Chapter I

Introduction
INTRODUCTION

Oh God, protect my little One! Add more torment to the life of this foolish women. Lord, who know how my child is? Whom will he demand things from, get playfully angry with? At this age other children grow up firmly grasping their parents' hands, then why such sorrow in my child's fate, from birth itself? And I myself have never given him anything but unhappiness. Only I know the sounds of this separation. I am alive, but my child passes his days in a remand home. How big a culprit of my child's circumstances I am, what right have. I to ask for this forgiveness? I am myself ashamed to call myself 'mother (Voice of Woman Prisoners – May, 1996).

INTRODUCTION

The Government of India adopted a National Policy Resolution for children in August 1974 declaring nation's children to be the supremely important asset. It promised to provide adequate services to children both before and after birth and through the period of growth to ensure the full physical, mental and social development. This resolution brought a wide and concentrated attention from researchers, planners and welfare workers to issues relating to children. Efforts were made to identify and deal with the needs and problems of physically, mentally and socially challenged children. The socially handicapped, delinquent, destitute, neglected and victimised children receive special attention. The children of prisoners, however, remain almost entirely unnoticed. It is perhaps the parents' anti-social activities which do not evoke public sympathy or support for such children.

Criminals are usually forced by circumstances. Crime is nothing sort of an ordeal for the criminal, but it is supposed to end with the pronouncement of judicial sentence. This never happens in practice and for a poor man the ordeal is an extended one. Once a criminal, people affirm, that he is always a criminal. Criminals account for a large chunk of population. "Criminals are forced by
poverty and social attitudes these rudderless and resourceless people have almost no options (Rahul Srivastava, 1988).

While the offender is in jail the family is denied of even the meagre income it used to obtain. With mounting unemployment it is difficult to find work and the stigma that the job-seeker is related to a convict makes things more difficult. Forced by hunger and squalid living conditions and with none to guide them, the children are left unwanted. The hostile world and a punishing home have caught many innocent children between two cross-fires. Hence they tend to harbour a grudge against society as well as distinct dislike for their parents. All this cast a shadow on their minds and affect their way of thinking (Chandrakantha, 1989).

FACTS RELATING TO PRISON AND PRISONERS

Prison population - 8 million

Of the 8 million imprisoned all over the world about

2.08 million are in U.S.A.
1.4 million are in China
1 million in Russia
0.5 million in 5 countries in South Asia.

Rates of incarceration (calculated per 100,000 of the population)

U.S.A. - 701 per 1,00,000 of the population.
Russia - 611 per 1,00,000 of the population
U.K. - 125 per 1,00,000 of the population
India - 30 per 1,00,000 of the population

With a fourth (1.5 billion) of the world's population India boasts low rates of incarceration the average of the region being 30 (www.google.com).
There are approximately 3,50,000 persons in Jail (judicial custody) all over India, a low figure by international standards.

There is the figure of (between) 65% of 90% prisoners who are pre-trial prisoners in most jails and languish for years without being tried.

There are approximately 10,000 women prisoners in India (a small figure by international standards); and any average size State Jail of Women has approximately 160 prisoners at any one time.

What about the fact that while a relatively progressive State like Andhra Pradesh has 775 women in prison in all its jails at any one time (June 2003 figure) it also has approximately 20,000 women (many with children) go into prison every year for varying lengths of time.

Almost 70 to 80 percent of the prisoners have some form of mental / emotional / psychological problem that is the direct consequence of their imprisonment (the figure is higher for women prisoners).

Far from being a priority the concept of mental health is disregarded as a vital need by most prison practitioners and indeed the general public even when it is demonstrated that prisons damage persons.

At least 60% of women in prison (convicts) cease to have visits from family and relatives after being in prison for over three months and some women prisoners have not seen families for five to six years as a result of their imprisonment and consequent abandonment.

This seems to be a matter of little concern for those who all too readily send women into prison without thinking of the future of the families.
Approximately 50% of women in prison are unable to resume normal (family) life after they have been through a jail experience and are at a loss in terms of what to do with their lives.

There is no effort to think of their rehabilitation and the fact that a jail sentence stigmatizes a women for life.

Prisons exacerbate the chances and incidents of diseases (physical and mental). The commonest diseases are TB, skin ailments of many types (and specifically of sexual organs) abdominal disorders are and ear diseases (Praja, 2003).

The total number of jails in India in 1986 was about 1,100 while at present (in 2000), it could be between 1,200 and 1,400 (National, Expert Committee on Women Prisoners, 1986). Of these, about 98 pre cent are maximum security jails and 2 per cent (1.6% exactly) are minimum security jails. Of the total maximum security jails in the country, about 7 per cent are central jails, 20 per cent district jails, 53 per cent subjails, 1 per cent (0.6%) women jails, 1 per cent (0.7%) juvenile jails, and 18 per cent other jails. The total number of offenders admitted to prisons every year is about 4 lakh, but excluding those who are released every year, the total annual prison population remains at about 2.3 lakh. Of these, 30 per cent are convicts and 70 per cent are undertrials. In Uttar Pradesh, for example, the ratio of convicts vis-à-vis undertrials which was 1:2 in 1947 became 1:5 in 1991 and 1:7 in 1997 (The Hindustan Times, 1998). According to a survey conducted in the 'second half of the 1990s by 'Worldwatch' organisation, the highest number of prisoners in the world is found in America, followed by China, Russia and India. The number of prisoners in jails in 1998 in America was described as 17 lakhs, in China: 14.10 lakh and in India 2,31,325. The number of prisoners per one lakh population was 687 in Russia, 645 in USA, 39 in Japan, 37 in Bangladesh, 29 in Nepal, 24 in India and 20 in Indonesia. (Rajasthan Patrika, May 28, 2000). Of the convicted
offenders in India, 80 per cent get less than six months' imprisonment, 13 per cent six months to two years, and 7 per cent more than two years. In other words, more than 90 per cent are short-termers, and less than 10 per cent long-termers.

Of the total prisoners (including undertrials), about 1 per cent are below 16 years of age, 12 per cent are between 16 and 21 years age, and 87 per cent are above 21 years of age (National Expert Committee Report on Women Prisoners, 1986). The break-up of those above 21 years (i.e., 87%) is found to be as follows: 42 per cent are between 21 and 30 years of age, 30 per cent are between 30 and 40 years, 13 per cent between 40 and 60 years, and 2 per cent above 60 years. Thus, about two-thirds prisoners (72%) belong to 21 - 40 years age group, or are young offenders. About 45 per cent have agricultural background and about 33 per cent are literate.

