliable, inadequate and rejecting. This fosters in the child a psychosocial attitude of fear, suspicion and apprehension toward the world in general and people in particular that will manifest its ill effects in later stages of personality development. Erikson also feels that a sense of mistrust may be augmented when the mother turns from the baby as the primary focus of her attention or when parents display divergent patterns of child care, lack self-confidence in their role as parents, or have value systems conflicting with culture's dominant life-style which may create an atmosphere of ambiguity for the child.

In autonomy vs. shame and doubt stage, satisfactorily meeting the psychosocial crisis depends primarily on the parents' willingness to gradually allow children freedom to control those activities that affect their lives. At the same time parents must maintain reasonable but firm limits in those areas of children's lives that are either potentially or actually harmful to themselves or destructive to others. Parents must maintain 'degrees of freedom' over the child's growing capacity to exercise choice. Erikson believed attainment of a stable sense of autonomy adds substantially to the child's sense of trust and competence.

In initiative vs. guilt stage whether the children leave this stage favourably or not depends largely upon how parents react to their self-initiated activities: whether children are encouraged to undertake their own activities and are reinforced and not ridiculed or forced to inhibit their fantasy activity. A sense of guilt in children is caused by parents who are unwilling to allow them the opportunity of completing tasks on their own. Such children experience feelings
of resignation and unworthiness, become fearful of asserting themselves and come to rely unduly on adults.

In the fourth psychosocial period, industry Vs. inferiority, children develop a sense of industry when they begin to comprehend the technology of their culture, facilitated by people in their neighbourhood, schools and family. The child's ego identity is now 'I am what I learn'. The danger of this period lies in the potential development of a sense of inferiority or incompetence. A sense of inferiority may also develop if children discover that their gender, race, religion, or socio economic status rather than their own skill or motivation is what determines their worth as persons. For Erikson industry includes a feeling of being interpersonally competent, the confidence that one can exert positive influence on the social world in quest of meaningful individual and social goals.

The fifth stage in Erikson's chart of life cycle is regarded as highly significant in the person's psychosocial development from 12-18 years of age. In the identity vs. role confusion stage, emphasis is placed on the ego and the way it is affected by society and peer group. A sense of ego identity, that is, the accrued confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others. "The virtue associated with successful resolution of the crisis of adolescence is fidelity, the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradiction of value system" (Erikson, 1965). Fidelity represents the young person's capacity to perceive and abide by the social mores, ethics, and ideologies of society.
II. Behavioural Perspective.

Behavioural theorists believe that by modifying the existing learning opportunities or by creating new ones, the course of an individual's development can be changed. They believe that the learning experiences that occur during the course of a person's life are the sources of developmental change. Ivan Pavlov and B.F. Skinner, who are the proponents of classical conditioning and operant conditioning respectively, claim that only observable behaviour is useful in understanding learning and development, and no matter how complex the development activity is, it can be explained by one basic set of laws of learning. Also all learning and developmental change can eventually be explained by one set of basic scientific laws of behaviour, which is reinforcement and punishment.

III. Social Cognitive Perspective

Bandura's (1977, 1982, 1989) learning theory is by far the most influential among developmental psychologists. According to him learning does not always require direct reinforcement; learning may also occur merely as a result of watching someone else perform some action, which is known as observational learning or modeling. He also calls attention to another class of reinforcement called intrinsic reinforcement or intrinsic rewards. Most important of his contribution is the emphasis on cognitive (mental) elements in learning. The great strength of this view of social learning is that it seems to give an accurate picture of the way in which many forms of behaviour are learned. Children's behaviour can change if the reinforcement system or their beliefs about themselves change. So problem behaviour can be modified. Learning theories
represent a very different theoretical tradition, one in which the emphasis is much more on the way the environment shapes the child than on how the child understands his experiences. Although learning theorists disagree a good deal on the particulars, all would agree with Albert Bandura when he says that human nature is characterized by a vast potentiality that can be fashioned by direct and vicarious experience into a variety of forms within biological limits. Learning theorists see human behaviour as enormously plastic, shaped by predictable processes of learning.

IV- Cognitive Perspective

'There are two traditions within this perspective:

Piaget. The Central figure in cognitive theory is Jean Piaget. He shaped the thinking of several generations of developmental psychologists. According to Piaget all children seem to go through the same kinds of sequential discoveries of their world, making the same sorts of mistakes and arriving at the same solutions. Piaget did not believe environment shapes the child but that the child actively seeks to understand his environment. In the process, he explores, manipulates, and examines the objects and people in the world.

