This chapter reports the findings on the way the alcoholism was perceived and the process of growth that the ACOAs underwent based on thematic areas that emerged in the in-depth interviews. The findings range from growing up to deprivation to nurturance experienced by the ACOAs and lastly development of emotional self as it is today.

Within Case Analysis

The 10 case studies that are presented in the following section were analysed using the themes which emerged from the indepth interviews with the ACOAs.

1. Growing up
   The predominant theme that guided the research trajectory was the experience of growing up with an alcoholic parent and how that affected the ACOA. Here researcher tried to enter and understand the world of the ACOA from an “etic” perspective as they were growing from childhood up to adolescence.

2. Deprivation
   One of the areas that emerged strongly in the study is the kinds of deprivation that children felt and expressed, be it fulfilling basic needs like food, clothing or shelter or be it higher order needs like love, safety and belongingness, of feeling parents were not around to monitor or look after and care for them.

3. Relationships
   Alcoholism affected the relationship patterns and the quality of relationships and this emerged as an important outcome of family homeostasis. The relationships that influenced the ACOA ‘s were also explored to understand both nurturing and neglect encountered. Thus from relationship with father, mother, siblings to friends and neighbours are presented.

4. Abuse and Violence
   One of the other areas that seems to affect many lives of children in alcoholic
homes is the presence of abuse and violence. The abuse that the children describe ranges from verbal to emotional to sexual abuse and physical violence is reported across classes. The observation is that more the alcoholism in the parent the more is the violence and abuse.

5. **Nurturing**
   This emerged as an important mediator in the Indian context. The theme was layered onto the larger conceptual humanistic framework. The humanistic perspective posits an understanding that people are generally good, they find their unique ways to deal with the problems that they have to face no matter how difficult the circumstances. This nurturance was present in many people's lives in form of grandparents for some and neighbours for others.

6. **Emotional Self**
   The overall emotional self as it is today was also explored and this reflected emotional management skills that are crucial for EI. The better the management reported the better the emotional core of the individual.

7. **Life Today**
   The common theme that runs through all the ACOAs is the ability deal with life as it and this is reflected in the lives of everyone. Though some regret on losing out and not doing things when they needed to be done. Overall many of the cases reported being satisfied with their journey so far.

Keeping these themes in mind the following section explores the diverse lives of the ACOA bound by the single thread of alcoholism in the father.

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**Case Study: Misha – The Prodigal Daughter**

Misha aged 38, woman ACOA soft-spoken and gentle has been affected by the alcoholism in her family. Her father is an active alcoholic. She is married with three children- two boys and one girl. Her husband is an alcoholic and currently unemployed. She is the primary bread winner in her family and works in a call centre.
When she was growing up she spent an early part of her life in a boarding school till about 9 years. At that time she remembers really missing being loved and wanting her parents. She would cry a lot but she felt that no one around really cared much. Her mother would visit her sometimes till they brought her back for good.

“Most of my childhood my dad was out and I was in the boarding school and I was 4 years old then, and I was in nursery and those years. I just longed for my parents love and that longing to be wanted and to be loved by parents. I used to write letters to my mum and my dada, I would write letter with crying faces to her. When my mum would come to see us, that time I was in Panchgani, I would be crying and crying when she would reach the gate. If someone would tell the matron she would not say a kind word or anything to comfort you. She would shout and say, “Go to sleep”. So those days there was a lot of pain, there was lot of wanting and longing for parents love. At that point of time which I always feel as a child, always you want to be loved by your parents. Wanted by parents ….and would be accepted and wanting that feeling of being accepted, like my father would say rude and hurtful words to me and he would always compare with other children. I am not a bad person and I did not like it. I felt I was what I was, you can’t compare people because you are completely different.”

Growing up she remembers her parents fights and the pain, shame and embarrassment she felt. She feels he has not changed at all. He needed a reason to pick a fight and show his strength.

“When I was very small I remember my parents used to fight a lot. My mom used to be very angry. Once I remember they locked me in the bathroom when they were fighting. Hearing of stories of when my dad used to drink when I was in mother’s stomach, he used to hit her bad, very bad, on her stomach. When my dad used to drink, then I was with my mother, he used to hit my mother and beat her, like hit her real bad.”

Her childhood memories are not only of her father drinking, but also of both her parents’ extra marital affairs. She remembers seeing her mom in a sexually compromising situation with another man. He told her that he would love to do the same to her. She was 10 at that time, too young to understand what he said.
I recall one incident when my father was abroad, where I saw my mother with this man, she was in relationships with this man. He told me that when you are big I will do it to you, but I never understood as I was very small, in the 1 or 2 Std. Because of that I mean, I could never trust to her. That was one thing, I love my mother a lot, she worked a lot for us when we were children but the thing is, to some extent I would never open up to her or trust her. The reason being that ... I will tell you. The reason was ...when my mother never stopped my father, once I had gone to Lonavala, one uncle when I was in the sixth std, he just molested me but that time she never had the guts, even when my father did this (sexual molestation), to tell my father that, she was frightened of him, she told, she was telling me, you don’t want to have a boyfriend when you grow up. So...I never understood because at that time I did not have feelings or understand about liking boys. I was in the sixth std, I must be 10 or 11yrs at that time”

She remembers her father molesting her and when she shared with her mother, her mother did not protect her.

Her relationship with her mother is not good as she cannot trust her. She felt that even when she shared about her father, she did nothing to protect her. Misha was molested on different occasions by different men. By then she had stopped telling her mother as she had lost trust in her.

“...because I had never had a sharing relationship, I could not tell my mother and kept this to myself.”

“For me only my grandmother was there for me, I would share with her, I did not share with my mother, and I would share with her. For me as a person if I have done anything wrong, if I tell it out, I feel much better, although I keep things which are hurtful and painful at the same time”

She counts her grandmother as a significant person in her life and she shared with her many things and is close to her. She wanted to be a nurse like her grandma but when her mother had a stroke she realised she did not have a personality to be one. She could not handle illness. Her father never changed and she says he still “continued womanizing”
She also began working at a very young age around 10 years to help run the house and financial deprivation was present.

“Otherwise, I also took a lot of responsibility because of the financial situation at home, my mom used to make decorations and I used to be responsible for helping her. Life was very difficult as a child, financially at home and I used to help make ends meet. I would go with her selling things house to house and I never took it out on my parents. I could have gone another way maybe you know I could have rebelled totally, gone out of hand and gone to extreme but I remained like …remained …that is my responsibility too.”

Life was difficult and she feels she never really had a childhood; there was no fun or recreation. She would come home from school and help her mom with the household work and then go with her to sell things door to door.

Education was not a priority and she remembers she was staying with a relative to help her cope with the death of her husband, when her results came out. She felt no one remembered that she had to go to college but she did not express this neglect to anyone around her. She did a teacher’s training course but that too her father did not encourage her.

She did not complete it as she got pregnant. She was 17 years at that time. Though she miscarried the child, she went on to marry this man.

“When I was growing up, for me….. I always wanted somebody who could take care of me, a boy. When I was in my 11th std, I was rebelling , because all the time I was listening , listening , listening , he never liked my husband, he did not like anyone , he felt nobody was good enough for me... you know... like other fathers.”

Of this relationship she shares that she was looking for being loved and wanted and she did not think about the consequences of marriage. Today he is an alcoholic and she is a primary bread earner. She runs the house like she always has.

“There are some things I share like my childhood things with my husband. He being an alcoholic too, when he wants it, he has a trump card against me and he would use it (sexual abuse by father) against me. Sometimes in front of my children.”
She does not drink anymore as her son had a confrontation with her about it. She has two boys and one girl and is finding it really difficult to parent them.

“Now I am working in a call centre but I am not very happy, the salary is good but I had rather be at home and be a mother to my kids. I can see that the way they study, the way their lives are going is not what I am looking at, sometimes I always take all the blame on me, but now my kids are become big and now certain choices are in their hands.”

Her husband does not support her at all. Her work in the call centre is such that she works nights and is around in the day. Her older son is 16 years, in 10th std but not wanting to study and her daughter 12 years was not going to school for a long time. (At the time of the interview she had missed school for a month). She misses chunks of school and Misha does not know how to work around this, her daughter also does not share what is happening.

“I go to work (work in call centre shifts) and come back. Sometimes I come back early but sometimes I come in the morning and am very tired. I cannot keep my eyes open also, I will tell my husband to wake her up, it is only half hour like as I am very tired, so he will abuse me and so no support, everything like alone na, if he was more strict they would be more disciplined, he is strict but he is not maintaining that sort of discipline with them. When I am tired and working and so long I am struggling and struggling this way, it is not going to work but the mental stress is very difficult to concentrate on work to give your 100 percent to your work is difficult.”

“Why they are not studying it is like a question mark for me because this fellow (husband) used to hit but now it does not work as the big fellow (older son) recently he hit my husband and gave him blast off. So now they don’t take this if you are abusive.”

Her husband is abusive too and of late she says her older son hits him so he is not so abusive to them anymore.

“(I am) waiting for God to make things better, that is a ray of hope and that my husband will change. That is what is making me wait so long; sometimes it gets very tiring and frustrating. I tell my husband that if you are not going to change I will go but the thing is
that I am so used to him. Now also if we … I have fights I have gone away… I am only able to be away for 1 day, not longer than that.”

The only thing that keeps her going is her faith in God and her spiritual basis. She identifies with the Prodigal Son parable from the Bible. She believes God is waiting with his arms open. She says

“It is only God, who really makes you, first of all, helps you keep your sanity which is very important, thinking about it, you cannot function; only God helps you help to function in the different part you play in different walks of life. Sometime thinking about my own life, there are times when I get very frustrated and get very angry and when I have yelled and screamed and have cried, I cry very easily and I am a very touchy person and whatever a person is, what life has made you, it is not something you choose to be and what you want to be. Everybody is different and life has moulded you that way.”

Her emotional self is such that she is vulnerable, too giving, nurturing at the cost of herself and is unable to stand up for herself. She is a caretaker for others and her own emotional self is neglected. She also plays the role of the lost child at time feeling confused, indecisive and insecure. She finds the world is not a good place. She says she trusts people and is a poor judge of people. Some of her sharing on her emotional self are given below.