Of the undertrials in jails, about 75 per cent remain under trial for less than six months, about 15 per cent for 6-12 months, about 7 per cent for 1-2 years, about 2 per cent for 2-3 years, and about 1 per cent for more than three years (Ram Ahuja, 2000).

THEORETICAL VIEW POINTS

There are innumerable theories relating to criminology. But a few theories have been related to the present study are listed below.

1. Sutherlands' Differential Association Theory

In 1939 Edwin Sutherland introduced differential theory in his text book ‘Principles of Criminology’. The theory states that crime is learned through social interaction. The formulating this theory, Sutherland relied heavily on Shaw and Mc Kay’s findings that delinquent values are transmitted within a community or group from one generation to the next.
Sutherland’s Nine propositions explain the process by which this transmission of values takes place

1. Criminal behavior is learned
2. Criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.
3. Families and friends have the most influence on the learning of deviant behavior.
4. When criminal behavior is learned, the learning includes a) techniques of committing crimes and b) specific direction of motives, drives, rationalization and attitudes.
5. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal roles as favorable on unfavorable. Not everyone in our society agrees that the laws should be obeyed; some people define them as unimportant.
6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of law. This is the key principle of differential association.
7. The extent to which association and definition will result in criminality is related to the frequency of contacts, their duration, and their meaning to the individual.
8. Learning criminal behavior patterns is very much like learning conventional behavior patterns and is not simply a matter of observation and imitation.
9. Criminal behavior is an expression of general needs and values.

Many researchers have attempted to validate this theory (Adler, Mueller, Laufer, 1998).
Attachment Theory

The British psychiatrist John Bowlby has studied both the need for warmth and affection from birth onward and the consequences of not having it. He has proposed a theory of attachment with 7 important features.

Specificity
Attachments are selective, usually directed to one or more individuals in some order of preference.

Duration
Attachments endure and persist sometimes throughout the life cycle.

Engagement of emotions
Some of the most intense emotions are associated with attachment relationships.

Ontogeny (Course of development)
Children form an attachment to one primary figure in the first 9 months of life. That principle attachment figure is the person who supplies the most social interaction of satisfying kind.

Learning
Though learning plays a role in the development of attachment, Bowlby finds that attachments are the products not of rewards or reinforcements, but of basic social interaction.

Organization
Attachment behavior follows cognitive development and interpersonal maturation from birth onward.

Biological-function
Attachment behavior has a biological-function survival. It is found in almost all species of mammals and birds.
Bowlby contends that a child needs to experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with either a mother or a mother substitute in order to be securely attached. When a child is separated from the mother or is rejected by her, anxious attachment results. (John Bowlby, 1969, 1973).

Labeling Theory

In the 1940’s the sociologist Edwin Lemert elaborated and formulated the basic assumptions of labeling theory. (Edwin M. Lemert, 1951). He reminded us that people are constantly involved in behavior that runs the risk of being labelled delinquent or criminal. But although many run that risk, only a few are so labelled. The reason, Lemert contended, is that there are two kinds of deviant acts: Primary and secondary (Edwin M. Lemert, 1967)

 Primary deviations are the initial deviant acts that bring on the first social response. These acts do not affect the individuals’ self concept. It is the secondary deviations. The acts that follow the societal response to the primary deviation, that are of major concern. These are the acts that result from the change in self-concept brought about by the labelling process.

 In short, deviant individuals have to bear the stigma of the “delinquent” label (Erving Goffman, 1963). Once a label is attached to a person, a deviant or criminal career has been set in motion. (Gerhard O.W. Mueller, 1953)

 Imprisonment of a parent can alter the prospects of the family in a number of significant ways, described in the literature on single parenthood (Mc Lanahan & Sandefur, 1994), as well as in the more limited literature of the familial effects of imprisonment. This combined work suggests that the trauma of parental imprisonment may have economic, social, and emotional dimensions. Associated sociological and criminological theories point to three prominent ways in which the effects of parental imprisonment on children might be understood. These involve the strains of economic deprivation; the loss of
parental socialization through role modeling, support, and supervision; and the stigma and shame of societal labeling.

As formulated, the three perspective all involve assumptions about the ways in which the withdrawal or removal of parents from the home deplets family resources.

The Strain Perspective

If an imprisoned parent has previously contributed positively to the family, that imprisonment may result in economic deprivation and other strains that affect children. Note that the preceding contributions may not always involve the parents maintaining an intact household. Many nonresident parents, even many never married and absent parents, maintaining an intact household. Many nonresident parents, even many never-married and absent parents, maintain frequent contact with their children, and much of the variation in the nature of the parental contribution may have to do with the form and quality of family relationships rather than with the legal and residential nature of the relationship. The quantity and quality of these relationships need to be measured separately (John Hagan, 1995).

The Socialization Perspective

Again, assuming the imprisoned parent has contributed positively to the life of the family, imprisonment can deprive the family of an important resource for the socialization of the child. Sociological and criminological theories commonly emphasize the importance of parental supervision, role modeling, and support. This perspective is reflected most prominently in control theories of crime and deviance. The most prominent version of control theory maintains that even parents and siblings who are oriented to criminal activities can often steer younger family members in prosocial directions (Hirschi, 1969, 94-97). An important contemporary application of control theory in the study of crime is the longitudinal research of Sampson and Laub (1993), which emphasizes that the
social control of children by parents is an important source of social capital that persists in its influence throughout the life course (Hagan, 1991; Hagan, Merkens, & Boehnke, 1995).

The removal of parent from the family can influence children in a variety of ways. Children lose whatever supervision, support, and role modeling the incarcerated parent provided; the salience of the remaining parent may increase; and the role of peer group may expand (McLanahan & Bumpass, 1988). Control and socialization theories tend to see children as situated in a struggle of allegiances between family and peers, with the absence of a parent shifting the balance of this struggle in favor of antisocial peers. That the parent is absent for crime-related reasons may reasonably intensify this concern, although, as noted above, it remains an unresolved question as to how different kinds of parents actually influence their children.

The Stigmatization Perspective

Criminologists have paid particular attention to imprisonment as a stigma that attaches to individuals and the groups to which they belong, in this case, their families. The stigma of criminalization is another way children lose out (Hagan, 1991; Hagan & Palloni, 1990). Barithwaite (1989) draws an important distinction between the kind of stigma imposed by imprisonment and alternative processes of "reintegrative shaming", which are intended to bring to person back into the group after being punished. The stigma of imprisonment is intended to result in exclusion from the social group, while reintegrative shaming includes rituals of reacceptance and reabsorption that are designed to encourage a return to group membership. Well functioning families are prominent sites of reintegrative shaming, but Braithwaite's point is that this kind of response to antisocial behaviors can be adopted in broader societal settings as well.

