CHAPTER 4

PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS HEAL AND EMPOWER

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings from the current study keeping in mind the research questions and the objectives. The research questions are regarding the need for healing of children in street situations and the way psychosocial interventions can assist them. Children are empowered to be responsible citizens through psychosocial interventions. They are assisted for capacity building which helps them for a meaningful life in society. Children’s voice is respected and accepted as they are part of the process of their development and progress. It is considered best in the interest of all children, to have their voice in their various requirements as they grow up to make their life in the society as adults (Smith 1995). To assess children’s wellbeing they need to be involved in the research process. Phenomenological approach places children as key actors to understand their perspectives on their wellbeing (Fattore et al. 2007).

The study has its objectives to find out the psychosocial health of children living in street habitats and to offer succour for healing and empowerment. Life in its fullness is the dream of every human being. Children in street habitats are socially excluded and marginalized. They can enjoy fullness of life through healing and empowerment which can be realised through psychosocial interventions. The research is regarding children who face ordinary psychological and emotional problems due to negative social situations. Those who suffer with acute problems need professional support and they are not part of this study.
The results of this study can serve as a benchmark to assess children in deprived situations. The study has followed qualitative analysis of the data gathered from children, their environment and key informants. The study focuses on emotional wellness of children in street habitats and children who are in the mainstream having left the street situations through psychosocial interventions. The study is phenomenological and ethnographic. Ethnographic is based on the experience of the researcher who spends quality time with children in the street situation, in open shelters and with children who are in the mainstream having left the street situations.

As the researcher has remained at the research site for a long time, ethnographic research is considered apt and it is one of the most in-depth researches. It offers rich insight into human and social aspects of human beings (Myers 1999). However, ethnographic approach though scientific, could be interpreted as having a subjective bias. Hence, a second approach is used in the present study which is phenomenological. It is a project of sober reflection free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxicants. It is driven by fascination with meaning in which the researcher sees the “heart of things” and exercises a formative touch (Manen 2007). In it the respondents express their lived experiences. The researcher following the methodologies elicits themes to answer the research questions.

Key informants, a source of information through interview (Dooley 2008) forms part of the study. They have lived experiences of children, living with them and accompanying them from the street to the mainstream. The researcher shares his questions and objectives with the key informants. They express their experiences with children and that enriches the research themes.

After having done deep study of the questions and the objectives following phenomenological and ethnographic approaches a tool is used for triangulation to avoid faulty understandings which might survive in any single measure (Dooley 2008). It is used in the initial stage and found it reliable in the given situation. The tool is that of FIRO-F and FIRO-B which is developed and propagated by Schutz (1966). The tool analyses the behavioural patterns of children by analyzing their answers to the two sets of 54 questions. This eventually assesses the emotional wellbeing of the children in street habitats and the children who left the street habitat for the mainstream. The comparative study brings
sufficient margin to show the differences in emotional wellbeing of both the groups. This helps the researcher to further explain that psychosocial interventions play a vital part in healing and empowering children in street habitats. The tool with its applications and analysis is explained in chapter five.

The analysis attempts to answer the research questions. The objectives get clarified during the course of the analysis. The first question and the first objective are to analyze the emotional situation of children in street habitat. The various situations that make the children to leave the families and live their everyday life in street situations which affect their emotional wellbeing and their social life are assessed.

The researcher finds that children have developed many skills and qualities while in street situations. Society at large looks at them negatively as expressed by all the children who have been part of the study. However, he notices that they have developed many skills which are positive and can be used to build up their life and others’ lives. When they are motivated to leave the streets and use these skills for positive living they become life skills and they excel in their social, academic and professional life.

The second part of the analysis takes care of the second research question and the second objective which assesses the need for psychosocial interventions to heal children in street habitats. Most children need healing (George 2014) whether they are in the mainstream situation or in street situations. The more negative the experiences are, the more they get wounded and that add to the need for healing.

The third part analyses the way children are empowered to be in the mainstream; how psychosocial interventions lead them through a process which enables them to join the mainstream society. The study analyses the emotional wellbeing and empowerment possibility in pre-street stage, street stage and in post street stage after having had an opportunity to take advantage of the various psychosocial interventions.
4.2. MENTAL DISTURBANCES IN PRE-STREET LIFE

Mental health is the wellness of mind which is very essential to be a healthy human being who is well integrated in a family and in the larger society. It is in the process of development right from the moment a child is conceived. In one of the interviews with a Key Informant the person states:

Children are fruits of love of two individuals – father and mother. Children born as a result of genuine love relationship grows into a healthy human person. While children who are results of lust, revenge, rape, anger or such negative passions are affected negatively at their origins itself regarding mental health (KI. 1, 09 October 2012).

As the child grows it receives all attention and care from the mother, father and other members of the family and society. The feeling of acceptance and recognition leads the child to a healthy growth and the child is able to maintain a balanced mental health.

Social life is considered most basic for every human being. If the social life is not pleasant or negative the person grows with misbehaviours and eventually becomes a misfit in society. It becomes a huge challenge to forge ahead in a healthy manner with his life. He becomes unwanted, unaccepted and remains under great stress which affects his life in many adverse ways. In the context of children who happen to be in the street habitats, they are affected by various adverse family and social situations

The present study begins with the analysis of emotional situation of children in street habitat. This study takes the researcher to their past while they were with parents in the rural poor villages. For some their past is with the parents in the street itself. The discussions start with their life before they actually started their active life in the streets. The term active is used to denote the children who come from the villages and have to begin their active street life with immediacy for survival. There is also another group that
lives with parents in street situations and they become active slowly as they receive parental support. They grow into street activities as they gain independence in earning, spending and saving.

All the different interviews conducted with children in the street situation and the children who are mainstreamed talked about their life in the villages. The researcher terms it as pre-street life and analyses the situation to understand them better.

For the researcher it has been a mind-boggling experience to be with children in the street habitats. They live in utter poverty and misery yet they survive. Extremely surprising is the way they stay and the complexity of their life in street situations. The extreme negative situations affect their mental health as well as social life. Their social experiences make them psychologically sick. They need therapeutic exercises for mental wellness to begin their social life in the mainstream society. Children are neglected by the society. They are not wanted. They do have a desire to live. They meet their needs for social life in situations that make them sick and that eventually lead them to marginalization.