“Like growing up as a child, as an adult, it was very embarrassing because my father has never changed, he is still the same”

“I trust people easily and that is not good, as people, they may not be good. I went out with a boy who had only bad intentions”

“There was lot of wanting and longing for parent’s love at that point of time, which I always feel as a child always you want to be loved by your parents. Wanted by parents …and would be accepted and wanting that feeling of being accepted, like my father would say rude and hurtful words to me and he would always compare with other children. I am not a bad person and I did not like it.”

“I am a very loving person but I can offer this love to any person and for me I feel I am not loved… I feel that when I give love… I get love”
“My mother no matter how much ever we did, they would never let me be what I wanted to be.”

“Whatver is there in my mind , things I want to forget and sometimes there are many things that I have blocked out and don’t remember them much , I don’t know whether I don’t want to remember but there is really nothing I remember… that has kept me going”.

“I am wondering as to why I am still over here. I keep saying that my job is very important. Nobody would ever stay with your husband who is not supporting you and also when you was supporting him. I do not know why, I am staying because I know how the world is. I feel the world is very bad place from my childhood, I have noticed that the world is very difficult place and wherever I have been and there have always been people who have taken advantage of you, now also when I am travelling and now I am not so pretty when travelling in rickshaw, share a rick some fellow tried to act smart with me. I keep thinking why.”

Case Study: Nandita – Badass Badger

Nandita is a 21 ACOA, who has learnt to be happy despite her circumstances. Her father passed way when she was 19 years old of alcoholism and drug addiction.

She describes how in the initial years of her life, she grew up with parents on the ship. Her early years were spent traveling from one place to another and she did not understand much till she was 6. Her only memory is that she wished people were happier.

“….and I am a child and you can’t see that you feel you don’t want to do that and you feel victimized and I am glad I never felt like that because I had my own support system and I had to create this imaginary support system, I was like things is(are) not happening everything is fine and things are not healthy but what do you do, what else do you do even today if something terrible happens the best thing to do is pretend that it did not happen, because sure, things happen but you can’t talk to people about what is bothering you, I am not the person to go around and talk to people and talk, I think that is because I never had
anyone who I could talk to, I couldn’t talk to my mom, I can’t talk to my mom, now the only person I really talk to is my sister”

Being an ACOA is what has become a part of her identity and it did make her who she is though she is not sad about it. Growing up she found a lot of times being victimized for things she did not do but she learnt to take it in her stride by creating an imaginary support system as she learnt to rely on herself.

“…as a little child, I felt protective to my mum as well, there were times but, I am sorry this is too candid, there were times when my dad would be beating my mum and I would come in between and say beat me but don’t touch her. At that time it didn’t seem traumatic and it seemed like it the right thing to do, it seemed like it happened in every house and you don’t know what happened. But now when I think of it and when I try and analyse it, how it affected me and how it affected my personality. I am as well adjusted and as outgoing, I have never been a problem child and a person who looks different. I am a very happy person, I genuinely am and I don’t hold any of my experiences against like anybody, I think it is easier now that dad is dead and now it is easier to forgive everybody”

As a child when her father was abusive, it was common to intervene and rescue mom. There was always a fear of going out with friends or partying as to what would happen at home and how would mum be.

“Even though dad was drinking and doing drugs and it seemed nice and normal and we seemed like a family and those were good days. Dad was on the mend sometimes and even when he was not, he would be abusive which we could not change. But yeah, we used to do horrible things as children and that was not intentional and acting out.”

She does feel she lost out on a carefree childhood. She felt when she was growing up her mom was too young when she had her and did not know how to look after her. She describes herself as self-sufficient child even when she was very little. Her dad on the other hand she felt was like a child who needed to be looked after. In her words she does not as such have any “father memories”. She has never seen her dad without a glass in his hand.
“As far as the whole time of my life, I have just shut it off and created a new reality which is happier. As much as I am aware that thing about that reality, I try not to talk about it or think about it, I am sure it has had its effect on me, I am sure it will continue to have, but to keep thinking about it is not fair to anybody.”

There are parts of her life which she totally repressed and this helps to cope too. She has very remote memories of being sexually molested but feels that it did not impact her much.

“I have these flashes of memory of like facing sexual abuse at his hands but you can’t be sure, because for so long I could not talk about it to my mom. To me maybe it happened, maybe it did not happen… if I can’t talk to her who I can talk to. I am not sure. But if it did happened it did not impact me much. I am not traumatized by it. I do not know if I imagined but I think you can’t imagine it at 4 or 5 years. Like I did not know what is supposed to be “

Things did become better when her little sister was born and she was involved in much of the care giving as her mom was unwell. This has been the best relationship for her and she is very close, protective and a surrogate parent to her sister.

Her relationship with her mother has been one where she needed protection and care and she has not been really close to her mom. She sometimes resented her mom for her helplessness and for not being able to protect her or take care of her sister. She felt she was able to protect herself but her mom needed to protect her little sister. She felt that her mom has not talked about things they need to discuss as family, like growing up or like father’s death. She believes the imaginary world she has created helped her to work through all these problems.

“The resentment between both of us started after my dad passed away, but she was never there you know…never to protect me or my sister and I was very upset, not for myself but she was never protective for my sister and she always expected protection from me and I thought that it wasn’t fair and the reason I thought because I could deal with it, not because I could deal with it but not because I was stronger, I just could… I was conditioned that way… there is a lot of pent up resentment to her for not being there and I try to discount the fact that she was suffering more than I was, but I keep telling myself that it’s not my problem or it’s not my fault. Most of us have this habit and sort of conditioning
that we blame ourselves for it. Like I blame myself for my father death, it is not active but it is latent, dormant and that’s what I was shaken about, but I wish she should have taken the time not about my dad but about everything. About growing up and about life and more, I wish she listened, at least if she pretended to….. She has never discussed even today, since my dad passed away has she asked if I was ok, she has never once addressed it, I never cried after my dad death, I never did…. she has never addressed as she is not interested. This escapism that I have got, I am so thankful for that, because there are so many issues, that I would like to be addressed, as I would want to put it on the table and ask what happened with dad … I don’t know. I felt that she was protective of my dad, which I was angry with. But when he is out of his mind, I see that I could tell and she would just pretend that everything is ok. Ma, you need to draw the line because pretending everything is ok is not ok. You can do it for your own happiness but you are supporting 2 other children who deserve full issues to be addressed. She has never done it with me, she has never done with my sister, but that is her style of parenting and I am not going to comment on that because that is not my place. There is a lot of lot of resentment that was there and there is still. Obviously it grows when I grow because I understand the complications of it but it also becomes easier to forgive”.

Her middle childhood was in a joint family system where she had a very controlling grandfather and one was not allowed to eat or wear or do what they wanted. He would discriminate against her because she was not as fair as her cousins. She shared that it was common to be fair and her father who was dark also had been discriminated due to his dark colour.

Her adolescent was more or less rebellious. Her granddad had passed away and she felt she found freedom. She was not a “problem child” but would be questioning things, be irritable and basically angry with her parents as they had shifted schools. In the new school she did not want to make friends and she felt they were not like her old friends. Even the music she listened to, some of them had never heard about it and life was different.

Her intimate relationships were with both men and women. She is bisexual and says it is not about choice, it is who she is. She describes that she is attracted to people who are “damaged
goods”, vulnerability and a need to take care attracts her in love. She first dated a boy whose father was an alcoholic. She elaborates on her relationships,

“It is Freudian, I don’t know anything about being Freudian. I am not so right. My friends seem to have noticed, I have this need for taking care of people and broken homes people and I am going to fix them and everything is going to be ok.”

“I get bored doing things and move at a much faster pace than most people and the idea of being with one person is nice until you are with that person but then you want to be with 10 other”

“I had a reputation of being insensitive and emotionally unavailable. Which is true and I am not like this person who likes to talk about feeling all the time”

“I had a same sex relationship; it was lovely, beautiful and my growing up. I had only dated women till my dad passed away, only after that I dated men. I was 16 when I dated her. She was 22. I got to play the part of the man and it gave me control over the relationship. Though, it was in my head as I would do things for her. Even pampering her and looking after. She died…she killed herself and that is why the damaged goods thing. I have never had a problem with her death and have never been sad about it, I always felt it was not ok to feel sorry or create a scene. In fact, I did not cry when my father died. He was suffering and he was a great man but… for her…it was a year before my dad died. I was never close to my family and she was the only person. That impacted me, made me cynical and made me angry. But apart from that, I am not angry anymore. I will always love and be fond of her. I felt cheated and we were happy and we were together and I don’t even know why you killed yourself. That was not cool. Everyone felt it was my fault and you just quit”

She also started working at a younger age to get out of home and it gave her some financial freedom. She also feels that doing many things means there is less energy to think about other things. She is extremely talented and was able to move her way up in the advertising circle and by 20 she was heading a big team. She also does freelancing in graphic design, and is assistant music director too. She says some people take a decade at least to achieve what she
has in a span of few years. She now wants to start her own tattoo place and plans to go abroad to study tattooing. She will be self-financing the course.

She drinks a bit too much now and has been smoking since the age of 15 years though her mom and sister do not know. She wants to be a model to her sister. Her take on drinking is that hers was a generations of “latent alcoholics”, nobody meets over coffee anymore, people meet and drinks happen. She does know her limits and says she has a role model (her father) to show her what to not do.

“It was a terrible time and he was abusing alcohol and using alcohol made him violent… more than drugs. It was excruciating for us he was invalid and sick but it was ok because he was a danger to himself. But when he was on alcohol he was a threat to other people, I could not leave house and that become a bit much. But today when I see the effects of that, the only remnants of that is that my mum thinks that (if) I have one drink and I will turn into an alcoholic.”

Her emotional self has developed in such a way that she does not want to be close to anyone. She says she has been accused of being unemotional and detached. She does not share her feeling with anyone and she has learnt to look after herself and at the same time she is looking after others. She is aware of her emotional complexity and her fears.

“I don’t know if it is really complex and I would over-compensate for everything and I was good at what I did and that continued and today I am doing much better for myself than anybody else. There are ……constant feelings of not being good enough”

“I have always had fears, not personal fears, and that has become a part of who I am. That was when I was not responsible as now I am.”