Scheff and Retzinger (Scheff, 1988; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991) suggest that the stigmatization experience that Braithwaite associates with imprisonment
can cause angry and defiant expressions of unacknowledged shame and rejection. These feelings and responses to stigmatization may effect not only the parents who are imprisoned but their children as well. Scheff and Retzinger explain that school, parents, employers, and fellow citizens increasingly recognize large number of explosively angry young people ready to punish any available target in response to perceived insults of the past, which may include the stigmatization experienced as children of incarcerated parents (1991).

The Selection Perspective

This perspective assumes the fact that imprisoned parents and their children are already different from parents and their children who are not imprisoned, prior to the imposition of a prison sentence. Differences that predate parental incarceration may derive from a mixture of factors that accumulate up to the point of parental imprisonment. These factors may include patterns of negligence, violence, and abuse, it is crucial that these predetermining differences be taken into account in assessing effects of parental imprisonment.

It is fair to say that we know little about the additive or multiplicative ways in parental imprisonment may cause changes in the well being of children. We lack definitive answers to even the basic questions of whether, in the aggregate, the children of imprisoned parents are less well off than children of parents who do not experience imprisonment.

Many judges openly acknowledge that they reach conclusions about such issues in deciding to sentence mothers and fathers of children to prison (Mann, Wheeler & Sarat, 1980; Nagel & Hagan, 1982;). The concern is that they currently must do so without empirical knowledge of the consequence of parental imprisonment for children.
FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

All sociologists are of opinion that family exerts a deep influence in the life of an individual. It not only gratifies an individual’s essential and nonessential needs but it also transmits cultural values which socialize an individual and train him in survival patterns. However, family situations vary from individual to individual. All individuals may not be able to live in ‘normal’ families and experience socializing interpersonal relationships. Lowell Carr (1950) has given six characteristics of a ‘normal’ family : (i) Structural completeness, i.e., presence of both natural parents in the home; (ii) economic security, i.e., reasonable stability of income necessary to maintain health, working efficiency and morale; (iii) cultural conformity, i.e. parents speaking same language, eating same food, following same customs and holding substantially the same attitudes; (iv) moral conformity, i.e., conformity to the mores of the community; (v) physical and psychological normality, i.e., no member is mentally deficient or deranged or chronically invalid; and (vi) functional adequacy, i.e., members have harmonious relations with one another and there is a minimum of friction and emotional frustration. Further, children are not rejected by parents, there is a minimum of sibling rivalry, and there is no effort to escape from reality.

However, it is impossible to find a home with all these characteristics, which does not mean that there are no ‘normal’ homes at all in our society. What is important is the level or degree of the presence of these characteristics (Ram Ahuja, 2000).

SOCIALIZATION OF CHILDREN

Socialization is a process of moulding the personality of the child. Parents play a vital role in generating or curbing aggressive reactions in children. Aggressive parents are more likely to have aggressive children because;
a) They are aggressive models for their children or
b) They are more rewarding toward their children when the latter indulge in aggressive behaviour. (Kaufmann, H, 1970)

Children learn aggressiveness not only from their parents, but also from other sources. The family environment in which the child is reared is believed to play a considerable role in the moral development of the child. The relationship of parents to each other will have an impact on the child as he grows. The home plays a major part in providing the atmosphere within which the child forms his style of life. The child must be clearly aware of what is expected of him before he can adjust himself properly. Security within the family gives a child a sense of warmth and belonging and permits many problems encountered outside to be handled more effectively.

Antony Storr (1968) observes that children entertain destructive phantasies of terrifying intensity. These phantasies arise partly from innate aggressiveness and are sustained by hostile and unfavourable environment in which the child may be raised. Psychoanalytic thinkers give a lot of importance to satisfaction of various needs of the child at each developmental stage prescribed by and sadistic tendencies may originate during these stages. Parental handling of these stages, the child's reaction to them and his inborn instinctual drives - all influence the degree of violence that appears in children.

The child welfare is important for the child himself, for the family and for the society. It is important for the child himself in the sense that he will be able to perform his duties well, when he has a good personality. His welfare is good for the family as much as the child happens to be its member. His betterment is also the betterment of society, as he is the future leader of the society. This child in this sense is the most important element of society (Madan, G.R., 1983).
NEIGHBOURHOOD

In rural areas, neighbourhood continues to be a primary group while in urban areas, it is emerging as a secondary group. Neighbourhood is an important agency of social control and contributes much to the development of the child. The child plays with his neighbours and gets the required recreation. But the neighbourhood also contributes to crime and delinquency by blocking basic personality needs, fostering anti-social values and creating subcultural conflicts.

School

Schools can provide a variety of positive influences on children. They can promote self-esteem, provide opportunities to experience success and enable students to develop both social and problem-solving skills—Rutter (1987). A supportive school environment can also act as a buffer against potentially harmful conditions in the home and in other non-school environments—Dubois et al., 1992).

FAMILIES OF CRIMINALS AND JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

Retrospectively speaking, a large number of experimental studies were carried out in the 1930s, the 1940s, the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s on the families of juvenile delinquents and criminals. The object was to ascertain factors in a criminal’s family life or the so-called ‘under-the-roof-culture’ responsible for his delinquent or later criminal activities. Identifying factors such as lack of control, too strict or too lenient discipline, parental neglect or rejection, physical abuse, and broken homes appeared to corroborate much of the popular outwise notion that family influence in general and parents’ erratic disciplining of children in particular had an influence on subsequent criminality.

Broken Home

The broken home is one in which one parent is absent due to death, divorce, desertion, separation or imprisonment. The absence of a parent may
result in lack of affection, lack of control and supervision, development of bad habits like smoking, drinking, gambling, etc. falling into bad company, and so forth. A number of studies have been conducted on the role of broken homes in juvenile delinquency. The broad conclusion of these studies conducted between 1939 and 1950 is that 30 to 60 percent delinquents come from broken homes (Sutherland, 1965). Healy and Bronner’s study of 4,000 juvenile delinquents in two cities in the United States showed that about 50 percent had a background of broken homes. Glueck’s study (1950) of 500 delinquent boys from two correctional institutions and 500 non-delinquent boys showed that the parents of the delinquent boys employed rather unsuitable methods of disciplining their children; lax, over-strict, or erratic. They were also either indifferent or hostile or used physical punishment against their children. In their later study (1962), they also found that the hostility became reciprocal and children also developed indifference and hostility towards their parents.