4.2.1. Family with Deprivations

A close look at the progress of the world reveals that the growth is restricted to the benefit of a few. The development has resulted in many being deprived of basic facilities and that lead them to the street life. It can be related to unstable political situation, unrest and economic crisis in the country and lack of family support through Government mechanisms (Dabir & Athale 2011). The crux of the problem could be poverty but family disorganization, socio-cultural reasons, natural disasters, widespread prevalence of HIV/AIDS, war, internal and cross-border displacement and internal conflicts in the country can also be some of the causes (Dabir et al. 2011).

Children in street situations can be broadly classified into two groups: the first group is that which left the village life due to various negative situations. Some of them left as individuals while others with their families. They are not able to meet their basic needs in poor villages. The second group is that which lives with parents in street situations. The family leaves the village situation and gets settled in the urban areas due to extreme deprivations. They eke out a living in the streets. The situation that leads the child, the
family or the family with the child is similar. The current study is about children in street situations and the findings are explained below. According to Ahuja (2014) there are over 300 million people who are considered poor in India. It is estimated that almost one-third of the 1.1 billion live below poverty line and most of them live in rural areas. West Bengal is considered, one of the poor states and the study is based on Kolkata which is the largest city of the state (Ahuja 2014).

4.2.2. Stings of Poverty

Poverty causes pain to people in two ways. The hunger and the absence of basic needs cause physical pains and mental agony. The world is growing small each day with fast communications. The progress in many fields is remarkable but individual needs are not cared for sufficiently. Poverty continues to deprive many Indian children of the opportunities for a reasonable healthy physical growth, mental development and protected childhood (Nagaseshamma 2010). The lack of basic necessities lead people to inhuman lives and the ones affected most are the children.

The gap between the poor and the rich is on the increase. Rapid increase in urban poverty leads to problems of education, nutrition and health facilities. For the children it is seen in displacement of families, abandonment, and poor living conditions. Huge numbers live below poverty line; extreme economic inequalities and rapid rate of urbanisation have eaten into every sector of human life in India. Children become victims of urban cash economy and its individualism. The numbers are on the increase due to cross boarder informal access. It is easy for children of neighbouring countries to cross over to India (Dabir & Athale 2011), especially as they have more possibilities for petty jobs and more services available for deprived children.

India is considered one of the poorest countries in the world. Every third poor person in world is an Indian and the number is on the increase. The problems they face due to poverty are social discrimination, social condemnation, housing and the subculture of poverty. The disparities between the poor and the rich are on the increase. An average Indian cannot look beyond survival. The 65 years of independence has seen growth rate income per capita as less than three times while many other countries have an increase up to five to six times. Japan has an increment of fifty times (Ahuja 2014). So the reason for
poverty is poor and slow development. The sufferers are the weaker sections people and the weakest in any society are the children.

The researcher meets children in the street habitats and most of them express that their families are very poor. They do not have enough to eat. At times it is mentioned that the whole village suffer from dearth of material things. As a result they are neither fed nor well clothed. They do not have the basic amenities for a human living. One of the respondents explains about the hardships that he has had while being in the village situation. The main problem expressed is poverty and other problems added to that. He states thus:

…I was born in a village. In the village I and my brothers and sisters had to go through many hardships. Our mother had to work very hard to feed us. There were days when we had moved on with empty stomach…

My mother would find job in the cloth shop. She earns something to live on. Whenever she did not have a job she would collect the plastic and paper from the garbage and earn some money for the food. A number of times we had to beg for food. On the other hand, my father continues the same thing (drinking fighting at home) in this new place. Nobody likes us because of our father. They all speak ill of our father and us. In this new place also we could not live in peace. We could not live a normal human life in the footpath. In the small temporary hut, the whole family had to stay. The house was a broken one and during rain and thunder we could not stay in the house. There was much difficulty in the footpath. Common people looked down upon us… (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

The poverty that confronts him and his family leads them to hunger, deprivation of essential facilities, family quarrel and being rejected by the neighbours. All these make the child unhappy and disappointed with life. They go through a feeling of unwanted situation, and missing out chances for development for a good future. He gets mentally degenerated as he sees everything negative.
4.2.3. Dysfunctional Family
When a family is not able to provide intimate relationship-comforts it is considered dysfunctional. Every person belongs to a family and to a larger society. Whatever environment that surrounds him adds to his growth in a negative or positive way. When situation grow negative to extremes, many children leave their homes. The reasons are varied: individual, familial, cultural and structural risk factors, death of parents, abusive home life, broken homes, feeblemindedness, delinquency and poverty (Dabir & Athale 2011). Violation of children’s rights seems common in many ordinary families. They include family violence, excessive control and emotional, physical and sexual violence in their domestic environment. At times it is noticed that there is extreme cruel treatment by parent, step-parent and relatives. Family conflicts affect children. Unfair punishments given to children lead to breakdown of trusts in adults and migration to streets become more attractive (Dabir & Athale 2011).

Growing children have needs and basic needs have to be fulfilled. In the absence of basic needs children struggle and survive. Family tensions affect their personality and behaviour. Slowly self-respect gets eroded and cynicism gets fostered (Ahuja 2014). Any problem becomes a big problem and they are not sufficiently strong to face them. The pangs of hunger, lack of care of children, absence of jobs and all other economic needs not met, lead people to frustration. This can lead to misunderstanding and quarrel among family members. At times it is between husband and wife and at other times it is between siblings, parents and children or other family members. The weakest in the family are the younger ones and they leave the family when they are desperate. They lose hope in the absence of care and understanding. One of the respondents describes the way his father and mother live a disgruntled and dissatisfied life in which they quarrel and make each other’s life difficult.

… My father used to drink and he used to beat my mother. Then he abandoned me when I was a small boy. He sent us away from home. My father was a daily worker in the year 1999. My father did not like my mother, therefore, he sent us to the street. We used to beg every day. Every day we used to get five to 10 rupees. When we returned to our house my father started to torture my mother.
Then she said to my father that she would like to go away from him and that she will not come to him any more… (FCHB. 3, 24 November 2014).

In this situation the child is very unhappy. He is not given the basic necessities that are due for any child. The child is caught up in the quarrel of the father and the mother. The parents are not able to offer to the child love and affection which is most required for a child to grow up. They may have had many reasons for their dissatisfactions. The dissatisfactions are passed on to the child in the form of negative energies. These wounds the child’s mind and affect his physical growth.

Children are joyful and they grow up well in joyful or happy situation. They need a healthy atmosphere for a healthy mind. When they have to face negative situations their mental growth gets retarded. They tolerate to a certain extent and when it goes beyond they suffer and get wounded or run away from family situations hoping for a better life.