Vygotsky's theory. Although part of the cognitive developmental camp, Vygotsky placed emphasis on a different set of variables. He believed that complex forms of thinking have their origin in social interactions rather than in the child's private explorations, a process he recalled, "scaffolding". To be optimally effective the parent must gain and keep the child's attention, model the best
strategy or solution and adapt the whole process carefully to the child's level of skill and understanding (Landry et al., 1996; Rogoff, 1990).

Vygotsky suggested the importance of opportunities for exploration and active participation with some form of assisted discovery, either the parent or teacher or some one providing the scaffolding within the zone of proximal development of each child (the range of tasks that are too hard for the child to do alone but that can be managed with guidance).

Theoretical Perspectives on Child Rearing

One of the oft-debated issues in the literature on child rearing is the use of parental authority on children's lives. How often, in what manner and in what context it should be exercised, and whether, it should be even exercised at all, have been discussed at great length with passion and conviction. Which parenting style of behaviour is best? Or are parents all that important? These are some of the widely debated issues in child development literature.

Numerous models have been derived from empirical investigations of parental authority (Roths and Thomas, 1974). They have been based on interviews with parents and their children, as well as observation of parents and children interacting with each other. Some parents are probably better at parenting than others. In Cooke's (1991) terms some are novices and some are experts. How are the two different? Among other things experts are better at sensing the child's needs and goals, especially in problem solving situations. They have some general knowledge of child development and child rearing; they
have consciously thought about their roles, responsibilities and goals, and they foster activities that provide their children with opportunities to be self-directive. These characteristics of expert parents are most evident in competent children.

Dix (1991) suggests that parents' emotions can be used as an indication of the quality of parenting, because parenting is an emotional experience. Emotions are 'parameters' of relationships, because they reflect parents' assessments of how well interactions are proceeding. Consistent with symbolic interactionist perspective (eg. Cooley and Mead) it was reasoned that the actual parental behaviour to which an individual has been exposed would largely affect the individual in the manner and to the extent that he or she perceives that behaviour.

Many researchers have tried to come up with an ideal parenting model that would deliver the maximum benefits to a child's development. Among those one particular model has been cited for its multi-dimensional character, typological clarity and empirical efficacy. This model, proposed by Baumrind in 1971, discerns three distinct prototypes of parenting authority, which are: 1) Authoritarian, 2) Authoritative and 3) Permissive.

Authoritarian Parenting

Authoritarian parents try to shape, control and evaluate the behaviour of children to a set standard of conduct. "Do as I say, not as I do" seems to be the motto. This type of behaviour considers and values obedience as a virtue and favours forceful punitive measures to obtain it. Autonomy and independence are
not highly valued. Respect for authority and work are higher in order of values than children's creativity or ability to make personal decisions or choices. Children are not given the responsibility to manage their lives, nor are they involved in family discussions. Rules are not well defined and the rationale for their existence is not explained. Children are asked not to question authority and no verbal give and take is tolerated. Parents are unresponsive to children's views. Harsh punitive measure rather than loss of privileges seems to be the pattern. In general, authoritarian parents tend to be very power oriented (Baumrind, 1978).

**Effects of Authoritarian Parenting.** In authoritarian family children seem to be fearful, apprehensive, moody, unhappy, easily annoyed, passively hostile and vulnerable to stress; they alternate between aggressive, unfriendly behaviour and sulky withdrawal. They are afraid to take initiative due to fear of failure and criticism, and are low in creativity. They lack a sense of personal control and responsibility over their lives. When they grow older most of them turn out to respect authority and strictly follow rules, although a small minority may become rebellious towards the parents and authority. Withdrawn and hostile, they feel shy, lack enthusiasm and often exhibit low need for achievement and competence, very low self-esteem and high anxiety. They easily get upset over criticism however constructive, may become too timid or shy, and develop poor social skills. They feel others are always trying to criticize or blame them. When they finally learn to trust anyone, they have a tendency to cling to them constantly and easily become gullible. They expect to be told what to do and distrust their own feelings. The use of excessive punishment tends to create
maladjustments in many areas of personality and social development, resulting in less self-reliance and confidence, and more immaturity and aggressiveness.