**Poor Home**

A poor home is not able to provide economic security to its members. It not only fails to satisfy the basic needs of members but it also fails to provide security against various exigencies of life, like accident illness, unemployment, etc. Sometimes, poverty operates directly to produce criminal activities. A poor person who is not able to provide dowry for his daughter’s marriage may indulge in embezzlement, accepting bribes or committing fraud, etc. A child who fails to get pocket money may steal from his father’s purse. A father may steal to supply his children food, clothing, and other necessities of life. Often, poverty operates indirectly too. A child from a poor family may run away from his home to escape worry, irritability, desperation and discord of parents and may come to associate with delinquent gangs. Scholars like Stephan Hurwitz (1952) maintain that the great majority of criminals and delinquents come from poor economic conditions, and the incidence of poverty in the homes of offenders far exceeds that of the general population.
Functionally Inadequate Home

This home is one in which tensions and disorders are common in interpersonal relations amongst family members over question of status, role dominance, values, attitudes, rights and acceptance. But the person who is the subject in any case-history of delinquency or criminality must be at the apex or one pole of the conflict. He must be a part of the conflict. In some cases, however, a child may not be directly in conflict with his parents but his two parents may have conflicts with each other, and the child may like to escape from such home environment, fall into bad company and become a delinquent.

The studies present three views on the role of family in crime: (i) psychoanalytic explanation; (ii) behaviourist explanation, and (iii) cognitive explanation. The psychoanalytic explanation focuses on difficulties in children's early development leading to their 'sickness' causing them to commit crimes like thefts, arson, sexual attacks, etc. Since crime was caused by 'sickness' children were not considered totally responsible for them. This view had its impact on the punishment and the treatment policies, leading to the rise of psychiatric treatment for offenders. The behaviourist explanation given in the 1950s and the 1960s rejected psychoanalytic explanation owing to its lack of rigorous testability. Instead, it proposed that people's action are controlled by a system of rewards and punishments and crime is caused by 'inappropriate learning experiences' or 'social mis-learning'. Criminals were thus seen not as 'sick' persons but those who suffered from 'mis-learning'. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a shift away from behaviourist explanation towards cognitive development explanation. According to it, a person's predisposition to commit crime is 'cognitive' rather than 'emotional', that is, a person's actions are regarded as guided by his moral development or awareness which reflects his ability to distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong' or 'good' and 'bad'.
Socio-Economic Status as Determinant of Family Environment

Family environment seemingly has a significant bearing on pathogenesis in the family. In spite of the various changes that have taken place in the pattern of Indian life in the recent decades, the family is still the most important factor in the child's social network because the members of the family constitute the child's first environment and are the most significant people during the early formative years. It is the family environment, which lays the foundation for patterns of adjustment, attitude development and finally personality and cognitive development. It is the family that provides feelings of security, meets the physical and psychological needs, guides and helps in times of problems, and caters to all the wishes and whims of children. Not only this, family is also a source of affection, acceptance and companionship (Anita Sharma et al., 2005).

Family climate affects children's cognitive and social development, which in turn influences children's self confidence, self-reliance, assertiveness, personality characteristics, coping skills, academic motivation and success (Pfeiffer and Aylward 1990). According to Moos and Moos (1986) family environment consists of 10 components viz. cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, independence, achievement orientation, intellectual-cultural orientation, active recreational orientation, moral religious emphasis, organization and control. Various components of family environment have different effects on the development of children. Cohesion, expressiveness and intellectual cultural-orientation are closely associated with young children's cognitive and social development and with adolescent's academic motivation and success. In addition, cohesion and expressiveness are related to higher self-confidence and social competence (Bullock and Pennington, 1988). More structured and supportive families tend to facilitate the development and use of more effective coping skills, whereas, family conflict is associated with more aggression and less self-confidence. But environment differs from family to family due to its major determinant of socioeconomic status'. The socioeconomic status has been conceptualized 'as a position' in a society or a group. It is a cluster of factors,
which includes occupation, income, and cultural features of home. It is an identity within a situation. Kuppuswamy (1980) considered education, occupation and income as the important factors to determine the socioeconomic status of a family. On the basis of these studies, individuals and families are classified into two broad categories ranging from lower to upper social class. Higher socioeconomic status families are positively blessed with nutrition, good parent-child relationship, language experience etc., which enhance the crystallized intelligence, whereas in low socioeconomic status families, there are impoverished environment, poor educational facilities, and lack of opportunities for educational stimulation and lack of crystallization of intelligence due to limited vocabulary of parents and also less encouragement from parents. Thus, socioeconomic status of a family determines its environment. Higher the socioeconomic status, the better the family environment which leads to healthy development of children and this in turn enhances the crystallization of intelligence (Madhu Bala, 2001).

CHANGES IN FAMILY STRUCTURE AND RELATIONSHIP

The women’s imprisonment caused significant disturbances and changes, irrespective of whether both parents were there, or mothers ran their homes singly. Most children felt her absence keenly, and missed her. Younger ones were the most seriously affected. Very small children, usually below five years, can be taken into prison with the mother for better care. For those left at home, the immediate need is for a substitute figure, who will assume, minimally, the ‘caretaker’ role.

Where fathers were earning and supporting their wives and children, women (whether working or not) had played the caretaking role. Many unemployed fathers were ineffectual due to illness, addiction, being too old to work, or for some other reason. And in many families where the mothers are widowed, divorced or separated, they had shouldered the responsibility of providing for both, the children’s economic and security needs.
Despite a father’s taking on the mother’s role, and the economic situation continuing to be stable, children still did appear to suffer the loss of the mother for emotional and other needs. Her role in their lives became limited.

A range of alternatives developed in the lives of children of women imprisoned for offences as varied as theft, homicide, drug-trafficking or other deviant ‘business’. These alterations or adjustments were not necessarily final nor mutually exclusive, but could alter or occur in combinations at different points of time.

The prison environment has a significant effect on a young child’s language, development and self-concept. For instance, male children confined in the women’s yard may, while referring to themselves, use the feminine gender. Prison jargon is picked up easily. All uniformed persons are ‘police’. Children born in prison or having little or no exposure to normal surroundings may not know, for instance, about animals or vehicles. The ‘imprisoned’ child requires time to adjust to the new surroundings, but usually gets accustomed to the change. After release, a new adjustment is required (Vijaya Raghavan et al., 2002).

**IMPACT OF PARENTAL ABSENCE**

Father/Mother absence for a certain period of time affects the family. This effect is influenced by the amount and kind of contact that is maintained between the absent father and mother. The fact that father absence affects the family means that certain vital changes take place in the family when the father is removed from the scene.

The absence of a parent may lead to physical or psychological deprivation which may be expressed through physical symptoms or behavioural reactions (Chandrakantha, 1989).
The withdrawal or loss of a parent can result in the loss not only of economic capital, but also of social capital involving relationship among family members and the organization of family life toward the maintenance and improvement of life chances of children (John Hagan, 1989).