“There was this massive inferiority complex because I was like, they think I am very good but I am not there is insecurity. It does not manifest that easily because of who I am. I am mentally sound and I understand I am more capable mentally than most people my age or disposition.”

“I had a reputation of being insensitive and emotionally unavailable. Which is true and I am not like this person who likes to talk about feeling all the time”
She shares that the one thing she can’t handle in women are their emotions as she is not an emotional person.

She wants to be really happy and give back to society what she has got and compares herself to a badass badger. The honey badger is fearless and will attack anything if it is hungry even a snake. It just goes after what it wants without worrying too much about the consequences. In spite of her father’s death and dealing with the loss of a partner she describes herself as being happy and be grateful for the life she has been given.

Case Study: Tina - Crossroads

Tina aged 34 is an ACOA who would dread nights as it meant being beaten and thrown off on the road. She claims she has seen the worst side of the alcoholism.

Growing up in a home where her father drank a lot and was violent and abusive towards everyone in the family, her mom, and her two other sisters, she has spent many a night outside her house and at other peoples home. Her memories are such that she feels that her fear has not gone till this day.

“My childhood was very bad. I faced a lot , I actually faced a lot ....seeing my dad beating up my mom. The nights were very crucial to me. At that point in time I did not understand how to deal with the situation. Although my mom was there. We used to go to A La Tots (while mothers attend Al-Anon , the little kids attended this play cum support group )and I did not understand it but would go because we were told to go. I only realised that I was not the only one who had this problem at home. It was nice to (know this).”

“My school life was buggered up because of my dad drinking. I was not a good student. Full day at school , I would be thinking that I don’t want to go back home, because nights would again be the same, getting up again. School become a very secondary factor and that is the reason I did not complete my education. I failed my class a couple of times, not that I was a good student because now when I teach my children I know, I get my education back from them. Yeah that was my childhood. Definitely I was an introvert and I would not want
to... did not want to talk to anybody and I would feel shy and feel that they will shun me away. I would ...of a lot because of that fright. So that was it. ”

“I don’t know how she managed the 3 of us and my dad used to trouble her a lot. He was on the rig first. I don’t know how many years he had this problem, from the time I was in my mom womb I have suffered a lot. My mom had shared that my dad used to hit her a lot and kick her on the stomach and I was in the womb. So even till now, I have this some kind of fear. Once my father in law hit me and I am not scared of him, but I am not able to talk to him and can’t face him. Some kind of fear holds me back, we had a fight and I told him that I would call the cops on him. He struck me once but I felt like all my childhood came back and I was like, he is nobody to me, who is he, just my husband’s father and why should I take this from him.”

“When my mamma used to go to work she, used to drop us and my grand mom used to take care of us. Her brothers used to taunt her and say you are married and even then you are getting your problems here. So we had a very shuffling childhood like from here to there. We would go and stay at a friend’s place, sleep there in the night, come back carry our clothes and uniforms and go to school in the rains. I remember and you get these …… I try to forget it and I have tried to forgive my dad but the only thing is I have this fear in my heart, it is sunk into my roots and I am just not able to open up and talk to anybody. You are hurting me but I cannot tell them, I let people take advantage of me and I am getting bold now, I am getting over this slowly, it is very slow and it is not easy”

Life was not easy for the family with dad drinking and the impact has been there.

Added to this alcoholic home, they were deprived financially as her mother could not make ends. There were times her mom got help by putting them into a boarding school but it did not help as they were so preoccupied with their mom’s safety that they ran away from there, all three of them.

“ …to be honest we were in poverty and moms salary was not sufficient and bringing up 3 of us and troubling her for money and my dad would be drinking…he would not go for work half the time and his bosses would come home. It was an embarrassing moment; I would never be at home.”
Her relationship with her father was one where she was the one who got the most beating.

“Beating, I don’t remember, I took lot of pasting from my dad, I was the one who took the most beating. (Inconsistent) I was not rebellious but I was scared and he used to take advantage of me, as a fear factor he knew she would not do anything, whereas my other sisters they would do anything to bash him up.”

“There was a time my mom had to put him jail and he was in lock up for a few days and he was in court we, my sister and I, gave false testimony to get him out. So then he went to AA”

There were times when they enabled their dad and felt it was wrong to betray him. Loyalty to them was important as they felt he was family after all.

Her relationship with her mom is better than her dad. She was not around as she had to work but she has been the constant source of support and guidance and she credits her mom for helping her to deal with her life situation as of today.

“It was my mom, she really guided us and we are the way we are because of her, if she did not have to care, bringing up 3 girls, she could have taken up another man, and we would have been partying and being drunk and been different, she really held us and she was there for us. She said she would run away but she wanted to be there for us. Today we would have been on different ways, I wanted attention so anybody could have used me, anybody could have (had) people take advantage of me and she was strict. Today in society they respect us”

“My mom had no time, she used to go to work. There was no time. The minute she used to come home she was tired. I don’t know how she managed the 3 of us and my dad used to trouble her a lot.”

Her relationship with her grandmother was really good and she liked going there as it offered her respite from the constant abuse they were undergoing.

She began drinking at age 17 with her husband to give him company. She says he is a hard core drinker but does not believe he may be alcoholic. She drinks every weekend and with
friends when she goes partying. She does not feel she is an alcoholic but says she enjoys her drink.

“I do drink…started at age 17, I had beer with my husband, and I would not drink out of frustration, only for enjoyment. We used to go for parties in my compound. I can drink a quarter of vodka; I don’t drink to get drunk. I don’t drink in the mornings, I drink every week, I only drink with my family and don’t drink with people I don’t know and I am more mature now. When my husband is down he gets me good vodka and I have so many bottles that I can drink every day and get drunk, but I have kids and I don’t want the kids to follow.”

She also feels she fell in love very early, age 16 years and got married early at 23. She attributes this to a need for attention which leads to the current choice of partner. Her husband does provide for her materially, but is not around physically and it seems to her that she is a single parent. He works on the ship and is away for many months at a time. She is also resentful of looking after her in-laws. She has a poor relationship with her father in law who is also an alcoholic, as he had tried to sexually abuse her. He has been having affairs as her mother-in-law is bedridden since last few years.

She has recently learnt that her husband has another parallel live-in relationship with a foreigner and also has children from her. She feels very heartbroken and is taking drastic steps, she is planning to leave everyone and go. She is planning to take a job on the cruise and get away.

Today she is busy making her passport and will be leaving her children in the boarding as she can’t leave them anywhere else. She had not really thought about the impact this decision will have on her children who are all under 9 years.

“I am planning to walk out before he comes and I want to know …. After my mother in law closes her eyes my father in law may just kick me out of the house. I don’t want anything, I want peace of mind. My mom knew about the relationship before I knew, she did not want to break the marriage and she was more hurt than I was. I would not want to be ok. When he does something in front of me it upsets me a lot and he does want to let go of the marriage and he says he still loves me but I think it is all bull shit to me.”
Her emotional self is such that she feels embarrassed, fearful, and disappointed. She is unable to manage her children and finds parenting three kids tough.

“I have tried to forgive my dad but the only thing is I have this fear in my heart, it is sunk into my roots and I am just not able to open up and talk to anybody. You are hurting me, but I cannot tell them, I let people take advantage of me and I am getting bold now, I am getting over this slowly, it is very slow and it is not easy”

“Till today I don’t bring friends home as I have this phobia that (I) have a small house, I would tell lies that I have a big bungalow and I have a good sense of .... I used to make a lot of friends and I have this all top, rich friends and if they wanted to come home, I would say no. Today we are in touch and now they come home and I don’t disclose my problems to anybody except for the road where we were the talk of the town as everyone knew and saw us. They all supported us.

“......... I wouldn’t trust anybody else and that was the only thing.”

She is at crossroads in her life and believes she needs to start all over again.

“I hindered myself and listened to him and I gave up my career for him and today I am here because of him. I am just a normal housewife, I am 35 and I tell myself that I can do it, it is never too late to restart my life. I am definitely not going to be here”

Case Study: Ronaldo – Love is not enough

Ronaldo age 65 years, is a recovering alcoholic and staying in a shelter home. He remembers when he was growing up seeing his dad drink every day. His father would go for work the next morning. His father would say his prayers and be off for the day. He was head of accounts in a cement company and had done pretty well for himself financially. They lived in a palatial home of about 1600 sq. feet. There was no dearth of money and life was good. In fact Ronaldo describes life as too good, too comfortable and with too much love.
“My father, he used to drink daily, he loved drinking, but next morning he was ready in front of the altar saying a short prayer and he is off to work. He used to go to work. I was wondering after coming to AA whether to call him an alcoholic or what. His drinking after retirement was daily in the evening and afternoon. That was continued but he had his limits. When he had to say stop, stop and he had a certain say half a bottle, he used to tell mummy to serve him dinner and after dinner nothing could persuade him to take a drink. -- the thing was when he was working, before retirement he used to drink in the evening but he was ready and out dressed up with his tie and all, he was the head accountant for the Associated Cement Company of India. He was never made an absent at all and I don't know, he never got sick. He had his quota of whiskey; brandy all brands of top foreign liquors because at that time they gave permits to special people according to their salary. He used to get his quota of whiskey, beer he used to get his quota of beer…good beer, he used to have White Hot and all the foreign.”

The family would drink together on Sundays and Shandy (mix of beer and a cold drink) was served to the children. He was about 12 when he had his first drink. Though Ronaldo recollects that, it might be much earlier that he may have tasted alcohol. Brandy was routinely given for cold as remedy, it was applied on baby’s stomach, an egg flip (mixture of brandy and egg) was also given to children. He recollects he may have been around 6 years when he first tasted alcohol. Moreover he felt that culturally being an East Indian, drinking was common at weddings too. Even children were given some alcohol so as to entertain adults with dancing and their antics, it was culturally acceptable to do so.

“De de poranla de pivayla nachayla” (give to the kids they will dance)

He grew up with too much of freedom and love as he says even when he would come home drunk his mother would not say much and this continued.