**Authoritative Parenting**

Authoritative parents attempt to direct the child’s activities in a rational issue-oriented manner. They encourage verbal give and take and share with the child the reasoning behind their policy. Parents value both expressive and instrumental attributes, both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity. Therefore, parents exert firm control at points of parent-child divergence, but do not hem the child in with restrictions. While parents recognize their special rights as adults, they also recognize the child’s individual interest and special ways. The authoritative parent affirms the child’s present qualities, but also sets standards for future conduct. Parents use reason as well as power to achieve their objectives but do not base their decisions on group conformity. Authoritative parents use firm control but allow plenty of room for rational decisions. They value obedience and yet promote independence. Their standards are derived from reason rather than from dogma.

**Effects of Authoritative Parenting.** Diana Baumrind (1991) comments that authoritative parents are more apt to instill confidence, social competence and independence in their children. Children are energetic, friendly, high in creativity and imagination; they are self-reliant and self-controlled with good interpersonal skills. They also have a tendency to be more cooperative, empathetic and sensitive to the needs of others. In addition, adolescents of authoritative parents are less likely to be rebellious. Studies by Lawborn et al.
(1991) and Steinberg (1991) also confirmed that adolescents of authoritative parents had higher levels of psychosocial adjustments and lower levels of dysfunctional behaviour. They also tend to have higher levels of academic achievements, more self-reliance and less anxiety and depression.

**Permissive Parenting**

The major premise of this approach is that the child has a natural tendency toward self-actualization (the development and fulfillment of human potential), which if left unfettered by adult intervention will naturally result in appropriate socially approved behaviour. The following statement by Neil (1960) summarizes the permissive approach. “I believe that to impose anything by authority is wrong. The child should not do anything until he comes to the opinion ... his own opinion that it should be done.”

The permissive prototype requires the parent to behave in an affirmative, acceptant and benign manner towards the child's impulses and actions. The immediate aim of the ideologically aware permissive parent is to free the child from restraint as much as is consistent with survival. Some permissive parents are very protective and loving, while others are self-involved and offer freedom as a way of evading responsibility for the child's development. Permissive control is usually non-punitive and parents behave in an accepting and affirmative manner toward the child. The child is consulted about policy and family decisions and given explanation for family rules if any. Few demands are made for household responsibility and orderly behaviour. Parents are a resource for the child to use as he pleases and wishes, but not an active agent for shaping
the child's behaviour. The child regulates his own behaviour as much as possible. No externally defined rules are imposed. Parents do not show their authority or physical strength unless called for in extraneous circumstances.

There are two types of permissive parenting (a) Permissive-indulgent which is very nurturing protective and child-centered, (b) The rejecting and neglecting (laissez-faire) which is very abusive, unresponsive and undemanding, nonpowerful and non-involved. They consider the child rather a nuisance than a blessing.

**Effects of Permissive Parenting.** Permissive rearing results in impulsive and aggressive children who are non-compliant to others. They have low self-reliance, are low in achievement orientation, low in goal-directed activities, low in self-control and lack a sense of responsibility. Permissive parents who place limited over-all sanctions on children's behaviour seem to encourage immaturity and selfishness. Adolescents from permissive homes also interpret parents' lack of assertion as an uncaring attitude.

**Rationale for the Present Study**

Research on parenting styles and their effects on children is not very conclusive. No research model seems to be adequate to measure the complexity of the interaction involved, according to McCartney and Jordan (1990). They argue that if the conclusions are to be valid and useful, researchers must adopt the ecological system model such as proposed by Bronfenbrenner.
taking into account microsystem, meso system and exosystem and the interconnectedness of these systems.

Following extensive investigation of parenting styles and personalities of their children in 1977 Baumrind concluded that no specific child rearing practices should be advocated over others. But some general characteristics of parents may have negative or positive effects. Parents should be firm and directive. The optimum parent-child relationship at any stage of development can be recognized by the balance between parents' acknowledgement of the child's immaturity (demanding) and individuality (responsibleness). She also points out that punishment does not rupture attachment between parents and children provided it is offered by loving parents. Unconditional love is likely to lead to the development of "selfish and obnoxious children". Parents do make a difference but our recommendation concerning the best parenting styles must be tentative. "At the most simple level if the children are basically happy, the parents are probably not doing too much that is wrong," says Christopherson (1934).