A recent survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1991) revealed that about two thirds of incarcerated women and more than one half of incarcerated men are parents of children under 18 years of age. Current estimates show that more than one and one-half million children have a parent who is incarcerated in the Unites States (Bloom, 1993), and many more children will have a parent incarcerated during a period of their lives. This grave reality should be a major policy concern, because the imprisonment of parents can severely diminish the economic and social capital on which families and communities depend to successfully raise children (Sampson, 1992; Hagan, 1994). Although relatively little attention has been given to the consequences of criminal sanctioning for families and children, much research has focused on recidivism rates among those who have been incarcerated (Shapiro, Flynn, and Chayet, 1988) and on issues of deterrence and incapacitation more generally (Blumstein, Cohen and Nagin, 1978). The results of this research are not encouraging. Criminal violence in America has not declined with the rising use of imprisonment (Reis & Roth, 1993). The research literature reveals that offenders defy as often as they defer to criminal sanctions (Sherman, 1993), and criminal violence continues unabated.

Disappointing findings about the effects of penal sanctioning should be evaluated in the broader context of the unintended consequences of these sanctions. A father or mother’s imprisonment can be the final, lethal blow to an already weakened family structure (Women’s Prison Association, 1995). The fact that a large number of parents are being imprisoned (McGowan & Blumenthal, 1978) implies that there is a neglected class of young people whose
lives are disrupted as well as damaged by their separation from imprisoned mothers and fathers (Bloom, 1993). As a family disintegrates, children experience prolonged and intensified periods of instability and uncertainty. These children’s problems are the largely hidden and uncalculated costs of imprisonment.

Very little is actually known about the casual role that the penal sanctioning of parents plays in children’s lives, alone or in combination with other experiences and events in the lives of these children (Gabel, 1992). For example, little is known about how this casual influence may vary with the prior and continuing relationship between the parents, the race and gender of the parents, the prior and continuing relationships of parents with their children, the gender or age of the children, and the class and community circumstances from which the imprisoned parents and children come. Nonetheless, there is speculation that the consequences of imprisoning parents can be substantial, especially when mothers are involved (Hagan, 1991).

**Period of Imprisonment of mother-possible effects (Source: Forced Separation, Children of Imprisoned mothers, p. 86)**

**Short Term**

- Children may stop going to school for a while.
- Children may not need to take up jobs themselves.
- Neighbours help as caretakers if mother’s absence is short.
- Family lifestyle may not alter significantly.
- Children’s relationships with others not much affected.
- Children don’t adjust to mother’s absence.
- Problems get sorted out; major decisions can be postponed till mother’s return.
- Relationship with mother stable; she decides for them.
Long Term

Children may drop out of school
Children may have to work to support themselves.
Neighbours not willing-relatives or institutionalization required.
Drastic lowering of living standard possible.
More complications if offence is serious.
Children get used to it; learn to cope.
Problems accumulate; decisions have to be taken without mother.
Communication reduced, children become distanced; mother may lose control.

PERCEPTIONS OF PRISONERS CHILDREN

"Prisoners' children may need to be paid attention to, because they are likely to turn to offending themselves, as their parents are criminals".

Such an opinion, if expressed by a layman, is not surprising. But what is disappointing is to hear it from senior persons in the concerned government departments or reputed child welfare agencies, (not excluding international organisations working in India).

Offending by the young person may take place for a variety of reasons, as even a cursory review of the literature on delinquency/ children in distress will indicate. While an adolescent may 'go astray' because of the deviant lifestyle of a parent, in our own experience (so far) this is not the rule. Moreover, it does not apply to all the children of such an individual.

In fact, some thought should be given to the following:

If any norm broken by a prisoner's child, no matter how minor and whatever the context, is thoughtlessly equated with criminality, would this not significantly affect such a child's opportunities for a better future?
Can any simple equation be drawn between a mother's alleged crime and her off springs' subsequent deviant behaviour?

Selectively highlighting the possibility of offending serves to conceal certain other realities, especially if a parent has been arrested for the first time:

Most children of prisoners are likely to be frightened away from the law. Other groups, such as street-children, may develop a 'smooth' working relationship with the police. But for children of prisoners, the system appears rigid and hard to perforate. In trying to reach their incarcerated parent, they can only form a troubled and uncomfortable relationship with the authorities, who are seen as 'punishers'.

A sequence of negative and often drastic changes begins to unfold itself when a parent is arrested. How is a youngster supposed to deal with this? How are intellectual and emotional development, self-perception, relationships, daily life, future, affected?

It is likely that children are victimised, rather than criminalized, by the excessive and debilitating physical and emotional demands placed on them in disorganized or brutalised families or environments (Vijaya Raghavan et al., 2002).

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND PERSONALITY

In India, children who have spent their lives in orphanages (Panda, 1980; sinha and sukia, 1974), foster homes and other child care centres (Langmeir and Matejeck, 1970) have been studied and a significant relationship has been observed between absence and or deficient stimulation on general adjustment and functioning. Personality development is hampered due to socio economic deprivation. Derivational conditions result in hardening of emotional feelings (Panda. K.C., 1999).
Social disadvantage is negatively related to personality adjustment. Langmeri et al. (1970) found that a child from low socio-economic status has more than twice the chance of being psychologically impaired. Father's absence, disharmony between parents, low parental education, authoritarian fathers contribute to such maladjustment. Persons from lower social class show greater feeling of futility and alienation. Srole et al. (1962) found a linear relationship between the degree of poverty and psychological damage.

Mohanty (1967) found socio-economic status related with neuroticism but not with anxiety.

Rath (1974) has also reported higher incidence of psychopathic traits like neuroticism and insecurity in low caste group than in high caste ones.

ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

The separation of a mother from her children, on being arrested and subsequently imprisoned, leads to a series of rapid changes in the lives of both. For many women, especially first-timers, this is certainly one of the worst aspects of imprisonment. The following narrations may convey more vividly how mothers recalled being forced apart from their children.

S. and her husband were arrested on a charge of murder, and after a few days in police custody were transferred to prison. Their only son, an eight-year-old, was brought to the police station for questioning. The police repeatedly asked him questions regarding the murder. The parents were not allowed to talk to the child, and the child kept screaming - "Mummy mujhe akele mat chhodo, mujhe sath le jaiye (Mother don't leave me alone, take me with you).

M. was a young widow. On her arrest, her son was taken away by the grandparents to their native village, while her four young daughters were left to manage on their own. The eldest girl was 14-years old, earning, and looking...
after the others. The mother was endlessly worried about their safety, their meals, who cooked, or how the little ones managed without the elder sister when she was away at work.