“Mummy and dad were very loving. There was sometimes I think too much of love, like go late sometimes and all. Once Mom became very angry when I came drunk, completely drunk the boys had to reach me, I vomited and all. – ‘Go! you lie in your vomit, I am not going to clean you’, she said. But in the night I felt myself being cleaned, my shirt taken out, putting a new bed sheet… I really feel the love of my mother.”
Academics never got much importance and he dropped out after SSC to a life of thrill and fun seeking. He became a part of a gang which terrorised the area. He got into many fights. He felt that there was a need to be a part of the gang, herd, to do what everyone was doing and not be left out. The alcohol was a main topic of the gang.

“I don’t call anyone bad company…we always wanted to be in the herd, if you smoke, you having to be with them, if you don’t smoke they would call you a sissy and all that. In that way, I left school early just in my tenth standard or so. That time tenth standard was now 11th, anyway, Chapel Hood is a place where there were always fights. We were a gang, we made a gang of 4-5 guys, we were a dancing crowd, and we loved music and dancing. At the same time we boys being hot blooded, we were ready to have scraps and all that. We even formed a group called Lunics. A teenage gang and it even came in the papers, ‘Teenage Gang Bullies Bandra’”

“Alcohol was there, the main subject was alcohol. If it’s a party or a wedding, first thing to see how much booze is there.”

From alcohol he progressed to trying drugs like hash and ganja. His house at one point turned into a hangout for drinking, drugs and music.

“ It was just too much…wild. Mom used to let us go and come. She was very strict, if I came later than seven o clock, then 2-3 whips with the thin cane I used to get. After that she let go, you come high, drunk and all and all, she would say, ‘Go, go take your own food’. Of course we had servants but they were sleeping. Then my house became a jam up place. Most of the top musicians of Bandra used to come and jam up there, guitar, bass, drum. We had singing, I used to love singing, and I was a good singer… music and high, music then I went into Ganja and Charas.”

His father retirement meant a struggle to survive financially. He began stealing things from home, selling it and supporting his alcoholism and addictions.

“For my alcohol, I used to do what all. Sell papers, do this, do that, sometimes try and take out brass articles – stand on the road, I became too much. I see any friend coming “how
about giving me one ten bucks?” That time the alcohol was cheap. They’d say ‘No, I have only five bucks’, and I would say, give it.”

By the time he was 17-18 he was a full-fledged alcoholic and addict. His mother, he felt was never strict. She only told him not to do these things, nothing more. He would rob silver coins from his father and sell it and he and his brother would sell it to go see movies. His brother was also alcoholic like him and has came in sobriety later on.

His mother was too loving, too lenient. She enabled his alcoholism by allowing him to do whatever he wanted. His dad and mom had a lot of fights, which would turn violent at times. Even he and his brother would interfere and at times they have physically hit their father to make him back off. His mom had a problem that she would not keep quiet and this would escalate the fights. The impact was such that till today he has not wanted to get married, though now he feels he needs a companion. He felt that there was “don’t care attitude” as long he had his drinks he was happy.

His mentor was his mother, whom he felt loved him a lot, but gave him no direction. He had others who mentored him, like some of his friends who he is in touch today.

In his youth he has many relationships with women, “Puppy loves”, none lasted as he was not serious about them. He had three women in his life who were serious about him, the relationship did not work out with any, as he was into alcohol and was also not able to commit. He is still in touch with one of the women who married his best friend. They write to each other and she visits him when she comes to India. He realises that his drinking destroyed the relationships as he loved alcohol more than any woman in his life. He also felt that his mother never really encouraged him to settle down when he wanted to do.

“I got hooked on alcohol and at that time when I was drinking, I fell in love with this girl here. I thought she is a nice girl from this convent… I thought it was just for time being, but she took a liking and she turned out to be very much this thing in love. For ten years I visited her, I will make it short, she did not like me drinking. Because of my drinking – she was a fat girl, my drinking she slimmed down …well.”
“Every time we went for a show here there, she makes a nice outfit and all and I spoil the show by getting drunk and sleeping. She was always so much in love with me, she makes me sleep on her lap, and anyone comes to dance and all she said ‘no. I can’t’. I used to tell her go, go ahead and dance, some good friend comes. That love lasted for ten years and – I told her you go. No, we planned, we got engaged. She’s saying get married, get married. I said no but I don’t have a proper job…we had a proper house, everything was there. I had a good job, I left it. Alcohol took me away from her, I could have become a captain”

“All love with alcohol, even my girlfriend was there whom I loved very much but you tell, come on Ronaldo, we are going for drink, I will leave her and go. She would say, don’t drink na. I used to go and come and she used to get very angry not talk for 2 - 3 days. I remember I spoilt her ten years…she wanted to get married because she also had nobody.”

His work life was also affected as he did not hold a job for very long, moving from Customs to a five star hotel to Mill to other petty jobs and to unemployment. Today all he does recollect is how alcohol “numbed his ambitions”. He was impulsive and if he had the urge to drink he would just quit his job and not wait for evening also. He lost many jobs because of this.

His homes were sold twice and all the time the money he had got from there, he used it to drink. His brother came into sobriety and has a place of his own and is doing a job. Their relationship was one of fights and disagreements and he would steal even from his brother. Now, since both are sober, the relationship has improved. He shares what happened after he sold his house:

“And that money which was balance after of that house…after buying a house, I had about one and a half to two lakhs. You won’t believe; I bust it in one month. Going to five star hotels, going here, going there, spent all on booze. One thing I don’t understand I never spend it on any woman in all that time… it was only booze.”

Today he lives in the shelter and helps around those persons who are fighting with giving up alcohol and he does some odd jobs like caregiving for old persons. Today, he shares that though he wants to have a relationship he can’t afford it.
He is more attuned to his emotional self today and understands his over-confidence and pride
“The thing is I am working on my emotions and my feelings, all my character defects and all. And I tell you there is another thing that programme tells you, surrender my whole life and will to the care of god.”

Case Study: Howard- When the going gets tough, the tough get going

Howard is 23 years old, who recently lost his father to alcoholism. He has been working since the age of 13 years to support his family of one sister, one physically challenged brother and his mom. In his words,

“Basically life was quite hard”

His father was an active alcoholic and was also quite violent and abusive. He remembers when he was growing up that in a week they would go hungry three days because his father would spend the money on alcohol and his mother was a housemaid so she could not make the needs meet.

“I can only picture every time there would be fights and my mom would get pissed. Half the time we would get pasting (beaten up) and my mom would come and protect us, whenever mom would get pasting we would go – and protect her. It was a hard life and in a week 2-3 times we would go to bed hungry. So that time it was quite hard. Because my dad would spend mostly on his money drinking so the house was (on mother)… and she couldn’t (manage), not only me, my brothers and sisters would also go hungry, everyone in fact.”

Being beaten, physically with a belt both for him, and his family was not an uncommon picture. Being thrown out in the night and spending his night outside was also a common day occurrence. If anyone intervened his father would be verbally abusive to them.

“Thrown out of the house means, my dad would fight and latch the door and say get out of the house. There are many nights we had actually slept out of the house, literally out. If he would become sober he would take us in by four o clock, five o clock or next day morning
at nine o clock whenever he would get up. After that I would have bath and go to school. My teachers would understand my problem”

His relationship with his father was the most problematic one and he felt unwanted all the time. His father did not even like him eating his food and would say he is freelodging on him

“There were hundred varied issues like I am not doing anything; according to him I was not studying properly. ‘So why are you eating in the house?, you are having “Fukatka” stuff. Eating everything free, get out, don’t eat anything of mine, I bought it’, he would say. I would feel neglected Na. I would feel I am not wanted over here. At times I would feel like I should just go away. –I could go to Goa, my grandmother would take good care of me. But my school was here so I did not want to drop out of my education.”

The relationship was very poor and the cycle of abuse and rescue when he was younger was played out regularly. His father would shout at him, abuse him, ask him to get out from the house and not eat his food. His mother would rescue him, saying that she was getting him food from her money and then let him eat.

“When arguments would start……he would close the gas and say don’t use my gas. Not only this he would say no putting the light, no putting the fan. It was so hot he would put off the fan and keep (it off )full night. Actually drinks is what made him mad. Otherwise when he was sober he was good... Drinks are the only thing that was a problem for him. ”

Since home life was so unbearable, he would not spend any time at home and this angered his father even more. He accused him of using his house like lodging and boarding place. His father’s suspiciousness affected his relationship with his sister and he could not even sit and talk to her without being questioned by his father as to what were they doing together. His father’s allegation was that they had a sexual relationship and not a platonic one like that of a brother and sister, which was untrue and hurt him and made him want to be out of the house.

This affected him emotionally and he learnt to not share at home. Even till date he does not share with anyone and keeps things within himself. He has learnt not to trust as a result of the negative experience with his dad
“There was a lot of narrow mindedness involved. Basically whatever trouble I was having, I never shared it with anybody in my home. Till today I don’t share. If I was sick also I would either tell my aunty. I would go with her to the doctor or I would go by myself or with my friends. But at home I wouldn’t tell. Till now I don’t tell. Till today I can say I keep it within myself.”

In all this school was the only safe place and he was happiest when he was in school. The school provided him with not only lunch but also breakfast. He hated Sunday when there was no school and he had to stay at home with his father who would be drinking all day.

“Thrice a week we would go to bed hungry. I would not mind about me because during school time I would get my afternoon lunch. Everything was taken care by my school from my uniform to my clothes to my shoes to breakfast every morning, milk everything; my school took care of everything”

He had an extremely supportive neighbour whom he called his second mom, an aunt and other neighbours who gave him food or shelter when this violence ensued. His neighbours have been supportive and almost everyone knew his father alcoholism and reached out to him helping in their own little ways.

“In school everybody was supportive. My teachers, my principal, even my neighbours, everyone was supportive. Everybody knew, almost hundred percent everyone knew and all of them were supportive”

His relationship with his mother is poor. It is only one of, ‘have you eaten’ or concern for his health but as such he does not share with her anything not even if he is ill. He will go to his neighbour or his aunt but not his mother.

His relationship with his friends was affected as his father would abuse them and so many of them stayed away for him.