Numerous studies have been conducted on the impact of family structure, attitudes, customs and so forth. One of the most significant of these was a survey of 124 homes in which patterns of parental behaviour were described using the 'Fels Parent Behaviour Rating Scale' for the collection of data. The scales were thirty separate rating devices designed to reveal the presence or degree of certain traits or characteristics of parents thought to be important for a child's development. When the data were analysed three major patterns revealed themselves: democracy in the home, acceptance of the child, and
indulgence. It was further found that various combinations of these patterns existed, as well as varying high and low positions on each scale. Three major categories or patterns, which emerged from the study, were: (a) rejected homes, (b) Accepted homes and (c) Casual homes.

In rejected homes there was little affection shown toward children; hostility and disapproval were expressed instead. These attitudes led the parents to be generally autocratic in their dealings with the children. Parental attitude ranged from ignoring the child to hostility toward the child. The expression of rejection may take the form of neglect, separation, denial of advantages or privileges, punishment, threats, humiliation and so on. In reaction to this policy a child may become withdrawn, shy, or stubbornly resistant in a passive fashion to adult authority. In general such children try in every way to gain affection. Failing in this, they engage in attention-getting behaviour, hyper activity, loud and boisterous shouting, striving for superiority on the playground or classroom, naughtiness and even neurotic disturbances of body function or health. Seriously neglected or harshly treated children may even develop unstable or psychopathic tendencies. Occasionally rejected children amuse themselves to satisfy their own wants, make satisfactory substitutes, or develop social and emotional ties outside the home (Symonds, 1949).

In accepted homes parents use security and common sense in dealing with their children. They identify with children so that they may understand their thoughts and feelings. They express their love and affection, they take active interest in their children's pleasures and activities but at the same time they exercise firm, quiet and consistent control over the children's behaviour. Parents
also provide an orderly but not oppressive environment in which children may develop optimally. Children from such homes reveal the beneficial effect of this atmosphere: these secure children have desirable character qualities; they are friendly, enthusiastic, realistic, emotionally stable and in general well-adjusted.

Parents in casual homes had no clear philosophy of child rearing but work out their problems as they went along. This group was further divided into casual autocratic and casual indulgent subgroups. Because of the variety of home atmospheres no broad generalizations can be made about resulting behaviour in the children; each home produces its own typical pattern of results.

Baumrind's theoretical perspectives and empirical analyses have inspired generations of psychologists to investigate the relationship between styles of parenting behaviour and personality development of children. The last two decades have seen a spate of studies, which sought to identify patterns of parental behaviour most conducive to the growth of healthy personalities in children. However, most of these studies have been done in Western societies, particularly in the United States. Therefore, the fund of knowledge that is available is largely from the studies done in western culture. Considering the different socio-cultural conditions of Western and Indian societies, Baumrind's formulations need to be tested in Indian family conditions. Saraswathi and Dutta (1987) have discussed four theoretical contributions by Kakar (1979), Neki (1976), Roland (1978) and Silvan (1981) in relation to cultural influence in child rearing. These four studies analyse Indian child rearing practices under psychoanalytic perspectives. In the process of theory building these four authors have brought out the difference between Western and Indian child rearing
practices. They state that the difference in the social milieu leads to the inculcation of certain traits, for example, dependency in the Indian child contrary to the emphasis laid on independence in Western culture. The social cohesiveness of Indian family is unique. The child born in a nuclear family cannot be strictly said to be growing up in a nuclear family. Off and on the child stays in his relatives’ house or grandparents’ house. A child reared in a nuclear family spending his short and long vacations with his relatives in the villages is very much common. Similarly, relatives from rural areas, especially, grandparents visiting and staying with their urban relatives are also not uncommon. These authors emphasise that the children are exposed to not mono but multi child-rearing practices in Indian families. Conditions being so, the knowledge as to which is the ideal child rearing practice for parents in India and the various factors that influence child rearing may be obtained only by studies done in India.

Studies in child rearing in India are very few. And, most of the existing studies were done in the early 70s and 80s. There are hardly any studies of recent times. This is a serious lapse because the Indian society has been in a period of transition. The impact of modernization has crept into every aspect of Indian life including child rearing. Another trend of change is in the number of women going to work. A few decades ago women going to work after marriage and child bearing was a rare phenomenon. In the present times more and more mothers go for wage employment. There is an extension of urban centers and facilities into rural strongholds and as a result there is increasing urbanisation. After becoming a signatory to WTO agreement more industries have come up
even in semi-rural environments and more women are employed in these industries. Family conditions also change in tune with the changing economic and societal conditions. Among the areas where these changes may have a telling effect, child rearing is one. There are hardly any studies in India in this respect. The condition of research in India on child development being what it is, there is no conclusive evidence available as to the effect of maternal variables over child's social competence. Studying maternal variables on child's social competence is very important because in order to improve opportunities for young children, it is necessary to work with the people who surround them and who can have a strong influence on their lives.