4.2.4. Deficiency of Educational Facilities
Basic education is made compulsory for every child as a universal practice; yet we find numerous people illiterate which lead them to a life that is less caring for children. People in the villages are illiterate and their main concern is survival. They do not understand the need and significance of getting children educated. With lack of education growth process gets stunt. Children in poor settings suffer as they miss possibilities for growth and development.

Many of the children in the villages do not have the chance to attend centres of basic education. As per 2011 Census, 26 per cent of people of India are still illiterate. West Bengal is said to have 9.44 per cent of its people illiterate. The problem of illiteracy among women and children is more pathetic. It is stated that 20 per cent of children aged 6 to 14 are still not in school (Ahuja 2014). The harm done by this to families is radical. It affects the overall welfare of every member in the family. It affects children the most as their life depends a lot on education which brings them jobs, serene family and good social life.

The children who are met at different times during the research period mention about the poor schools that exists in their villages. Many of them do not have the needed
infrastructure. In many of the schools the teachers do not meet the required numbers. The schools lack minimum requirements. The poor and illiterate situation of the parents adds to the problems. Lack of education lead them to less understanding of themselves and others, from the point of view of parents, husbands, wives, neighbours, children and other members in the family and society. They blindly follow their feelings and many head for the cities in the difficult situations.

While talking with a group of children one of the girls in the group mentions about her experience of miserable school situation.

In the sector of studies too our village was backward. No one is interested in education. The only school we had was not developed; it was only till primary level. The teachers too were not trained and were often cruel. I just could not really continue my schooling in such situations (FCHG. 2, 27 November 2014).

The children as groups talk negatively about the school facilities in their villages. Even those few schools that they have are understaffed and many of them with less infrastructure. Some of them are so miserable that they are not protected in the rainy and winter seasons. Classes are not regular in many of the village schools. Some parents force children to go to school; however children are not motivated to study. The parents are not educated and they are not able to guide children in their problems as they begin to go to school.

In some cases the children have to do all the household jobs. They are poor and the work of children in the farm or in other settings is required for the survival of the family. Children’s services are used for earning money or looking after infants (Ahuja 2014). There are many more problems associated with poor standards of literacy: lack of essential facilities like sanitation, health care, drinking water and playgrounds. Learning is joyful and it should be so if the school needs to retain its students. The child mentions about the absence of interest from the part of the adults in the village. The backwardness of the village adds to the low literacy level.
4.2.5. Loss of Parent/s and Dearth of Guidance

Parental presence is absolutely essential for children’s growth. When they are absent due to death or other reasons, children suffer. People in the village have poor nutrition. Ill health is very common. Health centres are not enough and those in existence are not sufficiently equipped to meet the needs of ordinary people. People in the villages get easily sick in the absence of needed protection from environmental hazards. At times they die early in life while children are young. Death of the mother or the father causes immeasurable pain to children. When the absence is not substituted, they become helpless. In extreme helplessness the children have no option but to leave their family and many opt for street life or land up in street situations. The families are so divided and poor that the rest of the family is not able to take care of the children.

One of the children who came in contact with the researcher has difficulty with her family as she has lost her father. It is very difficult for a lady to stay without the husband in a village setting. Presence of a husband is needed for companionship and for survival. When one loses the husband the practice is that the villagers ask her to marry again. Life with a new person with children already existing leads to lots of problems. One of the respondents shares thus. “… At the age of three I lost my father and the village people forced my mother to marry again. My stepfather use to torture my mother. One day my mother stood back and started beating my stepfather…” (FCHG. 3, 27 November 2014).

In many of the village families the father is the breadwinner. The mother normally manages the household activities especially cooking and caring for children. In some cases they also work adding to the income of the family. But the major dependency is on the father of the family. In cases when the father dies it throws the family into difficult situations. The father has been the breadwinner and the protector who takes care of them in all the necessities such as sickness, accidents and general protection. When he is no more they are almost thrown into a chasm and life becomes highly challenging.

It is customary for the villagers to make sure that every family has a man as the head of the family. It is very difficult for women to survive without the support of the man, especially in cases where the children are still small. The case that researcher meets is the one in which the father of the family dies and the mother has small children to look after. The
easy solution proposed and forcefully enforced is that the mother marries again. The children thus have a stepfather.

In most cases stepfathers are people who do not have a regular family life or people who may already have had a family earlier. They do not easily commit themselves totally to the new family. In the case mentioned above, the stepfather does not care for the children. The child does not see him as a good man. The child stands helpless seeing parents fighting. She feels so sad that her mother is helpless and much harassed. The child suffers seeing the hard and painful suffering of the mother.

The man who marries out of some compulsions without reconciling with his past is not able live in harmony with the new life. The effect is on the present family. The child says that he beats the mother. It is an accepted practice that women are subjects to the husbands especially in the village settings with traditional practices in India. They suffer and they are not in a position to react as the society is male dominated. In the present case the tolerance level reaches an extreme situation where the mother stands strong to support children as he is harassing them. Such family quarrels leave children in difficult situations. They get wounded not knowing to take sides and they suffer silently. When they find it hard they leave and look for places where they can enjoy peace and that may be the streets.

4.2.6. Social Discrimination and Children

The poor are considered a burden on the society. They are harassed, humiliated, and discriminated at every level. The poorer people are weak and they become the targets of the richer and higher classes. Hostility grows between the poor and the rich. Money and power rules most societies (Ahuja 2014). Normally, areas inhabited by the poor are crime prone and for every crime the attention of the general public and guardians of law is mostly the poor people, especially living in street situations. The poor are considered immature, undisciplined and less reliable and dependent. These build up their negative self-image besides adds to their inferiority complex and affect their growth. One of the respondents states thus:

We did not have clothes to clothe ourselves. Somehow our mother would get some clothes from the house of rich and we had to manage with that because
we did not have money to buy clothes. Our mother worked very hard for us and still she had to face criticism of the people of the village. My mother was repeatedly beaten up by my father because of us. We had to face a lot of criticism because of my father. ...........

......The neighbours were not happy with us.

We could not afford to buy the necessary books. The neighbours would not help us because of our father’s behaviour. During winter we had to go through a lot of suffering. We had no money to buy warm clothes. The winter season became our biggest obstacle. Since we were Muslims, no other caste children would play with us. They used to avoid us. They did not consider us as human beings. People in the village did not accept us. So we had to move to the footpath… (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

The mother has to work hard to look after the children. They do not have enough clothes to wear. The mother goes around begging from place to place to feed and clothe her children. Though the child receives the essentials he realizes the hardship of the mother and the rejection faced by the family in the village. They are utterly poor and the village does not accept them. Feeling of rejection right from an early age affects mental growth. They have desire to live on and they also realizes the need to depend on people who are not happy to help. The mother works very hard and still experiences lack of inclusion in the village.