“Most of the times because of me, my dad would give bad words to the neighbours also. Like whomever I would go for protection. For this reason at that point of time I lost my friends because they said that your dad told us not to talk, if we talk, then he gives bad words to our parents. So better you be away from me or you are away from us. And my dad
had also gone to their house saying if I see you talking to them then I will give you all bad words. Then my school teachers got to know about this so I took advice from my school teachers. So my school teachers tried even coming to my house but it was to no avail. They tried to convince my dad but my dad didn’t listen. But my dad wouldn’t listen to anybody of them… that’s why.”

He has faced some emotional abuse from outsiders who would say he will also become an alcoholic like his father.

“His father is a drunkard so he will also turn out to be a drunkard like that only’. I would not listen to it because I don’t give importance to such -. It’s up to me no? No one can control me, I can control myself. Till today I don’t drink and I don’t smoke.”

However once he did commit a crime due to the deprivation. He wanted to make quick money and he stole money from the place where his mother worked. All he wanted was a mobile phone. He was caught and he says that the incident humiliated him so much that he turned over a new leaf. He did not like being called a “Chor ”. He took a while to earn the trust back and he was lucky that the lady did not lodge a complaint. He felt at that time in his life he had no one to share or support him and his relationship with the opposite sex had not been very successful. Having had a break up, he completely withdrew and had only one friend and his neighbour who supported him through the crisis. He moved on and was able to continue his education all the time working his way through school and college. Though, his academic performance was not upto as much as others expected from him. He shares that he was affected by the alcoholism and the fights and violence at home.

“When I was in ninth I would go for odd jobs like catering. That was the time I started my first tuition. Up till today I am doing the same. Right now I am on full time job – I am giving tuitions four times a week. When I have time I do catering depending on my shifts. So there is something I am doing, I am the only person who is earning for the house. I am taking care after my family, my mom. I am now 23. I can say I became more responsible after my dad’s death…I became more responsible. Before I was like there is somebody who is providing, there was a Chalta Hai attitude. When my dad became sicker then I was thinking that now nothing doing, I have to be serious in life”
Today his hard work has paid off and he works in a steel company and has been recently promoted. His main aim is that he wants to see his family lead an easier life than him and for this he works hard.

“The thing that motivates me is that just because I had a hard time in my childhood to make sure that I can make life easier for me as well as my mother and my younger sister.”

What kept him going was that he found spiritual strength and started going to church. He consciously decided that he would not drink or smoke as he had first-hand witnessed the effects of alcoholism and seen not only his dad but 4 other fathers around him die due to alcoholism. Though his friends have pressurised him or tricked him into drinking or smoking he has as yet not succumbed to peer pressure.

“Drinks are the only thing that was a problem for him. He would drink this Desi Daru, liquor. Not this international, branded alcohol. That affected him and ultimately that was only his downfall.”

Case Study: Sheldon- This too shall pass

Sheldon aged 30 years, works in the aviation sector and has not been exposed to a bad childhood. He knew his father drank but since his father lived away from home due to his work, he did not grow up seeing an alcoholic father. When his father would come home on leave he would get drunk badly (binge drink) and they would feel something is not right but later when he came for good he started drinking every day and then they felt it was a serious problem.

“Experience was normal; I did not know I had an alcoholic parent till about 2008 when I was 25-26 years old. Everything was normal. But on and off we had this thing when he would come on leave, there was something amiss, he would get drunk very badly but we thought it was a one off case and did not know it was alcoholism and after 2008 it became very regular but we still did not know what is alcoholism. After 1-2 years it got more violent, leaving the house, falling down, it got to a point when he started abusing daily, waking me up in the middle of the night, sitting outside the house and drinking, going out and
drinking. We went to local church and we understood about alcoholism and we understood that it was a disease. To come to terms it is also difficult…we could not accept that my father could be an alcoholic. But he was a downright alcoholic, then we accepted and then solution to the problem, first we tried a non-legal solution, we took him for AA but he came only once and he did not want to come”.

They took action and admitted him for treatment under false pretext and now though he is not fully sober, he has had relapses and slips in and out. Sheldon does not let this affect his feelings.

“No, it has affected me in a positive way and I don’t want to take to alcoholism, it has not affected me in a bad way, I did not have a bad childhood. I had good relationships, friendships, no deprivations, nothing. Career choices maybe I am disappointed, but it had absolutely no affect. Day to day basis there was a fear about what is going to happen. I was not affected; I completed my Masters when he was in alcoholism. He woke me in the middle of the night and it was 3 o clock, it did not affect me even though I had exams the next day.”

As a child he never felt he was deprived or that he had to compromise on anything. His relationships were not affected and his life was like any other kid who grew up with father not being at home or away at work for long durations.

His relationship with his mother is not as good as the one with his father. He could talk to his father but his mother gets easily worked up and upset and uses things said in confidence against him when she gets angry. His other intimate relation is going on since some years though he has had break ups, he is in a relationship with someone at present. He has one sister who was diagnosed with a mental illness but she is on medication and is dealing with it.

“She is hyper but(and) she changes her mind every 5 minutes that is good for her. She completely forgets what has happened.”

Though he is not as happy with his career choices he does not feel that his being an ACOA affected him in many ways. His attitude is that, today it could be his father’s alcoholism, tomorrow it might be some other problem. He feels that no problem stays for ever so why get
worried about it. He also universalized the problem saying that every person will face some problem in their life, one could not allow it to affect one's serenity.

He feels that this change in him is due to yoga and his guru. He was earlier affected by everything around him, but with regular practice of yoga he has been able to maintain his balance and keep calm whatever happens around him.

He has felt shame and guilt and embarrassment of inviting friends over as his father could be drinking but he deals with it better now.

As an ACOA he has had some experiences like being woken up in the middle of the night during his exams. His way was to deal with instead of being upset by using the self-talk that it was for only one night not forever.

"**Functionality wise there was no problem, everyone did their own role, but peace wise there was a problem. There was no peace in the house. Of course it is temporarily there now."**

He believes that “...suppose there is nobody, it is like a car, one wheel is slow, the other wheels have to pick up. That's the way it is, you have to do, it is not something great but everybody in their own way have to do something, it is no big deal."

His emotional self is very logical, rational and in the here and now. He has gone through a phase when he was very angry and upset, to now when he felt things around him would not change and he had to change himself. His interview revealed that some areas of his life he did not want to share at all or he minimized the problem. His ability to empathize with his mother or with his sister revealed a certain level of detachment that is common in ACOAs as revealed from interviews with professionals and people who have worked with ACOAs.

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**Case Study: Janhavi - The Bitter Pill**

Janhavi is 28 years ACOA, she is a medical professional, a doctor. Her father is an active alcoholic and continues drinking everyday.
When she was born her father was having a job abroad and due to some problem she was not able to be with her parents till she is 2 years old. She was initially brought up by her grandparents and later she went to live with her parents. Her parents worked abroad and she often came down for holidays. During these holidays she would stay with an uncle and aunt who were also doctors. Around 7 years of age, the sexual abuse started which continued till about 16 years. The uncle would molest her and she feels it happened to her older sister too. He would touch them when they went to take aashirwad (blessings).

“It was nothing, but yeah, he used to try and kinda touch me, he even touched me many times, whenever I would do that he would touch me many times. Whenever I used to touch his feet, he would pinch me there and touch me there (gestured to her breast). Obviously I did not like it. Initially I used to not like it and obviously I never liked it only. Pehla toh itna samj mein nahin aata tha ... but dheere dheere, you know, it started getting too much and then I like, once I told him that you know, I told him we shouldn’t be doing this, (I remember I did not tell you that last time) and then he said that “ok fine, then there is no connection between you and me”. “He would be like this was, when I had jaundice. When we went home, he was scared that I would tell my aunt about it, so then he took me to where you keep the god and made me promise that I will not tell it anyone. ………. ”

She never spoke about the abuse as she felt no one would believe her and also he made her take a promise in front of god that she would not tell this to anyone. She shares that when she was growing physically it was not a happy time for her. She did not like it because it meant more abuse. She shares her thoughts on her uncle:

“Now also if I meet him, I am not very comfortable, I am not very comfortable, if he is giving me an injection or something I always make sure my aunt is around. Because I don’t know, I just don’t …..but though I know I am old enough now, I still you know, I don’t think he is okay, I think he is still a pervert. So that’s how because of this I was …. I used to not like when I used to grow …. (points to breasts), I used to lie down on the stomach, I did not want it to grow, and it has affected me in a very bad way, as I told you that I don’t trust men now ……., because of this like that, but eventually I will get over it, I know, yeah but now toh, I mean I am not so interested in doing all that, I am far away from all that but …..”
Her relationship with her dad was one of fear, he was strict. When he would drink he would be verbally abusive and sometimes would hit her mom. He used to do that more when they were younger but not now as they are older. Fights between her parents were common after he drank too. They would have verbal fights. He father controlled everyone including what they would pursue professionally.

“My dad always had a drinking problem, in fact even now if he drinks he gets a little abusive, he becomes… I don’t know, alcohol aggravates your anger, it does that so for small things he gets angry, he kind of abuses, but now he has reduced, it is not that much. When I was a child it was more. It was more towards my mom. He is pretty abusive to my mom; it is not too much now”

She has also been a witness to her father attempting suicide and that was a very traumatic period for her and her family. They were able to prevent it but it was a difficult time for the family.

Her relationship with her mom is based on respect. She is a very simple person who had an early marriage and has been a stay at home mom. She is not so worldly wise and she now tries to be friends with her daughters but she feels it is a bit too late. She believes her mom had not been there for her and not explained anything to her. When she had her first period her mom put it aside saying she had a lot of fish and she must not do so. She did not know how to deal with menarche and would not even share with her mom if she had period pain when she would get her periods. She had not told her friends that she had her periods for about 2 years. There was a fear that everyone will say she had grown up and she did not want to grow up.

She also feels the worst period in her life was her adolescence and she never wants to revisit it again.

“I mean that was stupid, I got my chums (periods) very young at the age of 11. Today of course kids get it early, much earlier. As I was very young, 10 and a half or 11... she was angry with me, not very angry, she took care of me but psychologically she never told me that it is ok, it happens. After that when it used to happen, I used to hide about it. In school
also when they would ask did you get it, I would say NO, I would hide it and for about 2 years I hid it because I used to think that maturing so early is not a good sign.