The disruption in the relationship between mother and child could occur not only at the time of imprisonment, but from the moment of arrest itself - perhaps at home. The mother was taken away by the police, sometimes in the presence of the children, sometimes in their absence. In cases where family members were present, they were aware that she had been taken away by the police. But if she was arrested away from home - at the market place, at work, on the road, or when attending a hearing at court it took the family longer to find out about her whereabouts.

After being arrested, most women reported, they were not allowed time to meet their children. Many also mentioned not being informed that rules permitted their taking into custody with them children below five years. So babies a few months old, too, were left behind - at least initially. The police had apparently assured them that they would be permitted to return home. This gives one the impression that several women were initially not able to make provision or arrangements for the children's care, or perhaps anticipating an early release/bail, did not feel the need to make more secure arrangements. Children may have been left in the care of neighbours with the understanding that the mother would be gone only for a short while. But many did not return from the police station, and no one knew when they will.

Where a child was present at the time of arrest, the forcible separation, in fact the suddenness with which the situation was precipitated, appeared to have left many women at a loss about what action to take for him or her right then.

At the police station, mothers reported having helplessly watched children being shocked at the occurrence of events: the ill-treatment meted out to their
mother, abusive language, the harsh rupture and being sent back home without
the mother. Later, while in police custody, respondents reported being more
upset about the effect of the events on their children, and what they would now
do without their mothers, than about their own condition. From this stage started
the endless worrying about children’s protection and care (Vijaya Raghavan,
2002).

STRESS

Stress is an emotional intellectual or physical reaction to change or
demands. The stress reaction prepares the mind and body to react to any
situation that is new, threatening or exciting. The causes of stress are
environmental, physiological, social, personal thoughts, conflicts, hassles,
pressures, frustrations etc (Seema Kashyap and Ravi Sidhu, 2005).

According to Pillow et al. (1996) the people who have recently
experienced a major traumatic event are more likely to be plagued by minor
stressors than those who have not had a recent shock. In another study Morris
(1990) says a common source of stress occurs when a person feels forced to
speed up, intensify or shift direction in behavior or when a person feels
compelled to meet a higher standard of performance

Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an
opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires and for which
the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Uncertainty over
the outcome and the outcome being seen as important are the two necessary
conditions precedent for potential stress to become a realized (actual) one
(Sculer, 1983). To put it succinctly, stress is the wear and tear on the body.

Coping mechanism denotes the way of dealing with stress or the effort to
master condition of harm, threat or challenge when a routine or automatic
response is not readily available. Use of coping mechanism generally involves
cognitive and behavioral factors to manage environmental and internal demands and conflicts affecting a person, which exceed a person's resources. Coping responses are supposed to modify the effect of potential stressors. According to Pareek (1983) coping may either take the form of avoiding the situation, i.e. dysfunctional or confronting and approaching the problem, i.e. functional style. In another study Printz et. al (1999) indicated that available coping resources including social support and problem solving, significantly buffer the effects of stress on maladjustment. In looking at the influence of support from family and peers, family support appeared to be more critical for healthy functioning than support from friends.

The stress response or General Adaptation Syndrome is an innate, inborn protective mechanism. Selye (1956) in his work on The Stress of Life argues that human beings possess an in-built homeostatic mechanism that keeps at bay diseases and illnesses. Homeostatic mechanism, or a system of self-regulation, involves the maintenance of a stable condition of health and the return to such a condition in the face of environmental disturbances.

ALIENATION

Alienation is a feeling of uneasiness or discomfort, which reflects on exclusion from social and cultural participation. It is a breakaway from the values, norms, roles and facilities available to a member of his/her group or society.

Health and social problems associated with youth alienation require prevention programmes directed at our basic institutions of the family and the school – Krant, R., et al. (1998).

Increased social differentiation, the disappearance of community, the breakdown of regularity norms and the difficulty of realizing the self in mass are all problems that have drawn people to the concept. The concept of alienation
rooted deeply in sociological traditions has recently enjoyed a new popularity. At present, in all social sciences, the various synonyms of alienation have a foremost place in the studies of human relations. Investigation of 'unattached', the 'marginal', the 'obsessive', the 'normless', and 'isolated individual' all testify to the central place occupied by the hypothesis of alienation in contemporary social science. Alienation refers to the estrangement of an individual from his surroundings. It is essentially a cognitive-cum-affective behavior, which is generally manifested in such behavioral patterns as powerlessness, normlessness and isolation, and the like. Seeman (1959) has described five distinguishable but interrelated components of alienation viz., normlessness, meaninglessness, powerlessness, isolation, and self estrangement (Asthana and Verma, 1994).

Alienation as a psychosocial phenomenon is growing among students at almost all levels of education. The social scientists have tried to interpret this phenomenon in their own way. It has been reported that the outcome of the alienated behavior is so serious and harmful that it not only obstructs the growth of the institutions but also damages the personality of the individual.

a) Childrens Expression of Emotions

Crying was reportedly the most common and overt form of expression of feelings, especially amongst the younger children and even older girls. The initial separation from the mother was the most difficult period for many, and they cried frequently - sometimes excessively - at home, or when taken to meet the mother at prison or court, and on returning after these visits.

The following statements, although about crying, compellingly draw us into scenes from the children's lives.
Children

"We cry a lot at night."

"Other children do not talk to me. One child teased me 'your mother is in prison'. I feel bad and cry"

"We cry whenever there is any festival."

"When we see that our parents are in prison, we cry."

"Many times (the younger ones) cry because of hunger."

Mothers

"When my 6-year old child cries, nobody can stop him."

"The children were crying when they met me in court."

"There is pain during mulaqat. Children cry on that side."

"All of them were crying at the time of arrest."

Caretakers (relatives/neighbours)

"Children cry for their parents."

"We slap them when they make mistakes; then children remember their parents and cry."

"Mostly it's the girls who cry."

"Younger children cry more."

CHILDREN'S INTERACTION WITH THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THEIR STRUGGLES

Children of prisoners have not only to content with a changed home situation and social disrepute, but also to encounter the world of police, court and prisons without any preparation for such experiences.

Children and the Police

As with other adults in the family, children often had occasion to interact with the police before, during, and after the arrest of their parent. When parents
are ‘accused’ persons their young children get willy-nilly drawn into the situation and could be subject to police action. The attention they receive may be helpful, indifferent or even hostile.

Parents’ Arrest and Custody

At the time of the arrest, (whether at home or at police station), the mother was either permitted to take her younger children with her to lock-up, or they were separated when taking her away.