Hence the present study attempts to ascertain if and how social competence of children is related to the occupational status of the mothers and the types of parenting behaviour they follow.

The fact that motivated the researcher to undertake the study was her long time interest in doing research in parenting style of Indian mothers. Over the years the need to study parenting style of working mothers was felt as more and more mothers began to work outside the home, especially, in formal settings. It was thought that undertaking such a study would be helpful in identifying the factors that enhance the phenomenon of social competence among children and ultimately forging a theory of social competence.

Another overriding interest in the study was its application aspect. It is useful to determine how best an employed mother who does not have enough time to be with her children can foster high social competence in her children.
Studying the influence of a number of variables would throw more light on the methods and conditions of enhancing the social competence of children.

The primary motive in conducting the study was to test the theory on parenting style being related to social competence. The findings, it was hoped, would benefit child development specialists, parents and children themselves. Academics and teachers who are interested in developmental psychology will find the results useful, as it would expand the horizon of knowledge in child development theories. True to most behavioural research, the present study is motivated partly by specific questions about parenting style and social competency and the researcher's curiosity about the variables related to social competency in children. The researcher was interested in the specific topic because developing social competence is an important goal of child rearing and occupies a central theme in child development literature.

Studies, which seek to investigate the relationship between parenting styles and children's social development, are very much needed in today's Indian society. Just consider the typical Newspaper headline on a Mumbai-based story: "City reduced to modern nightmare as it tops in homicides, rapes and other crimes". According to a report being circulated by the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS) crime rate among the youth has gone up by 40%. Most of these young do not even fit the personality profile of criminals. Many are young, educated and with means. Psychiatrists baffled by the criminal behaviour of youngsters, attribute the causes to a number of factors such as lack of parental guidance and increasing number of school and college dropouts. In the words of psychiatrist Achal Bhagurt (1999) the family, which held the society together, has
become unstable. Sanjay Chung (1999) opines that with the breakdown of the joint family system life has become very individual-centered. This has led to the evolution of isolated human beings, who never have any one around to instill values in them. These statements truly reflect the changing society and the plight of our children. As quoted by Gabriela Mistral (1999) "We are guilty of many errors and many faults but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life". So it is very important and imperative that we need to take a hard look at our child rearing in view of changing social conditions at home and abroad.

Indian society, like many other societies in the world, is going through a rapid social change today. The family that once held the society together like the mortar that holds the bricks together of a building is very fast disintegrating and is in transition causing breakdown in values and in social structure. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening. The glorification of material possessions and inability of many to afford them while watching those who can amass them leaves a good part of the population frustrated. Values once held very high like honesty, trust, interpersonal relationship, care for the elderly, tolerance for the differences of others like in food, faith and dresses are replaced with greedy, get-rich-quick schemes and selfish attitudes. We need to go back on the basic values of life, which are fast fading, teach our children to be self-confident and competent individuals with high self-esteem and respect for one another and humanity as a whole. Seen in this backdrop there is no denying the seminal importance of social competence and parenting style in the personality development of children. Hence was thought to be highly appropriate for the
researcher to have taken up the present study: "Social Competence of Children and Parenting styles of Employed and Unemployed Mothers".

Accordingly, the following were set as major objectives of the study:

1. To find out the factors that influence parenting style of mothers,

2. to identify the factors influencing social competence in children,

3. to describe the relationship between parenting style of mothers and social competence of their children and

4. to compare the social competence level of children of mothers engaged in different kinds of employment.

Statement of the Problem

The primary focus of the study is the link between mother's parenting practices and social competence of children. The present study attempts to find out the parenting styles of mothers in different socio-cultural contexts along with other major variables such as maternal employment and unemployment, kinds of occupation, their education, socio-economic status, age, number of children, gender of the child, order of birth and place of living and how these factors are inter-related. The main focus was to find out whether there is any relationship between parenting styles and the social competence of children.