“I think my adolescent was bad, I wouldn’t like to go back to that age, I would not want to because those were the crucial years and I think I was dealing with everything on my own, I did not have any guardian to tell me that it was ok or not ok, there was no one, that was one of the problem”

Her career choices were controlled by her father and she was not happy but she was obedient and went to study medicine and become a doctor. She was an excellent student in whatever she pursued like swimming, karate or dance. In spite of this her parents never encouraged her to pursue these activities and would insist on her studying. The period she stayed with her uncle and aunt she did really badly in her studies and though she cleared her exams it was not her best performance.

She did medicine because it was what her parents wanted but she is not driven or satisfied with her career choice. She is more inclined towards dance and performing arts but always knew she would not have her parents support. Also she feels very obliged to her father who had paid for her to get admission in medicine. She says that he has invested about 35 lakhs in her and it would be incorrect to give it up. She will have to listen to them saying that she wasted their money which she does not want to hear. She reveals her feelings

“Now I am not my best at that because my passion is something else, my …you know, somewhere you don’t love what you are doing but because you are not doing what you love, it is not that I am not good at my work, I am not making the kind of money as my friends are, they are making a hell of a lot of money than me, I don’t have that passion of having my own clinic, though I am appreciated for my work, it is not that my patients are not happy they are very happy, but the thrill of making money is not there. I feel that if I get into dance, I have joined now, they (parents) don’t know”

Her first relationship was when she was just out of school. Her first boyfriend was a controlling kind of person. He would beat her, torture her and she found it difficult to break off. He reconfirmed her mistrust in men which had stayed on after her sexual abuse from uncle. Later on once she entered college she also had a tendency to fall in more easily. She
would easily fall in love and then be heartbroken as the boy she liked would be dating someone or it was one sided, or she took time to make a commitment and the person had moved on. Currently she has been in a long distance relationship with someone for five years. The last two years she has fallen out of love and does not want to marry him though her family is making preparations for her wedding. While in this relationship she had a slight fling with another person and it did not work out as he went back and started dating someone else. She was heartbroken but the next day she went and joined a dance class and felt better.

She feels that it may just fall apart on its own. Though she does not realise the inconsistency of dating two guys she does not feel it is cheating.

“I am not cheating on him or seeing other guys but it is just happening. If I would have started liking someone to alag hota, I do have crushes but I don’t love him.”

Her other close relationship have been to her Nanima, her grandmother. She was attached to her as she spent her first two years of life with her. She has been a source of nurturance for her.

She says each time her heart breaks she learns something and then moves on. The last time it broke it made her want to do well.

“I told you that I always had an inferiority complex even if I was good or not, I always felt others were better than me, they are smarter than me. I don’t know why I have such stupid inhibitions. In my building they would have programs among children. I would know the answers but then I would think I am wrong and not answer. Even now I check with Google and then feel even if I am (right)”

“Something goes wrong, the negativity is still there, even in dance I feel that if I am dancing, I will forget my steps”

“I don’t know how I coped up.....and I think I was just studying and studying and friends and studying and friends... it just passed by. I did not have anyone elder like a friends mom, friends also I did not have any big friends, I used to be very quiet, not that I was an introvert, I was still very good, in fact when I had joined swimming I would lie as that is what I like doing and I knew my parent would not like it”
“Because all these years I have been in a shell”

“I was always very conscious about everything, my school, my college, I don’t know what I was so conscious about, and I had lot of inhibitions, though I was very good in everything”

“Now I just want to live my life, now because I don’t want to become old and think that I should have done this. See your parents are not going to there forever.”

Today her emotional self is a complex bundle of low self-esteem, anger and feelings of dissatisfaction.

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Case Study: Hari - The Lone Ranger

Hari is 21 years old ACOA. He was 12 when he lost his father prematurely to alcoholism. His father was drinking heavily at the time of his death. He felt that when he was growing up and his father used to drink, they never realised that he was an alcoholic as he was heading an organisation in a post akin to a CEO. He worked till the end of his life. He hardly had absenteeism and had not taken days off till the last stages of his alcoholism when he was hospitalised.

“But it was around the last year before his death that things began becoming more serious and it needed more attention. Meaning, initially he would drink, my father had a habit whenever he used to come home he used to have a drink from a nearby bar. However, later on he started drinking heavily on occasions where alcohol was available and even when alcohol was not available he would try to make an arrangement for it wherever he would go. Carry a small peg with him; carry a small miniature bottle with him”

He went through a “why did this happen to me, why were things not normal” and a sense of disappointment with what life had meted out to him.

“Why couldn’t things be normal that was my main question? I have seen people around going on vacation with their families, people on Sundays just going out for dinner or
somewhere or doing nothing just sitting on Marine Drive. Why couldn’t that happen with me - why God has to do this to me, what mistake have I done, God is so bad”

He shares the emotional experience of growing up with an alcoholic father where the main feelings he felt were of anger, isolation, sadness, being hurt, a sense of shame and embarrassment.

“One person who was my source of pride at one point of time slowly became a source of embarrassment. He did not know what he was speaking, he could not walk properly, talk properly. At that moment there were great feelings of anger because people would mock him, people would mock me.”

“There were moments when people on the road you know, any odd person I met, let’s say some uncle or aunty who never even knows me would one fine day just bump into me and say; as though he’s seen something great; “I saw your father drinking under the steps today’ or ‘I saw your father standing there in the bar and drinking’, ‘oh your father drinks one bottle in one shot!’. I did not know what answers to give these people. It was for them like they are watching some great adventure taking place. I used to just walk. I used to come home and cry. That was what was pretty harsh and plus at that moment I was very small…like how old I would be…ten or eleven. That was how it developed basically. Those are the memories I have. ”

Besides this kind of insensitivity from outsiders, he faced emotional neglect from his parents as one (father) was drinking and the other (mother) had no option but to work harder to maintain the status quo

“My mom had to go to office that time as finances had gone for a toss totally because of alcoholism. No, he had a very good job. He was there in the job till the end. But, he had a very high thing; he had a very high post in the organisation. He was an executive director. That’s one post bigger than the director. Everything went for a toss, all the savings, all the cash, all went into alcohol. So my mother at one point of time became the quote unquote pseudo sole earning member of the family”
Though he says that he did not face any physical or verbal abuse, he did feel very lonely as parents were not around for him like other parents.

His relationships were influenced by the presence of alcohol in the family. He felt his closeness to his father was affected and they grew apart due to his drinking habits. This did result in him being close to his mother later in his life. He was influenced by significant others like his grandmother whom he described as being closest to, especially when he was growing up. There was also an AA friend who helped him cope with the alcoholism and understand it was a disease and a college teacher.

His peer relationships as he grew up stemmed from a need to please and thus he shares he became vulnerable to being used by these friends to do their notes and assignments. He tried unsuccessfully to enter a heterosexual relationship but he faced rejection from the girl. He is shy and not very expressive still, which acts as a barrier to establish relationships. This is a common feature of ACOAs- a difficulty in intimacy as boundaries were never clarified.

His family life had an element of unspoken rules like don’t talk about what is happening at home. He also faced shame and ridicule from neighbours and relatives who were disdainful of his father drinking and at social events would ask him if he was okay to be present there. A constant feeling of being an isolate is a part of his personality now.

“My relationship apart from my family with people has been very poor. They are on the way of improving now. My father passed away in 2004 and now it is 2013. Years have passed, now things are slowly, slowly improving. I am little less withdrawn, I am more open.”

The death of his father spurred him in a need to prove himself and for a while he became a rebellious person. He felt no one had the right to tell him what to do as he had lit the pyre of his father.

“I was pretty calm and composed because I was more or less prepared.”

His need to prove himself was so strong, that he went on to excel in his studies and stood first in his school, thus taking on the role of the family hero. He went on to study in one of the best colleges in the country.
“(I wanted) to show somewhere, that look, I am also someone, don’t think that I have fallen down. I don’t want your sympathy”

He used his negative life experience to make a positive change in his life instead of being a victim.

Today he copes with his life without his father, having found a father substitute in his mother’s male friend. His main coping is his spirituality and he is a follower of the Bhakti movement. He has hobbies which are solo in nature like reading and travelling, again reflecting his feeling of isolation. He travels alone almost everywhere.

He has emotionally managed himself and on the surface seems to be well-adjusted, responsible and mature. Beneath the exterior, is his vulnerability, his shyness and feelings of being different from others and a sense of being isolated, that only he is aware of. If one understands emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, use, understand and manage emotions then one can say he has a high EI which is reflected in the ESAP he also took. But at times his emotional canvas and that of many ACOAs is not captured in the scale as the ability to perceive itself is faulty due to messages given in childhood like ‘don’t feel’ or ‘don’t talk’ or ‘don’t think’, which acts as barrier to the EI development.

He looks forward to life as he prepares himself for a competitive exam.

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**Case Study: Rooney – One day at a time**

Rooney is 57 years old. He is a recovering alcoholic and has been sober for about 18 years now. He grew up first seeing his father drinking and much later his mother also took to alcohol.

He describes his family as a typical orthodox and God fearing family who were regular at the church. He said though there was love he felt his parents loved his eldest brother more than him. His thinking he feels, from the beginning was negative. He was also embarrassed by his parents who had loud fights which neighbours could hear. He said they never failed to enquire about it and he would lie saying, it was just talking. He now sees this as enabling
behaviour. He felt that he was denying things they did and went into a shell and became a loner.

“What happened I don’t know may be... The fights started between them because they both were drinking. Fifteen years it was okay, there was good loving thing and everything. But then my thinking was so negative you know, I don’t know... since childhood I would not mix with the other boys. There was something lacking because I wanted to hide my parent’s fights. Because when parents are fighting people come to know... because neighbours are not putting cotton in their ears or something. So when I used to go out people used to ask me, are your mom and dad was fighting yesterday? So I would say, no they were talking... Then I just used to enable them, would say okay they were fighting, so what’s the big deal. They were talking and now they were fighting. I was just denying the fact that they were doing the wrong things or something or whatever. Then I went into a shell, inferiority complex I would not share with my peers I would not mix with friends.”