The child understands the need for study and wants to study. However, he has to depend on the neighbours who are unhappy with him as he belonged to a poor family. The problems are aggravated during winter as winter-clothes require more money.

In the present context the child faces religious ostracism. He belongs to the minority group and the child dares to say that people do not even consider him as human being. Sense of discrimination and rejection experienced, affect their mental growth. Negative experiences have negative impact on their future life. The experience of the child being part of a poor family is that of discrimination and rejection, when the child needs inclusion and acceptance for a balanced growth.
4.2.7. Abuse and Hurt Feelings

Abuses are experienced by children in varied ways. The ones who suffer more are from poor villages or from families or people who are emotionally less balanced. It can cause emotional disturbances for children. In one of the discussions with a key informant a case is brought to the notice of the researcher.

………I walked up to the girl, almost 17 years old as she was walking alone in the airport at 10 pm. On enquiry she said that she is there being thrown out from a family that kept her as a maid. She mentioned that she was working in the family since her childhood. After some talking the child agreed to come with me. After keeping her for the night in a girl’s shelter for the night she was taken to a centre that cares for girl children. The care giver managed to get the phone number of the family and contacted them. They came in big numbers to take her back home. Once they came, the actual truth was unearthed. She ran away as she had to face her brother with a failed report card. Her brother in anger slapped her. She could not stand the punishment and she left the home. She made up a story to hide the actual fact…. (KI. 2, 10 October 2014).

The case mentioned is of a child walking about in the airport of the city all alone. Being a girl child the safety is a matter of concern. That pushes the key informant to approach the child and take her with her. At times when children are abused, they do not have the mental strength to stand the strain. If they are not supported they take any decisions which may eventually ruin their entire life. In the present case it is clear that the child is not prepared to get a scolding from her own brother. Her brother cannot accept a failure in the examinations that takes place in one of the semester examinations. She feels hurt and she leaves the home.

Child abuse in families and in villages is becoming rampant. Children are not respected and cared for, in many of the families that are economically as well as morally poor. The effects of child abuse are many. According to Ahuja (2014) children lose their self-esteem. Their dependency gets shifted from parents or caretakers to teachers. They become victims of deviant behaviours. They face social and interpersonal problems and lastly the child
become re-victimized as the child gets abused time and again (Ahuja 2014). One of the respondents states thus about his experience.

… His moral character was not good. People would not accept us because of the loose character of our father. We had to go through many suffering and shame. There was no time table for our food. Some time we would get something to eat in the morning and nothing in the evening we had to work hard to get something to eat… (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

The child does not explain much but it is clear from the statement that the child had to face lots of embarrassing situations. He is able to understand what is morally right and wrong. The child talks about morality and the suffering associated with bad morality. The child talks about the different types of abuses that he has gone through. Physical abuse and abuse of neglect is spelt. He is hiding the sexual abuse under the title of moral abuse. The child talks about lack of food, lack of care and physical torture. He talks about the fact that he is a bad man and that he has no morality to indicate the sexual abuse which he does not like to talk about. When the child experiences abuse in the family it becomes a mental wound. Child feels that he is in a desperate situation.

The child talks about hard work and rejection due to the lose character of the parent. The researcher notices that child is able to reflect on his past objectively. He is able to realize the harm that he has received and that becomes the starting point for healing.

4.2.8. Caste and Class System

In India most people are considered as victims of class and caste system (Dabir & Athale 2011). The higher caste and class refuse to see the people of the lower class and caste as human beings with equal dignity. Many people like to know the caste of the other before they begin any close relationships. Official system does not separate people on the basis of language, class, culture or caste. The weaker groups are protected by the constitutions. But in reality the higher caste still rule with their wealth and power. It is experienced very strongly in the remote villages and as a result many find difficult to survive. When the harassment grows strong the weaker ones escape to the streets. To escape from domestic violence, neglect, traumatic occurrences at home/school and dysfunctional families many
escape to the streets (Dabir & Athale 2011). One of the respondents talks about the discrimination that he has faced.

We could not move around freely in the village because no Hindu family and even Muslim family allowed us to enter their house. Sometimes due to some political problem the police would break into our house and we had to get some other place like a barbarian (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

In this particular child’s village, his group is not accepted by others; they are considered to be of lower status. In many villages they follow caste and class system. The lower ones do not have the chances that others enjoy and the ones who suffer most are the children

4.3. WOUNDS OF STREET LIFE

The speciality of the present century is booming industries, which changes the course of the world to affluence and accelerated growth. People in the villages have to struggle with the weather conditions and they depend mostly on agriculture. Generally village families are large and poverty becomes acute. Food is not sufficient and people feel the pangs of hunger. These problems affect children’s growth. As the cities grow, more industries and more people gather to the cities. People, young and old flock to the cities for jobs. Many get jobs while others cannot due to large numbers. City slums come into existence and people start staying in groups, as families and as single individuals trying to get enough for their survival (Dabir & Athale 2011).

Once children reach the streets they face inhuman situations. They need to face difficulties from different fronts to sustain themselves. Staying with children in street habitats the picture that comes uppermost in the mind of the researcher is the scene of the city corner dumping pit. The researcher notices the struggle between the cows, dogs and human beings, especially the feeble children to live on the waste of the society.

While children live in street situations they get sick and the damages caused are many as described by Sondhi-Garg (2004). Physical development is affected in its coordination,
strength, vision, hearing and overall development. Cognitive development of children is hampered. It includes literacy, numerical learning and acquisition of knowledge needed for normal life. Probably what is most affected is the emotional development of children which includes self-esteem, family attachment, feelings of love and acceptance. Children are affected in their moral development which includes sense of group identity, the ability to cooperate with others and the capacity to distinguish right from wrong (Sondhi-Garg 2004). This leads the researcher to conclude that children are sick and they need healing. The problems that lead child to sick situation is seen and experienced in the field work as the researcher meets children as individuals and as members of groups in street situations.

4.3.1. Exposures of Street Environment
The street life has dangers that even threaten the lives of children. They cannot have safe place to stay, to keep their things, to eat and even to sleep. Most children are found with one set of clothes. A few may have another set kept in some street corners, shops or with some friends. They live dirty as they feel safer and they can earn more. They cannot afford to save for the next day as the saving normally is stolen while sleeping. They have good days and bad days. A temple festival, a marriage and some trains can be a boon for them. But mostly they eat the minimum, they sleep in unhealthy environments and they suffer most when they are sick. Children freely express their unsafe life in the streets. While staying in the street, children suffer hunger, cold and absence of sufficient clothes.

