INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1
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THE PROBLEM

Punishment is a penalty or infliction of pain imposed upon an individual who has violated the laws of the country. From time immemorial the society has been punishing the law breakers in some form or the other. In the words of Churchill the mood and temper of the public with regard to the treatment of crime and criminals has been always an unfailing test of the civilization of any country.

A criminal is punished primarily to ensure the safety of the society. Imprisonment is one of the methods of punishment and the duration of it depends on many factors. Since the offender is not only a mere person, but a member of a group also, the impact of imprisonment does not confine to the punished only. It affects the offender as well as the groups to which he/she belongs.

The confined man must content with loss of liberty, deprivation of heterosexual relations, loss of autonomy and loss of security. The real pressure of prison however goes beyond the surface of discomforts created by
environment, immobility, poverty and abstinence or compliance and uncertainty. These are aspects of prison experiences that seem designated to irritate and annoy. But the fact is that the prisoner has lost control of his world and is rendered powerless to alter his fate. The pressure of prison thus threatens to undermine the convict’s image of himself as well as self sufficient, respectable member. The prisoner faces complex issues of loss, psychological change, and areas of experience, that were not, or could not be communicated. There was also a need for more discussions between prisoners and their families about their temper and expectation on release.

The impact of imprisonment does not occur in isolation for a man with a family, and the prison walls can never be a complete barrier to the emotional currents which flow between a man and his wife and children. The rupture in the marital relationship creates physical and psychic frustration for the wife and husband. The imprisoned person turns to homosexuality, sex perversion and clandestine heterosexual behaviours. Similarly the spouse outside has to resort to similar ways for satisfying sex urge. The spouses inside and outside look upon each other with suspicion and it will end up in broken marital relationship.
For the family members the feeling of isolation from the prison world where their dear one is confined is often greater than the isolation of the prisoner from the world outside. The family has to suffer more not only financially but also in many ways which sometimes are beyond the imagination of the prisoner or an outsider.

The imprisonment of a person, whether of long or short duration, results in a crisis for the family especially where he/she is the only earning member or where she is the only woman to manage the household work.

The crucial problem, faced by the family members because of the imprisonment, is of finance and the taking up of an economic role by someone else.

For a dependent wife, the husband’s imprisonment is a real crisis and a problem of disintegration, particularly if it is the first forced separation. The total functioning of the family will be affected because of the imprisonment of the bread winner. Apart from this the family has to suffer from social stigma caused by imprisonment. The family members of the convict suffer not only from mental agony and financial loss out of their personal loss, but suffer from traumatic social apathy and boycott too. So the
family members are prone to develop psychological disorders like depression, persecution complex, suicide tendency etc.

The impact of imprisonment on families and children has received only very little attention of researchers. It is evident that negative consequence of imprisonment must be changed inorder that individuals can place faith in peace building and feel included in the structuration of a new society. Without inclusion and in open recognition of the problems faced by prisoners and their families it will be impossible to integrate them into a more just and inclusive society.

This study is an attempt to analyse the impacts of imprisonment of married convicts on their familial and marital relationships, primarily from the perspectives of the imprisoned. This parental problems created to the prisoners also have been analysed in this study