His academic performance dropped and he repeatedly failed his exams before dropping maths and thus finishing his SSLC which is today equivalent to 11 standard exams. He said he could not share the things that were happening at home. At this time he also fell into bad habits like he started drinking alcohol, playing truant in school, forging his parent’s signatures on remarks.

“I failed thrice in my tenth at that time, we had eleventh as SSC. In eleventh it was good that my teacher told me to drop maths. Because till tenth I had taken maths only for that SSC board examination I was told to drop maths. That was a big blow because as it is I am doing accounts and office so – dropping accounts and dropping maths. But then maths I couldn’t cope up with in the tenth standard. Because I was not attending school, not properly. Happenings at home the pressure of their fighting, at night no sleep, going in the classroom and sleeping, bunking the first period, attending 2 periods and then going home after recess or not going home, sleeping in gardens, there till one o clock in the afternoon and then go home. There was no one to look after, any records, any remarks I would just sign my parent’s signature and tell them my parents had seen. So that was forgery and that was that much. Once in a while my parents came to know I would take them. My parents were quite possessive of me they would say why you are bringing the
child you see, you are teachers Na. I would feel ashamed that I have done something wrong and my parents are taking off (means supporting) for me.

He felt that there was really nobody to care for him. Even when his school detected the behaviour and called his parents, his parents covered up for him and he felt really bad that they were supporting his negative behaviours.

He dropped out of school after 11th std as he had to take financial responsibility. His life was affected when the mills closed down and his dad lost his job. He felt that he was deprived of education and that was most important loss due to parental alcoholism. He had no choice as his other siblings, all boys were much younger and the oldest brother had passed away due to alcoholism. All his brothers’ excerpt one became alcoholics and had to go into recovery. One is still active, one is social drinker and one is 12 years sober.

“Possibly, (it is) in the genes or the hereditary factor. I don’t know whether science will be able to prove it but it’s something like, it’s called a family disease. Possibly the environment in which you grow up, the parents are there, parents are drinking, the children follow”

He attributes alcoholism to genes as well the environment of seeing his parents drink. His relationship with his mother was that he would trick her and take her for a ride. Since she was not educated and trusted him to do his studies, she would not know he had not studied or he had not done his work. Also in the later stages he and his brothers would have to get her the alcohol as she had become addicted to it. His feelings of neglect present themselves as early on he learnt to care and look after himself.

“Mother was fine. Sometimes when I used to find her, I used to shout at her for not taking care.”

“My parents were also in their own world and there were five of us to look after so nobody like…I don’t remember that was when I have no idea as such, I started some odd jobs, and nobody was there in my life. No significant person that’s why that coaching which comes na… that mentor type that tutorship was not there. So I had to look after my own self.”
There was – less of partying, less of fun wherever because I don’t know… I took up a job which was you know… I could not socially get together… there was nothing like restaurant jobs start from 12 to 12. So where we had the time, I didn’t have the time work was full time. Friends were there but that was only once a week. If they told me, Rufus take an off I would say, no I can’t because if I get one day absent it means losing one day of a salary.”

His adolescent years he spent a lot of time at work and had no fun at all as he did not have time to even go for a party since he worked till 12 am.

He did have relationships with a few girls and even dated. One relationship broke down because of his parental alcoholism and another girl whom he proposed to refused him as she was not ready. He was not drinking at that time but was so angry at this refusal that he went drinking. He eventually married someone else in haste to prove a point to the girl who refused him. This decision had a heavy cost him as he ended up marrying another alcoholic. Though the marriage lasted a good 19 years, it was an alcoholic marriage as both were drinking together regularly and partying. He did not realise he had a problem till he took his wife for treatment and a recovering alcoholic who was a counsellor pointed out that he too could be an alcoholic. His wife died prematurely from liver cirrhosis. At the time of her death she was sober for about 2 years.

He bid his time and came to recovery only 6 years after that. He was also working and dealing with alcohol since he was a bartender and alcohol was free and available he felt he took really long to come to recovery. He still manages the stock of alcohol bottles and is in charge of the inventory and describes this as a slippery place. But since he follows the AA program, he calls his sponsor if he has an urge to drink.

He has one son from that marriage who has been staying with his mother-in-law since a young age. He does not have a close relationship with him as he was drinking and so was his wife and they could not look after him at all.

“Ya, I lost him in the formative years. Because I couldn’t care for him, my mother-in-law picked him up and took him under her care. Today also he is with her only. Now he takes care of her… she is about 75-76. I don’t tell him you come and stay with me. He’s now
attached to my mother-in-law. Because see, we were both drinking and we fell sick. He had
to be admitted to Kasturba. I think he had jaundice or something. I think she found out
that you all can’t take care of him…I will keep him”

At that time his mother-in-law stepped in as she felt that both were incapable to look after the
small child. Today he has a 30 year son. Parenting is a challenge for ACOA especially since
role modelling is absent. He was not looked after or cared as a child too.

About 3 years back he remarried. His present wife was married to an alcoholic who had
deserted her. The present marriage is better than the first one as there is communication and
he has a good relationship with her. His son and her three children get along well. He did feel
that only one child has had problem blending in the family. The problems in his earlier
relationships he says were due to lack of communication, in his first marriage, with his son,
with his parents and with his brothers too.

Today his philosophy is simple

“Because today I know after the AA programme, that you act positively, you get positive
results.”

“Act, let go of the past. The past cannot change but the present is there in your hand. Live
one day at a time like today.”

“One more – god will do it for me provided I do it for myself.”

Case Study: Reva – The Star

Reva age 60, is an active ACOA who helps other ACOAs and shares her experiences of
being an ACOA.

Her childhood memories are of waiting for her father with her face on the window not
knowing how he would come, would he be carried or would he come by himself.
“I remember as a little girl with the face against the window waiting for my dad to come home. Since we lived in a hilly place the road was zigzag and up and down and sloppy because of the hill. So always that fear, how is he going to come home today, is he going to be brought by somebody because when he used to come home drunk invariably people used to hold him and bring him home. Soon as the evening comes five o clock, six o clock all three of us, my sibling and myself would be there at the window looking for my dad to come. And then the apprehension, how is he going to come home today is he going to come walking on his own or will he be brought by somebody. So that fear is still there in my mind and that is something I can visualise very very well even today.”

Her relationship with her dad is where he was involved with them. He would help them with their studies since his command on languages was very good. He would play little games with them and when he would drink he was a different person.

“He was very affectionate; he really had a heart of gold”

“When he used to cut vegetables, we children used to crowd around him. You know what he would do... he would pick cabbage or cauliflower he would hide a sweet inside, a chocolate or something he would cut it in front of us and say –chocolates for you!!!.”

The feeling of shame was all pervading throughout childhood and adolescence. She never could get friends home or take her father to school. School was where she did well. She was an outstanding student, and won a scholarship every year till she completed her graduation.

“One was fear and one was this one, nice one. And another memory as such would be the one of shame, I have always had that in me. I remember during my school days or during my college days also, parents would come very proudly to the colleges of their children. But then somehow somehow in me there was that element of shame. I could not take him to my college though he used to come but I wanted him to be sober. That shame was there in me. I don’t know why I could not get that shame out. I could not proudly introduce him to my friends or bring my friends home because I would not know what the house condition would be. So that element of shame was there for a very very long time I would say. So I never took him to my school or my college even for my admission, for my school admission my sister used to come. For my college admission I went alone. And also to get
medals and all those things because academically I was brilliant and I used to be good --- to get medals and this and that, but I used to be little wary about calling my father. Though I would say that during my college days he was sober he was not even drinking but that element of shame had gone very deep in me. “

“That (school) is where I really shone, I was a prefect, and I was a house captain so I had so many diversions. So I was not given to any depression, only the home scene was a little sad for me, but even then I got lost in books and studies.”

Her relationship with her mum was one that children shared in those days. They were dutiful and obedient and did what she asked them to do. She says that all the three of the them were model children and never troubled their mother. It was not that she was close or confided in her.

What stays with her is that her father and her mother were very proud of her and her academic achievements. She regrets that she never felt proud of him or his talents like his command over languages. The feeling of shame was what was there all the time.

“But one thing is there even when I was growing up I don’t think I blamed him for anything, I didn’t blame my state though there was that little - feeling of want, for instance when I compared myself with my other peers I found that I was lacking. I was lacking in the sense that they would wear good good dresses and good accessories, all kinds of trinkets matching costume jewellery and all that and I would not indulge, I would not even…. And mind you the girl that I was, I wanted it. I used to tell myself supposing I had that, how would I look? I was like any other teenager probably getting conscious of my looks or whatever and when people used to praise me and say I look nice I used to feel good… then I used to tell myself I wish I had that, I wish I had that. But not once did I ever breathe a word that I wanted any of that. Though that longing was there in my heart, I did not express it either to my mother nor to my father because as I said I was very mature even at that age. I knew their financial condition, I knew what they were capable of giving me, so I never harassed them, never. And that is one of the very good memories of myself also in that situation because I never threw tantrums, I was a model child they never had to be behind me to make me study or whatever. I did my studies on my own, I
never went to any classes. In those days nobody went to classes. And at the most I would have asked my father for help

As she grew older she felt deprived of many things like good dresses or trinkets and would spend time daydreaming about how they would look on her. She said she never ever told her mother anything about it as she was aware of her home condition. She remembers sometimes her scholarship money was used to run the house and she never complained, she was model child.

She did not have many other significant persons when she was growing up as she stayed really far away from all her relatives and they were “lonely and cooped up” in a north eastern state. No one really came to visit or stay as it was too far. Later when they went to college they shifted to south. Her older sister who was 16 years older than her was “mother figure” for her and would come to school and be involved in her academics. She later on did everything on her own not knowing if her mother was interested but she was aware that she affected by her fathers drinking.