In the present investigation the major question asked is whether parenting style of the mother and social competence of her children are related. To be more specific, how are the three parenting styles, authoritative, authoritarian and
permissive styles of the mother related to high, medium or low social competence in children? In other words which is the parenting style that is related to high social competence? Is there a difference in the mothers’ parenting style owing to difference in the mother's employment? Another question, which is asked simultaneously, is whether maternal employment influences social competence. In other words whether employed mothers have more socially competent children? The researcher was also interested in knowing what role the sex of the child, place of residence, educational level of the mother, type of family, number of children, order of birth and the income of the family play on the social competence of children.

In order to find answers to these problems, the researcher first of all set out to identify the independent, dependent and control variables. After identifying the variables, they were operationally defined to ensure clarity of concepts and validity of the study. After clearly defining the different variables the researcher set out to formulate the hypotheses to be tested. They were in tune with the problems/research questions posed earlier.

All these three steps recounted here largely helped the investigator to be very specific about the kind of measuring instrument to be developed for assessing the parenting style and the social competence.

The Scope of the Study

While patterns of parenting behaviour influence all four areas of child development, namely physical, mental, emotional and social, only social
development has been considered for this study. The scope of the study is restricted to mother's occupation and mother's parenting style. Though father's role is also equally important, only mother's role is studied because of the more important role the mother plays in the socialization of the child and because of the fact that the child spends much more time with his or her mother than with the father. Many American and British studies have proved that maternal variables whether of education or occupation, are far more powerful predictor of children's educational achievement (Baker, 1987). Niles (1981) also reports that mother's occupation was a better predictor than any other variables in academic achievement.

Hypotheses Tested

Generally survey research describes the attitudes and behaviours of a population of people by selecting a sample of individuals and getting their responses to a set of questions. Survey research attempts to explain a phenomenon, not merely to describe it. In this case hypotheses are set up to be tested by relating the responses to different questions to one another (Baker, 1988). True to this characteristic of survey research, the present study also set up a number of hypotheses to describe the phenomenon of social competence of children in relation to parenting style and employment of mother. The hypotheses tested in the present study are as follows:

Hypothesis 1. Parenting style of mothers affects the social competence of children.
Hypothesis 2. Maternal employment is related to social competence of children.

Hypothesis 3. Social competence of children is influenced by variables, namely, mother's education, age of mother, income, place of residence, type of family, sex of the child and birth order of children.

Significance of the Study

The recognition of the family as the child's primary socializing agent has been accompanied by periodic calls for monitoring parental performance and by recommendations for providing parents with child rearing information and guidance. In the past few decades there has been a resurgence of interest in the role of family in the care and education of young children. The current attention to families stems largely from several interrelated global trends. Family structures throughout the world continue to change in response to industrialization, urbanization, population growth, increasing longevity and migration. While these changes have created new opportunities, they have also disrupted familiar cultural practices and survival patterns that families have developed over the years to cope with their multiple responsibilities. One aspect of family affected by these trends is the ability of the family to provide optimal child rearing environments in the context of widespread changes in the social fabric of families, neighbourhoods and communities. Adding to this concern is the increased recognition of families' major influence on young children's social, emotional and cognitive development. It is now more or less clearly understood by all that children must be raised in a wholesome environment. In order to
improve opportunities for young children it is necessary to work with the people who surround them and who can have an influence on their lives.

As the foremost caregiver, the mother must know which parenting style is best and what harm the undesirable parental behaviour can lead to.

Psychological orientation to parents on ideal parenting can be helpful to mothers in urban and rural settings. The study would help in parental education as well as throw light on patterns of parental behaviour and their impact on children. The undesirable parenting style needs to be changed for better personality development of children. Present and past parenting styles need to be studied so that parental guidance is possible. The findings may be used:

1. to increase the social competence of children at home and in school, and

2. to provide parental guidance on desirable parenting style.

Efforts taken along this line will increase the competency of school-going children. Better personality development can only be assured with better parenting style. Teachers, child development specialists and academicians can use this information to better the lot of children, to do further research and to improve the school and home conditions so that child’s personality development is enhanced.

A clear understanding of the relationship between parenting style and social competence can have significant consequences. It will help policy makers and educators plan the curriculum in schools to give future parents training in child guidance, rearing techniques and information on role of parents in shaping
the personality and competencies of their children. Curriculum in women's studies could incorporate different parenting styles and their effect on children. Fathers can also benefit since they are taking a more meaningful role in child rearing in contemporary society, especially, because of the rapid disintegration of the extended family system and increase in mothers’ employment. Short courses can be developed to educate village women through Mahila Samaj or Balwadis and such courses may be incorporated into high school curriculum.