… Winter we struggled because there were, not sufficient blankets and also some time at night police use to come and send us out of the station. Somehow we used to get enough food most of the days… One fine morning I and my mother saw few boys of my age were drinking and they came to me and requested me to drink with them but I refused… later my mother took me to a home for children (FCHG. 3, 24 November 2014).

The child when asked about street life her thought goes to winter days. Those are the days she and her family suffered the most. The girl has phobias of the night. One thing is to suffer the cold and the second is to be harassed by others. She used to come to sleep in the railway station premises as it is better protected. Outside the station she is exposed to all
the possible dangers. However, often they are send out as they are seen as a nuisance in the station premises.

Child faces problems regarding regular food. She needs to beg often and people offer food. When that is not enough she works in small hotels or work to clean the compartments of the trains and to get enough to manage the food. She gets leftover food from the passengers at times. Being a city often people distribute food in different corners especially in the temples. Once children get used to the city life they manage their food most of the days.

Life becomes more dangerous when they take to alcohol or drugs, getting sick physically or mentally. Many of them in the streets are addicted. They smoke, drink and sniff different items that cause intoxication. The girl, whom the researcher meets, though poor, has certain good sense to realize the good and the bad. She is being offered drinks and she refuses. Some of them do give in and some others get forced into unwanted situations. Once the person accepts and becomes a victim he turns out to be an addict eventually.

Thus street hazards are many: insecurity, absence of food, addictions, illicit or unlawful relations that can lead them to STD or HIV. The child expresses her support in her mother. Mother came to street situation due to her helplessness at home. It is difficult for her to keep her daughter with her. She eventually looks for a foster care home for her daughter for she realizes that street is too dangerous for her and her daughter complies to give up street life for a better life.

4.3.2. Pangs of Hunger: Initial Flow to Social Evils

In the initial days of street life a child goes hungry as he does not know how and where to get food in street situations. He needs to learn the street earning methods. Normally children have very little or no money at all when they reach the streets. They depend on others. The pangs of hunger lead them to beg, search for food in wastage bins or even to steal. As the researcher meets one of the children he states that he spends most of his time begging to get enough to have food. He spends many days in hunger. The feeling of hunger leads him to beg though he does not like to beg.
… To tell sincerely, about my feelings I did not like the job at all. I had to depend on such a job as my food depended on it. There were days in which I had a coin or two; I ate what I could get. The money was hardly enough for one time food. The rest of the day I had to spend suffering from hunger. (FCHB. 1, 06 December 2014).

Every living being needs oxygen as its primary need and it is free. Following that the immediate need to be satisfied is for food. The need for food is strong and the cravings to satisfy one’s hunger can lead people to borrow, beg, steal and go to any extend beyond reason.

Normally the children look quite cleanly dressed in the initial days. To beg they need to look poor and miserable. When begging fails or when they do not like to beg and if they are smart they begin to steal. They steal as individuals and when possible as a group. They develop gang spirit and they support each other. This stealing habit leads them to face legal consequences. Many of them become victims of conflict with the law.

Some of them borrow from their friends or from shops where they sell their goods that are collected from the streets. This borrowing leads them to difficulties when they are not able to pay back. They become preys to business people who would take advantage of them. When they cannot pay they have to work more or leave their place to further unknown cities to begin once again. They become victims to gangs in the streets as they offer support in vulnerable situations.

Some live with their hunger. They get more famished and that affect their health. They get sick oftener due to malnutrition. Some risk their life by eating from unhygienic situations. As the days go by they slip into unhealthy, unwanted and edge away as human person to inhuman lives.

4.3.3. Disrepute and Demean

Once children begin to beg people look down upon them. Children keep insisting when they are desperate for money. Some keep asking out of need and others out of greed. The society has a group that turns sympathetic and offer support. However many do not like to
see or interact with anyone in street situations as they are seen dirty, filthy and bad. Many offer support with repugnance and some with hatred.

A few children express dissatisfaction with the way people deal with them. One mentions that one day he throws away the money which is given to him in an insulting manner. In the responses some say that while they beg some throw coins with terrible disrespect and neglect, ignoring their humanness. People at large do not realize that children do not opt to beg. They beg as they had no other alternatives. There are also situations where the people curse them for the harassment.

In one of the experiential sharing a child writes in his statement that he never likes to be a beggar. But he has to take that profession in his early age to manage the food for him and his mother.

My work began a year after I learnt to walk, as at that tender age I started my profession as a beggar. I begged every day in and around Howrah station. At times people took pity and threw a few coins and at other times they cursed and slanged me for my presence (FCHB. 1, 16 December 2014).

While talking the boy shares that he never likes to beg. He may be poor but he has not lost his dignity. While talking to one of the key informants he talks about the pride of children from street habitats.

One of the boys did not want to sit with others who were younger to him in class. He would sit by himself and learn by himself. He would ask a teacher only when he is absolutely not able and he would make sure that it is not seen by other children. The sense of pride made him work hard and learn till he learned enough to be with his age group (KI. 1, 22 June 2014).

The key informant says that the boy refuses to learn in front of others. He is too proud and he does not want to be less than others. So he learns basic writing and reading by himself. Sense of pride is very strong and for most it is the sense of dignity. At times children are forced to let go their dignity for the sake of survival and that affects their mind.
4.3.4. Nutrient Deficiency and Health Issues

Children require nutritious food for their wholesome growth. During the initial days children who come into the street situation struggle as they depend on daily jobs, begging or rag-picking. During the days of *bundhs* (strike) they become desperate due to hunger. Often they do not get enough to eat; they do not get food that is nourishing. When they are sick they are not able to work and do not receive the needed care. One of the respondents talks about the pains of hunger.

> It was almost afternoon and I did not have a single coin with me to fill my rumbling stomach. I was sitting there crying on my bad luck for nobody gave me alms, when she came up to me silently from behind and stroking my head gently asked me the reason for my sorrow. I looked up at her and with eyes full of tears told her that I was hungry and did not have any alms, with which I could buy food (FCHB. 1, 06 December 2014).

The researcher comes across this child who experiences extreme deprivation. He is used to begging as he is not able to earn by working. He is too small to work. But he normally gets enough by begging. But some days are bad and those days they go hungry. The child is crying as he is hungry. There are many people passing by and no one dares even to ask him the cause for his sorrow. His mother is in another place trying to earn money.