“That is one of the things about myself, I was more into myself, and I was driven a lot to reading. I used to be a voracious reader even at that age, so I used to mind my own business, do my reading quietly, do my studies quietly, even help my other friends. I was very popular in school and college”

“My mom’s world was my father. She was obsessed with his drinking and with him. So that is why probably we siblings we took care of ourselves. She gave us the basic attention which any mother gives but I don’t think she was really after any one of us, never breathed down our neck. So all three of us- my brothers and myself, I think we were on our own. We studied alone, we went to school alone even for admission and for all that my sister came, not my mother because that time my sister was already married so she played the mother’s role even at that time. Because there is a lot of difference between me and my sister, about 16 years of difference between me and my sister so she was like a mother figure to me. I don’t think my mother was so actively involved in my school or college life. She was not actively involved because as I said I went alone did my things, my brothers also did, if my brothers needed anything they would ask me so I would take them to school, so it was like
that. I don’t know whether my mother was interested but I would say more than that she was very deeply affected by my father’s drinking I would say. Probably she was more into keeping house making both ends meet, all those things were there. So I guess she was into that, upbringing, we just grew up. I would say we just grew up but then the initial, the values which were there were there within us because both the parents by themselves were good they did not ill treat us in any way, so we had good memories of them in that way”

She describes what has emerged as a general theme of looking after oneself and caring for younger siblings like many other ACOAs. She felt that as a family they did not socialise much when she was growing up and she was ashamed to call her friends due to the alcoholism. Much of the time she remembers her mother preoccupied with the thoughts of her father and his drinking. Her father was obsessed with his drinking and she was obsessed with him. The children more or less looked after themselves.

Sometimes they enabled his drinking by going and getting him from the liquor den. She would be worried about him all the time. Though she never shared her feelings with anyone and there were no support group meetings like today so she dealt with it on her own. She also felt because of her father alcoholism, her mom had to go out of her way to please people or she would do things for them and people did take advantage of her also.

“\textit{I would say that my mother was – really affected by my father’s drinking and whatever she had to undergo in her life, I don’t think she had, she had done a lot, she had struggled a lot, she had worked very hard for her family, for my father’s family… she had done a lot. And all because he being an alcoholic, people took advantage of her goodness. And she felt she had to do it, she was obliged to her family members to please them by doing their work for them because she felt obliged.”}”

As she grew older she was brilliant in her studies and was voted Best girl, she topped the university with a gold medal. She knew her parents were proud of her. She was at that time married and already pregnant with her first child. Though she wanted to pursue a career in journalism she never shared this with anyone and just adjusted into the large family she married.
“I took it up also and I was very happy with what I did. No tension, I was good at the language and I was good at studies I topped the college – I got university first rank. I was consistently good, very good and the principal was proud of me. I was given the national scholarship which I never took up because I got married by then. When the results came I was already married and pregnant. So I could not pursue further studies that is the only regret in my life I was very keen to go into journalism at that time.”

Her criterion for marriage was a non-drinking partner and that was all she wanted. She did not get that, having married an alcoholic. Her husband gave up drinking when her son was one years old. She feels her husband alcoholism was buffered by her in laws as she stayed with them and they helped in the recovery. Today both have been very active in the support group they are a part of and mentored many a youngster and helped in recovery. She shares that her children did feel that their attending the meetings was a bit too much but they never made a big deal out of it though sometimes they would be grumpy if they were left behind.

“The fact is they were trying to, later on in their growing years when the – meetings there was some kind of obsession because we were obsessed with the meetings, I was also obsessed with the meetings I would say. They used to say what this meeting, meeting all the time is because they never underwent anything. It was difficult for them to understand but hats off to them they never made, though they were grumpy sometimes that leaving them and going, my son I had to take him all the time also”

Her career went through different phases where she helped with family business and later started her own classes. She still teaches and that gives her great joy.

Parenting her children was not so difficult and her son has credited their being a part of the support group as one of the reasons he never took to alcohol. Both her children are married and she feels that the meetings have been a positive influence in her life.

Her emotional self is more content with what is happening in her life and she has gratitude for what life has offered her. She is also able to see both her parents in a positive light and understand how alcoholism affected her. Being in meetings helps her to share and she attends these meetings regularly. She is able to form trusting relationship with both her family and
others who come into her life. She is mentoring younger ACOAs and holding their hand and guiding them in the maze of family disease of alcoholism to emerge stronger and resilient.

**Findings**

From the above case studies, the findings that emerge argue strongly that alcoholism at home does affect the ACOA in several ways and his/her relationships too are affected. The emotional intelligence is affected as the ability to perceive, use or understand emotions is blocked by parental messages like Don’t talk or Don’t feel. In this chapter an attempt was made to present some of the similarities and differences observed in the in-depth interviews with the ACOAs by the researcher. The profiles of the ACOAs were analysed along their socio-demographic background.

**Age:** it was seen that the age of the ACOAs varied with the youngest being 21 one and the oldest being 65. This gives us a developmental understanding of what it means to be an ACOA as one observed that the relationship with the parent and the understanding of the illness changes as one grew older.

**Sex:** There were five men and five women who were interviewed and who shared their experiences of alcoholism. This allows one to perceive if the gender differences affect the individual’s emotional intelligence

**Religion:** There were six Christians and 4 Hindus who were interviewed. The larger number of Christian emerging as ACOAs in both the quantitative sections as well qualitative sections seems to point out to many reasons. One is that there may be more alcoholism in the community due to cultural sanctions for alcohol as from what was shared by many of those who were interviewed. Another reason is the awareness of taking help for alcoholism and treating it thus there is permission to seek help. Further support group meetings are held in churches and schools which are largely missionary gives accessibility for treatment to this group.

**Marital Status:** In the male sample 4 men were single and within the women 2 were not married. The others were all married. It was observed that all the four ACOAs who were
married were married to alcohol dependents. Two of them had partners who were still drinking and only one women’s husband was recovering alcoholic. One male ACOA had remarried as his first wife who was an alcoholic had passed way. This is an interesting finding as even research studies are claiming that ACOAs tend to marry other ACOAS and a lot of women ACOAs do marry alcoholics themselves. (Olmsted et al 2003)

**Education:** The group had variation from those who did not complete education and dropped out due to alcoholism in self or due to financial problems had to take up work at an earlier age. One of the men was still studying and had just given his psychology exams. Only one of the men and one women was professionally qualified having completed M Com and Dentistry respectively. One was studying and working alongside as she needed to support her family. She was the youngest person in the group that was interviewed. One of the women had also completed her graduation. Only two women, did not complete their education and had dropped out early to get married at about 17 and 18 years. One of the women had become pregnant due to which she decided to get married to her husband and subsequently did not pursue her education.

**Work:** Amongst the men 3 of the 5 were employed. One individual had just given his exams and one who was staying in a home reported that he worked on and off. He was also the senior most in the group that was interviewed. One of the males was doing more than 2 jobs at the time of the interview. Within the women group all the four were working and only one was a housewife. All those who were working did so because they were supporting the house financially. One women in fact had been running her house as the singular breadwinner since the last 5 years, her husband was an alcoholic.

**Socio Economic Status:** Of the ten interviewed, three Janhavi, Sheldon and Nandita were from higher income groups and can be classified as upper middle class. And Rooney, Tina, Misha, Reva and Hari five were middle class and two, Ronaldo and Howard were lower middle class or lower income group. Socio economic status did not shield the person from alcoholism and the abuse or violence that went alongwith it. It was observed that the socioeconomic status had undergone changes as the alcoholism in the family seemed to affect economic stability.
**Family Composition:** Overall about 5 individual reported that they lived in nuclear families and 4 lived in joint families, and one lived in a shelter home. Only one male of the 4 reported being in a joint family. Most men lived in nuclear families. Within the women 3 lived in joint families and two lived in nuclear families.

**Residential Status:** 8 of the ten stayed in homes owned by them or their fathers or husbands. One lived on rent as her house was undergoing redevelopment. One was living in the shelter home.

**Onset of Alcoholism:** All the persons in the study in this section had grown up seeing the father drinking, one had also seen the father doing drugs. Only one had a parent who had not stayed with him so he did not feel the impact of the alcoholism and it was only later when his father came home did they realise that he had a problem. It was observed that the younger the age of the child when he or she saw the alcoholism the more the exposure to the drinking problems and patterns in the family.

**Parental Status With Respect To Alcoholism:** There were some whose fathers were not sober, some reported that their fathers were still active alcoholics and some had lost their father due to alcoholism. Four of the five men had lost their father in active alcoholism, one at 12 years and another at 20 years while the others were much older in their 30s. Amongst the women only one reported that she had lost her father prematurely when she 19 years. Only one woman had a father who had died in sobriety and one reported that her father was sober since many years but she called him “dry drunk”. The other two women had fathers who were still drinking and active alcoholics.

**Support Group as a Support System:** Attendance at support group was reported by the individuals in different capacities. One ACOA was a part of the Al-Anon and very active. Two ACOAs were part of AA as they had become alcoholics. One ACOA had attended the AA meeting as there are hardly any groups running for ACOAs in Mumbai. Among the women, one ACOA had never heard or been for any meeting or support groups. The others, about 4 women and 3 men were aware but did not attend or go for it or had gone in the past and dropped out now.
Father As Part Of Support Group: Three had fathers who had been for AA meetings and mothers who were part of the Al Anon One mother was active member in Al-Anon. 4 males had fathers who did not attend AA meetings, two reported that they did not even know that their father had serious problems with alcoholism till they became alcoholics themselves. One ACOA had reported that his father did not attend AA and was later admitted by force for treatment in a centre in Mumbai which uses force to admit patients. One ACOA had a father who had never attended any ACOA meeting.

Personal Habits: Within the group, the two ACOAs who were in AA did not drink or smoke or do drugs at all. The other two males also did not drink or smoke at all as they had decided early in life not to do so. One used to smoke but had given up. Among the women one reported smoking, drinking and trying drugs. Two reported that they did not drink at all. Two were drinking one drank on weekends and one drank occasionally. Both these women it was observed had partners who were alcoholics.

Conclusion:

The diverse lives have certain commonalities and these are further analysed in a cross case analysis that is presented in the following chapter. The themes which emerged from within each case have been at times found to be applicable to other ACOAs whereas each journey is unique and has some distinctions the cases are similar in the way that each dealt with alcoholism and each managed their emotional intelligence in the way they understood best.