At the time of their mothers’ arrest many children were reportedly taken completely by surprise, were thrust into precarious circumstances, and could barely comprehend what was happening.

Witnessing the ill-treatment or beating of their parent during the arrest, and later even at the police station, apparently left most children scared and crying.

There were also complaints about police being unhelpful to children who visited mothers in police custody. A few women alleged that their children were not permitted to meet them. The emotional impact of such experiences could be lasting. Over a period of time, however, youngsters may get accustomed to the situation.

Many mothers reported that their interrogation by the police was very frightening to their children, particularly when the family was subjected to intimidation, abuse and threat. The manner in which the children were questioned was apparently frightening for most.

The treatment a child received at the hands of an investigating officer could be a projection of the latter’s perceptions of the mother. In cases of homicide occurring at home, minors were at times treated as suspects and taken
into custody along with the parents, (being later sent to an Observation Home). Fear of the police was found not only in the children who were arrested, but also those who were not. They were scared they would be next (Roshini Nair et al., 2002).

**Infrequency of Visits**

Some mothers were not visited because their children did not, as yet, know about the women's whereabouts. But in general, the regularity of prison visits was affected by the difficulties encountered during the process, and therefore many children, especially the Younger ones, did not go (or were not taken) to meet their mothers as often as they might otherwise have. A group of social work team when they took these children to meet their parents they have faced some of the difficulties which are as follows.

First the trip takes nearly the entire day. Children and caretakers had to travel the whole distance usually by public transport, wait outside the prison till the appointed visiting hours, queue up to meet the mother and possibly other family members who might also be imprisoned (father, brothers), and then return home by the evening. Accompanying adults could not frequently take time off from work or other responsibilities, repeatedly going through all the lengthy formalities in order to accompany children who wanted to visit their mothers. But then, neither could young children be sent alone. If the family was against the mother, the children were not taken to meet her.

Second, the prison is often very far from the home, making each trip a fairly expensive one for a family of modest means. Apart from the costs of transportation, things needed to be bought for the mother - or children wanted to take her something - for which money was not always available.

Third, for some children their previous experience of visiting the mother has been so stressful as to cause much disturbance to them, (and likewise their
parent), even after the visit is over. Many caretakers, therefore, decide to lessen
the frequency of the visits. An extreme instance was of a child who cried
incessantly during her meetings with both parents, separately, in prison. Her eyes
were later so sore as to require medical attention. The caretakers decided against
taking the girl for any more visits on account of the trauma caused to the child
and the family. Many children are considerably upset at not being able to see
their mother's face properly, or hear her voice, or touch her.

Fourth, fear of arrest.

Fifth, children who have been taken into residential care are dependent on
the staff of those institutions to arrange for visits to their imprisoned mother.
Sometimes there is considerable delay - months and years even, from Prayas'
own field experience - because either the prison or the Children's Home does not
take interest or responsibility in this regard. The reason most often given by the
Homes was that the children had to be escorted, but there were no personnel
available for the purpose. Prison authorities, too, generally did not seem to act on
their own unless pressurised by the mother.

Unhappily, the decrease in the number of mulaqats due to one or more of
the above reasons sometimes led to younger children forgetting what their
mother, or siblings inside with the mother, looked like - and vice versa. This lack
of contact led to a weakening of bonds, and a kind of sadness about the loss of a
relationship.

Mulaqat

The actual meeting with the mother, or 'mulaqat', was found to be of
considerable emotional consequence for both the mother and her children,
meriting a separate presentation.
The whole mulaqat situation was distressing for both mothers and children, and anxiety was the feeling which was most often communicated both ways. Children were jostled along with all other people herding together to meet their relatives in Prison. Family members were on either side of iron bars and wire meshes, shouting across to each other. There was no privacy for the mother and children to feel or touch or comfort each other.

Most children tended to cry. Some just stood blankly and did not talk at all, being overwhelmed by the whole situation. The younger ones, especially, could not fully grasp the situation of the mother, or cope with seeing her behind the bars. A repeated question was: "When are you coming home?", and the uncertainty of the reply added to feelings of loneliness, isolation and anxiety. The slow realisation that the separation may continue for a long time was often very hard for a child to cope with or comprehend. Older children tried to reassure the mother rather than tell her about problems they were facing. They tried to be as supportive as possible, asking about how she was and how she was coping in prison.

**Some statements:**

"When we see that our parents are in prison we cry."

"(Children) cry at prison a lot during visits."

"Children are happy to see me during mulaqat."

"After mulaqat they come home and cry."

"Children were scared and nervous and crying."

"Till today my son asks me 'Papa ko hathkadi pehana kar k gaye the na? (They handcuffed father and took him away, didn't they?)' He still has not forgotten it. Probably he will remember all his life."

"At the time of mulaqat, the boy cries there and the mother cries inside."

"Both sides cry at mulaqat - don't talk much - cannot hear anything."
On account of all the above, the effect of the mulaqat remained with mothers and children for long after the visit. Caretakers noted that after the visit children remained upset for several days. At home they were reported to cry more, feel depressed, stare blankly, feel sad, and keep thinking about the mother. Although they had tried to be comforting, caretakers said they had seen the children turn quiet and sad.

Institutionalized children who had been brought to meet their mothers, the mulaqat procedure was a more considerate one. They met their mothers inside prison, usually in the office of perhaps the Superintendent or another senior officer. Here, the family was given more time, privacy, and the opportunity for closer contact and freer interaction. It appears that the overall experience was less upsetting, as these children did not see their mothers behind bars.

Children also felt threatened by people in the neighbourhood who wanted to take advantage of their helplessness. In some cases, they were intimated by the victim’s family especially in the case of homicide. Such a threat was especially menacing where the two families were related, and living together as a joint family. Children complained about how the other (victim’s) family constantly fought with them, abused them, would not allow them access to the kitchen or bathroom, and threatened them.

Fearful and humiliating memories linger – of force exerted on parent/s during arrest and interrogation, some children’s own interrogation, the shock of sudden and coerced separation, being unwillingly sent back home from the police station without their parent.

**Worry About the future**

Children were anxious about the shaky and uncertain future that seemed to loom large before them. For older children looking after younger siblings, a
situation characterized by the possible long-term absence of the parent left them worried about their lives as grown adults.

The following themes were frequently expressed:

"When will mother come?".

"When mother returns all will be well"

"After mother’s imprisonment we no longer like it here. When she is back, we will return to our village".