In such a desperate situation he welcomes the gentle pat. He eagerly expresses his pain of hunger and he is assisted. What is more striking to the researcher is that many children go hungry on a regular basis. Many of them do not own up their hunger especially to known people. The society turns hostile and unfriendly. They suffer that probably more than the hunger.

In extreme hunger they eat whatever they get: stale food, junk food or cheap food. Those do not provide them with sufficient nutrients to keep their physical health as well to grow. Being children they require food that is nutritious for their growth. Many do not have proper development of their brain cells as they do not have enough food or food with nutrients. They may grow physically in size but they remain very average or less than
average in their intellectual capacities. Many of them develop poor eye sight. Some also suffer from skin diseases. All these are caused due to lack of nutrients for proper physical development.

Children also are affected with lack of proper nutrients for mental growth. The presence of a good family, society and people who promote growth remain absent in their life. They do not feel included in the mainstream. Many of them do not experience affection. They do not get proper guidance. All these affect their mental growth.

4.3.5. Humaneness’ Ebb and Flow to Misery
Children are meant to live in a human family. They experience first and foremost the love of the parents and siblings. Then they receive attention and affection from others in the family and immediate neighbourhood. Absence of the needed affection leave them emotionally misbalanced. Children need to receive and give affection for a healthy growth. Children who are deprived of safe human company in street situations look for substitutes: animals, unsafe men and women. Many of them become victims of alcohol and other drugs to escape their inhuman world. Thus, they lose their humanness and get into unacceptable practices which add to their misery. Some of them find escape roots in films to live in a world of fantasies.

The researcher while spending time in the street observing the various scenes where deprived children are involved, he notices that many of them are quite at a loss. They seem to give up respecting their human nature by taking to inhuman ways of living. The researcher observes their life in the streets.

… Suddenly a girl appeared. Probably she was eighteen years old. She also had a huge sack. She put the sack and sat down leaning against the sack. She was wearing salwar kameez; but looked very shabby and dirty. Soon a boy came nearby and sat for some time. He took out a piece of cloth and puts dendrite or some glue on to it and started sniffing. The girl seemed to be quite at home seeing the boys sniffing in front of her.
After sometime the girl covered her face with the piece of cloth around her neck. The researcher had to move away as she noticed that he was observing her. Little later the boy moved away too. There appeared a dog that seemed very familiar to the girl. As the dog reached near her she offered some food. The dog took the food and stayed close to her. Eventually she reclined as the dog stayed very close to her both enjoying each other’s company (OB. 1, 24 August 2013).

The researcher while spending time, observing children in the streets notices that they have a world of their own. Though each one has his own work they have some common life. Normally each one fends for himself. At times they are in pairs. Once they collect their share they come together to relax. They relax by talking of various things especially of the movies they see. At times they share their woes and miseries. The researcher comes into their life by listening to their stories.

Children are found relaxing by smoking, drinking and taking other harmful drugs as part of their addictive behaviours. One of the common scenes noticed by the researcher is sniffing. Many children in the street hold a handkerchief/piece of cloth item, which they keep close to their nose. While observing closer, it is seen as dendrite which gives them a ‘kick’. Some of them sniff while working and others once they complete their work in the streets and they fall asleep sniffing.

A positive aspect noticed by the researcher is that children in the streets are friendly and kind. They are kind even to animals. Quite many of them feed and spend time with dogs. As mentioned above the girl has very minimum. She is very poor and looks dirty. She is basically a rag-picker. But she shares her food with a dog seen near her. She finds the company soothing as she was able to sniff and sleep keeping the dog on her side.

A gradual ebbing away from the human society is well noticed. Children wear dirty clothes and live in dirty environment. They eat in unhygienic situation. Seeing them it is clear that they do not take bath and do not brush their teeth regularly. They are able to sleep anywhere. Even the rains do not affect them as they do not mind getting wet. They fail to care for themselves and others. They do not mind their peers being dirty. They are able to
share and even eat in the same place along with street animals. Children lose their human dignity and feel free to live with non-acceptable behaviours of the mainstream society.

4.3.6. Impoverishment and Publicities of Wealth that Hurts
Children with tattered clothes feel ashamed of themselves and they do not feel nice to come out in major social events. They feel trapped seeing children of their age in the mainstream with elegant attire. During festivals people offer clothes and food to the poor. Many in the streets are lucky. But feasts are not in all seasons. The children suffer due to want of clothes especially in the winter season.

The children in the streets notice that their counterparts in the mainstream have decent clothes to wear and good food to eat. They are exposed to the best as they live and move about in the heart of the city. The researcher has come across many children living in the streets who are in shreds looking at other children with shame and despair as they go about with gaudy dress and good food, accompanied by people exhibiting wealth. At times they receive good clothes as they are distributed for festivals by pious and social welfare agencies. In such situations they receive momentary joy. But it is surprising to note that there are people in the mainstream ready to pay a price to deprive them of the good clothes they received. Children sell their clothes for meager amounts. Once again they get back to their old clothes. The children sell them to get more food or even to have more entertainments like movies, or to meet the requirements of their addictions.

Children do not have bargaining power and they are forced to work in difficult situations with minimum pay offered to them. Mostly they receive a place to stay and food to eat. The smarter ones get the bargaining power and they earn more. In one of the regular visits to the streets the researcher observes a scene of a child suffering due to his street state.

… The boy is in tatters and was very shabbily dressed. He has long and unkempt hair. He looks very dirty. The boy being quite fair the dirt was too clear. He seems to be having a deep sleep. He had some plastic covering his leg up to the waist. He makes some move now and then but taking deep breaths. Flies were around him. They were trying to get little areas of his body not
covered. While turning it is noticed that he is really in tatters. The plastic really
protects him from nakedness

After sometime he opened his eyes but very lazily. Then he continues his nap. But he was sleeping lightly as he was opening his eyes oftener. When he opens the eyes he would see people walking. Some are eating while some are walking in groups. There were many who were gaudily dressed being a festival season. The child sees all that and there is no reaction. He probably has accepted his desperate state of being poor and neglected (OB. 2, 28 September 2013).

The boy noticed by the researcher is with unkempt hair. He does not have sufficient clothes. He has to cover himself with plastic. The child looks very weak physically and mentally. He suffers the ordeals of the environment. He is totally in desperate situation. It seems to the researcher that he has given up on life and just survives as long as possible.