The family teaches appropriate behaviours, values and knowledge to children and it also provides an emotional setting in which children can feel loved and accepted. Such a positive setting plays a critical role in shaping the child's personality and social development. Certain variables related to the child's interaction with the family are extremely important during the tender years. Parents' support, guidance, understanding, trust, security, emotional support and the types of discipline employed by parents are crucial factors affecting the child's personality and social competence. It is hoped that the present study will throw light on a host of factors, which positively influence parental styles of behaviour and enhance their skills in child rearing.

The study was aimed at identifying the factors that are likely to facilitate social competence. It was envisaged that the study would provide valuable information related to the level of education and kind of occupation of the mother that are related to different levels of social competence. Another reason is to determine the impact of maternal employment in child rearing in general and its effect on the social competence of children in particular. Whether maternal
employment is detrimental to social competence in children is worth studying. As of now hardly any study is available on this aspect.

It was also hoped that the research findings would suggest the ideal conditions for improving social competency in children. The study was designed to help understand the relationship between various factors and parenting style and social competence. When the findings of the study are made known there is a chance that they might influence the thinking, perception and reaction of mothers both employed and unemployed to their role in developing the social competency of children.

Definition of Key Terms

Social Competence

The International Encyclopedia of Developmental Psychology defines social competence "as the ability to achieve goals in social interaction while simultaneously using and maintaining positive relationship with others". Social competence is defined by Schiamberg (1988) as the ability to use both personal and environmental resources for optimal adaptation; the competent child is one who can accommodate to new situations and adjust to new circumstances such as entering a preschool education programme or accepting the birth of a new sibling.

Hurlock (1974) defined social competence "as the ability to behave in accordance with social expectations or as " the process of growing up to take one's full place in the society". A very popular definition found in many books is
the ability to deal with others in accordance with social expectations in a variety of situations. Clemens and Vans (1981) sorted out four major determinants of social competence, which are: 1. a sense of connectiveness 2. a sense of uniqueness 3. a sense of power 4. a sense of models.

For the purpose of the present study social competence is meant a multidimensional concept involving several component elements some of which are autonomy, initiative, adjustability, empathy, self-awareness, self-esteem and integrity.

Parenting Style

In defining parenting style, Baumrind's typology of parenting has been considered. This typology includes authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles. The present research defines parenting style in these three forms. The assumption is that authoritarian parent values obedience as a virtue and favours punitive and forceful measures for disciplining the child, rejects autonomy, keeps the child in a subordinate role and believes that the child should accept parents' word as right. The permissive adult behaves in an affirmative, acceptant and benign manner towards the child's impulses and actions; such parents are likely to offer freedom as a way of evading responsibility for the child's development. The authoritative parent attempts to direct the child's activities in a rational issue-oriented manner. Both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity are valued. Such parents share with the child the reasoning behind parental policy and solicit child's objections when the child refuses to conform (Baumrind, 1978).
This being the conceptual definition of parenting style, the operational definition is in terms of the respondents’ agreement with the statements prepared based on Baumrind’s typology. A parenting style scale was developed for determining the kind of parenting behaviour predominant among the parents. As in the case of social competence, the parenting style inventory also had statements, which involved various life situations where parental control is exercised. Care was taken to see that the life situations chosen are relevant to the local culture. The statements were selected in consultation with parents, teachers and child psychologists to improve their validity. The statements were so selected that they were indicators of the various dimensions of parenting styles.

Employment of Mother

Employment of mother was defined in two ways. One was whether the mother was engaged in wage employment or not, and the other was on the basis of whether the mother was employed in unskilled, white collar or professional jobs.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The study was delimited to the parenting style of mothers. While the parenting style of father too influences social competence, the present study has been confined to the parenting style of mothers only. It has been assumed that between mothers and fathers, it is the mothers who are more influential in the personality development of children. In
Indian families, especially among the families in Tamilnadu where the study has been conducted, fathers generally confine themselves to the role of provider to the family and the disciplinarian in the family. Mothers take care of most of the needs of children as well as their academic performance of children. For these reasons mother’s parenting style alone was considered. The title also shows this delimitation of the study.

2. The study was restricted to only three kinds of parenting styles as identified by Baumrind which included Authoritarian, Authoritative and Permissive parenting styles.

3. The study was limited to children of ages 14 and 15 years.

4. Another delimitation of the study was restricting the study to only Dindigul and Madurai districts.