**VICTIM-OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP**

The relationship between the offender and his victim is of great significance in crime. Wolfgang (1962) in his study of homicides found that family members, relatives, close friends and acquaintances are the specific relationships between victims and offenders both in victim-precipitated and non-victim precipitated groups. In India, D.P. Singh (1978) found that in nearly one-fourth of cases, the dacoity-victim belonged to the village / mohalla (neighbourhood) of one or another gang member. In most cases, acquaintances of the gang leaders / members were responsible for the raids. In another study of murders, D.P. Singh (1980) found that a large number of murderers had murdered their family members, followed by neighbours, friends and others. Rajan and Krishna in their study of homicides in Delhi and Bangalore in 1981 found that 22 to 39 percent victims get murdered by relatives. Prasad in his study of female murderers in 1981 found that 40 percent had murdered their husbands while the rest had murdered their children, husband’s concubine, some family member, and so on.

**PROBLEMS OF CHILDREN OF WOMEN IN PRISON**

The children of women in prison have a greater tendency to exhibit many of the problems that generally accompany parental absence including low self esteem, impaired achievement motivation, and poor peer relations. In addition, these children contend with feelings like anxiety, shame, sadness, grief, social
isolation, and guilt. The children will often withdraw and regress developmentally, exhibiting behaviors of younger children, like bed wetting...as the children reach adolescence, they may begin to act out in antisocial ways. Searching for attention, preteens and teens are at high risk for delinquency, drug addiction, and gang involvement (Women’s Prison Association, 1995).

However, there have been relatively few studies of prisoner’s families. the first of these studies focused on the financial troubles and adjustments of these families, which were found to be severe (Bloodgood, 1928; Ferraro, Johnson, Jorgensen, & Bolton, 1983; Sacks, 1938; Morris, 1965). Gabel (1992) identifies several other themes in the evolution of this research literature as it relates to children, including the deception and trauma surrounding the separation, care taking problems, stigma, and antisocial behavior. Perhaps the best known of this work is done by Sack and colleagues, who have studied clinical and non clinical samples of the children of incarcerated parents (Sack, 1977; Sack, Seidler, & Thomas, 1976, 1978). These studies report that families sometimes deceive their children about the whereabouts of the incarcerated parent and that issues of social stigma and isolation are prominent. Sack and others also note the connection between incarceration of parents and antisocial behavior of children (Bakker, Morris & Janus, 1978; Fritsch & Burkher, 1981; Lowenstein, 1986; Morris, 1965; Swan, 1981; Wilmer, Marks, & Pogue, 1996).

Variation in the well being of the children of imprisoned parents is likely to become especially apparent during the transition from adolescence to adulthood, in ways that include not only involvement in delinquency and crime, but also educational failure, precocious sexuality, premature departures from home, early childbearing and marriage, and idleness linked to joblessness. The signs of such impending problems are likely to be visible in early childhood. A number of theories offer reasons as to how and why this might be the case (John Hagan, 1995).
MENTAL HEALTH: GENERAL WELL BEING

Mental health reveals wholesome mental attitude and lack of mental disorders. Sound mental health is a pre requisite to better adjustment. Mental health cannot be defined in terms of mental discomfort only, as it is closely related to customs and requirements of society (Amrik Singh, 1999).

Cobb et al. (1963) realized the difficulties involved in measuring the positive aspects of mental health such as integration of personality, level of interpersonal adjustment.

Those who took very positive views regarding mental health include Henery (1953) who referred it as the individuals’ striving for successful adaption to “normal stressful situation and Frank (1953) declared that mentally health persons are those who continue to grow, develop and mature through life by accepting responsibilities and finding fulfillments without paying too high a price, either personally or socially.

Some investigators applied the definition of mental health to the reported feeling of happiness or unhappiness. Pollack (1948) and Rogers (1959) are two psychologists who contributed much to this point of view stressing the subjective feeling irrespective of the objective appearance.

Jahoda (1958) presented six cardinal aspects of mental health as:

ii. The attitude towards the self
iii. Growth and development and self actualization
iv. Integration
v. Antonomy
vi. Perception of reality
vii. Environmental mastery
Psychologists have mentioned the following characteristics as attributes of a mentally healthy person who enjoys general well being.

a. A mentally health person is free from internal conflicts he is not at “war” with himself.

b. He is well adjusted, i.e., he is able to get along well with others. He accepts criticism and is not easily upset.

c. He searches for identity.

d. He has a strong sense of self esteem.

e. He knows himself, his needs, problems and goals (this is known as self-actualization)

f. He has good self control balances rationality and emotionality.

g. He faces problems and tries to solve them intelligently, i.e., coping with stress and anxiety.

One of the keys to good health is a positive mental health (Park.K., 2000).

The mental health of children and young people must always be considered in the broader context of health and well being as physical and emotional health are inter dependent. Health problems experienced by children and young people reflect a complex interaction between the child or young person, their family, their social economic and cultural environments – Raphael, (2000).

**RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL WORK**

The child is our sacred human resource and the world’s culture and future hang on the practical concern shown for the worth and growth of the child, its environment and opportunities the full and harmonics development of the fledgling fertilized by education, creative incentives and value models – Justice.V.R. Krishna Iyer (1997).
The current state of children of lifers reflect an uneven commitment to the implementation of best interest as a child centered and child’s rights principle (Grace Khoo, 2002). What is required is a child welfare orientation which should emphasize the prevention of harm by instituting a special welfare system than can ensure that certain risks are avoided in the first place (Evelyn Grace Khoo, 2002).

Further, what is necessary is a serious overhaul of policies and practices that have the country so far down the road in its stigmatic orientation. This requires the whole structure to begin thinking outside of previously constructed understandings about the conditions that lead to harm. The alternative is the installation of a multi-pronged approach to protect these children.

At this juncture, it is realized that social work intervention is necessary in all schools and organizations in order to help the children to cope with anxiety, stress and alienation. Social worker’s specialized help is also expected in the area of family counseling and student counseling. Psychotherapeutic intervention is very much essential.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTING THE INSTITUTION

This quasi-experimental study was done by collecting the data from Bethel Agricultural Fellowship Organization in Salem and Tirunelveli Districts, Tamil Nadu.

Bethel Agricultural Fellowship was started before 43 years for the sake of poor, orphans. It caters to the needs of children - orphans, poor children, children of lepers and children of lifers. Now the organization is taking care of one thousand six hundred students in various branches. Residential care with food, education, medical facilities and spiritual climate are provided to the children. For every twenty five children they have appointed a warden or a matron with an assistant to look after them. They have many small homes inside
the biggest and beautiful campus. This organization is supported by the service organizations in Netherlands. Regular schooling, medical checkup, spiritual training, adequate clothing and recreational facilities are sufficiently provided to the children. Though this is one of the well known organization working for the children of lifers, the research has been undertaken because the children face inner struggles which are psychosocial in nature and that should be studied and possible social work intervention should be given.