The boy does not look like a new case in the street. He seems to be used to the flies and the passengers of different types. He is not scared of anyone including police personnel who walk by him now and then. As he notices people who are well-fed and well-dressed he seems helpless. He is suffering mentally as he is deprived of all the comforts that others enjoy. His poor family background forces him to the streets. He does not seem to have many friends. He has become really the scum of society. To accept oneself as a scum of the society must be hurting him a lot.

This particular child looks like a complete victim of poverty. He does not have anything to own except a little cloth and some plastic to wear and protect him. He is totally at the mercy of the public. The public does not care about him. They do not want to notice him. However he continues his existence. Probably once he is awake and feels the pangs of hunger he has to fend for himself either by begging or searching for things that could be sorted out from the dustbins or dumping pits. Poverty thus leads him to extreme helplessness.
4.3.7. **Human Dignity Assault: Denial of Essential Facilities**

Most of the children met in street corners are not able to protect their dignity as human beings. Many of them interviewed mention that they do not find essential facilities. It becomes a bigger problem for girls who stay in street situations. They feel more insecure while working, sleeping and they are not able to take care of themselves. They move around in groups as they feel safer together. Many of them belong to groups or gangs that protect them. One of the girls stated briefly about her difficulties to the researcher.

> But we could not have enough facilities especially for bath, toilet and other requirements. The boys used to manage and it was more difficult for us. There were times when we were embarrassed; the people were watching us when we wanted absolute separation (FCHG. 3, 27 November 2014).

The researcher talks to the girl who spends time in the street with others. She recalls her days as very difficult. The most sensitive needs of her life are not taken care of, being in street situation. She is a girl brought up in a family with a village setting. In the Indian context women enjoy a lot of privacy and respect especially for their various needs of nature and hygienic requirements.

The people in the mainstream look at girls in the streets with a negative attitude. They do not get the required respect. Once children are in the streets the general public do not seem to be sensitive and they feel hurt and suffer rejection. The child is aware that she is vulnerable and she needs more safety and security than boys. She wants it but is not able to get the required protection and care.

The child specifically mentions about her embarrassment while answering nature’s call or taking bath. Being in the urban setting and being exposed to street life they do not have any privacy. This suffering adds to their mental agony and they grow in their feeling of misery. They reach a situation when they are absolutely helpless and suffer silently. But in the long term it affects their mental growth. One of the respondents shares freely about her experience of people being insensitive.
… She was not happy to be in Howrah too. Boys say so many bad things. They also wanted to have sex with me altogether then I felt troubled. They want to have sex with me even when I was sick. They forced me to have sex. I do not want to stay. But I could not leave station and go home and stay. I was also scared of father coming to see me or if mother see what she will say. In the station when I see other gentle people I used to feel bad and even sorrowful (SHG.1, 21 November 2014).

The child who is in the street situation expresses openly her difficulties. She is already staying in the streets over seven years. She has gone through all the possible difficulties. She has spent sleepless nights; she has been a beggar, a wife, a vagabond and a labourer. She opts to continue as she enjoys freedom but she dislikes the streets for its negative aspects.

The main harassment she faces is from boys. At first she talks about boys in groups who do not respect her as a girl. The boys have similar difficulties of poverty and they spend their time in the streets. But as they are illiterate and less formed in the adult group they do not know or do not care to respect and love other children. The boys use abusive words to them and girls get hurt. At times boys misbehave to draw their attentions.

Boys with less human formation give into their animal instincts in them. They become a victim to their passions. The girl expresses that they want to have sex with her altogether. Probably she may be able to tolerate individual relationships. Boys may not want to take responsibility and they get into the group mentality and they harass girls. The boys do that to protect themselves as they may be scared to be alone. They feel the group support as they are aware of the legal or dangerous consequences. Sometime it may be due to the fact that they feel ashamed or immoral but the group overthrows such feelings.

The girl tolerates hardships but is haunted by the fear of being noticed by her father or mother. This is an indication that she has parents who care for her and she is aware of that. But some situation in her life forces her to leave home environment. Presently she is scared to go back. This fear helps her to get used to the street situations.
In spite of such a complicated life she seems to be gentle and kind hearted. She shares her feeling of love and sympathy for others. This informs the researcher that she is still able to get back to the mainstream life. She has lost opportunities and if someone offers opportunities she has the power to get back and live her future life in the mainstream.

4.3.8. Aggressive Manners and Violence

Many children who are born in criminal environments grow up as criminals. Children born to sex workers hear a lot about flesh trade from a very tender age. Children in the streets are used for fetching cigarettes, liquor and even drugs. They are easily drawn into petty crimes and eventually to major crimes and thus they promote violence in their various activities (Agarwal 2003).

Children’s first need is food. At times they need to struggle for food and they need to compete with others to get the better part in the various street income possibilities. That can lead to violence. Once their basic needs are satisfied they begin to have further needs for enjoyments. They form groups and situations arise where they need to fight for their rights. Street violence is quite common among slum and street dwellers. They are not protected sufficiently as they are considered less important. Children fight often and hurt themselves for ordinary reasons. Little fights can also turn out to be gangs’ fights where more children get injured. One of the respondents living with his parents talks about the violence that he has experienced.

... My father’s friends use to beat my father as well as they use to misbehave with my mother. I myself had to work for food. I worked in a teashop, factory and cloth shop. I did not like to live on this life where my father after drinking and smoking would quarrel with my mother. Slowly I began to learn all things.

I did not like my father’s character. At times police would put my father into prison and my mother had to go to release him. There was no peace in the family, only quarrel and slang language. My father used to quarrel with those who would talk with my mother. The people nearby used to speak ill of us. Sometime they used to beat us (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).
The child expresses that his father is beaten by his friends. He is used to alcohol and he gets into fights and quarrels. These fights lead the mother to get involved into violence. The child is not at all happy with the character of the father. The child likes to live peacefully as he expresses disgust regarding quarrels, alcohol, slangs and fights.

With the misbehaviour of the father the neighbours too are upset. They dislike the family. The child feels rejected and neglected in the society. He experiences violence as he says that they use to beat them at times. Probably the child cannot tolerate his father being harassed by others. Even though he is able to realise that the mistake is that of his father he supports the father. Love for parents is well expressed in their involvement with the enemies of their father. The child suffers mentally more than the external suffering.

Violence takes different forms. Children are kidnapped or even stolen at times. One of the key informants recalls his experience of a child being rescued while in transit being kidnapped.

… One day the child opts to travel by train to school to save some money (the children going to school in school uniform need not pay for their travel in local trains). As she gets down she is gagged and taken by a man. Out of fear and shock she became helpless even to utter a word and slowly she is taken to another train and led to another station. While crossing the checking line the Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) notices some strange behaviors and stops the man with the child. While checking the child reports the matter to the TTE who in turn informs the police. The man is arrested and the child is taken to the shelter for girls. Within two days the parents were contacted and the child was handed over to them (KI. 3, 17 January 2014).

This is an indication of the dangers that children have to face while being alone in street situation. People turn violent taking advantage of their vulnerability.

4.3.9. Beggary and Rejection in Abject Poverty.

When children do not receive basic facilities especially food they feel that they are unwanted in the society. They see some children better cared for and out of despair they
take to streets. Children in street habitats are victims of various types of abuses, lack of emotional support and a lot of unresolved grief (Dabir 2011). They long to belong to a group and it seems most essential for their survival though occasionally the researcher comes across some children who live on their own, all alone.

In the initial days of street life children are forced to beg. Slowly they learn to earn through hard work. When they grow weak or sick they beg. Many use smaller children for begging to get sympathy of the general public. Begging is something which goes against the dignity of human being. Helplessness is seen in the extreme, while a person begins to beg. For most in the public it is considered as a nuisance. On one occasion the researcher observes a lady with a child begging.

... He notices a lady with a child going around begging. They were looking poor and famished. Though begging, they did not have the look of beggars. The child looked very young and it was probably with her grandmother begging... they went from person to person and everyone seemed busy. No one offered anything. Probably they did not have the look of beggars. Some of them show signs of repugnance when the child extended the hand to them asking for alms.

The researcher follows them in the streets. At one moment the child approaches the researcher and after asking the name he offers 10 rupees to the child and she gave the 10 rupees to the grandmother... there was a smile on her face as she got the money. The child was constantly clinging to the mother; either the child is new to the street or there is fear as it is dark (OB. 3, 07 October 2014).

The researcher comes across a child begging with an elderly person. It is a common sight in many of the cities. The lady seems to be using the child to beg. The lady looks very sick and feeble. On enquiry it is found that the lady is with TB and that she is due for admission to a centre that offers free stay and treatment. They are utterly poor. They do not have the meals during the day.
In the present scene begging is in the evening hours. The lady says that she has to spend the night in some street corners as she is not able to go back to her village home. The child looks weak and innocent. The public at large is busy with their schedules: buying, selling, and looking for modes of travel. Some people are busy eating while others busy talking and playing with mobiles and dolls.

The child approaches some people and they show signs of disrespect and rejection. They do not want to see her as a girl child of seven years in a pitiful situation and offer the minimum concern required. The rejection and helplessness experienced by the child has an indelible mark in her mind. She notices other children of her age happy, cheerful and having all what they need. There are moments in which the child feels depressed.

4.3.10. Injurious Child Labour

India has the largest number of street children in the world. Many of them are working in informal or unorganized service sector. Children offer cheap labour catering to the various needs of city dwellers (Nagaseshamma 2010). Washing utensils in tea shops, hotels or houses is a common work available and many children do that as they are offered food. They help in pushing carts, cleaning vehicles, carrying loads for others and at times get involved in antisocial dealings. They risk their lives to earn a livelihood.

Children in the streets do different types of work such as selling newspaper, serving tea, working in roadside hotels and restaurants, shining shoes, work in small factories, or automobile workshops, rag picking and as parking attendants. They work in carrying load, luggage, cleaning cars, hawking or vending, selling popcorn, balloons and other low cost items. They may also get involved in begging, prostitution, drug-peddling and pick pocketing (Sondhi-Garg 2004). Their works bring them their essentials

From these discussions it is clear that the children in the street get wounded physically and mentally which leads them to an unsocial life. They become misfits in the society. They live through the initial days in the streets with lots of struggles. Eventually they grow into it and they fail to realize or recognize the worth of human life. They reach to the extent of giving up their life at times. Physical sicknesses can be healed with the help of medicine. But the sickness of the mind in which they fail to accept themselves, the Divine and others
need interventions appropriate to heal them. They need to become contributing persons in the society by their life and works. One of the children, who still lives in the streets, during an interview, talks about his work which brings him an income.

Researcher: When you stay in the railway station… what about your food…where?
Respondent: Eat… push and pull fish
Researcher: Huh…
Respondent: Push and pull fish and eat in the hotel
Researcher: Oh… you push and pull fish cart…
Respondent: Ah…
Researcher: Then you get money?
Respondent: Yes
Researcher: How much do you get?
Respondent: When we work we get 20 rupees per trip …
Researcher: Twenty rupees… how much do you earn a day…?
Respondent: Sometimes 150 to 200 rupees
Researcher: So much money…so nice
Respondent: Sometimes we push van too
Researcher: Ah..ha..
Respondent: 100 to 200 rupees…
Researcher: Plenty of money… so you sent money home… (INT SHB.1, 22 November 2014).

Children in the streets are ready for any kind of work. Streets offer them enough work. Children who are healthy are able to earn enough. There are children who come from the families to the streets to earn and then go back home later on. Many families do survive on such street work. Children in the streets have less bargaining power. But many prefer to use children for work as they are less demanding than the elders. They work in groups and they are able to be good substitutes for elders who may be more demanding.

The case mentioned above is of a happy child as he earns enough, but without a future. He is not able to send money home or save as he does not have such possibilities. They begin
to spend the extra earnings on unnecessary items and that mostly on things that can ruin their life like alcohol, drugs or other intoxicants. Many of them spend a lot of money on electronic gadgets and movies which do not give them the needed satisfaction. They continue without any plans. They get mentally dissipated as they cannot spend their time and money on socially accepted and progressive activities.

4.3.11. Deviancy Development
Society rejects children as they are dirty, filthy, looks ugly and sickly. At times they seem and may be are dangerous. They live on the left over of the society as they do not get their due share of basic facilities. Many in the main stream do not understand that children have their rightful place in the society. Children in the streets are considered a threat to them. So they are rejected, chased out, abused and considered unfortunate. Children get deteriorated mentally and physically and develop deviant behaviours.

Children in the streets belong to the deprived group in the society. They suffer in the absence of psychosocial needs fulfilment. Their needs are for love and security, new experiences, praise and recognition and for responsibility. They live in suboptimal social and economic conditions. They are unprepared for school life and as a result more likely never to attend schools. Absence of affection and security needs can lead to deviant behaviours. Parental deprivation can be termed as psychosocial deprivation (Sondhi-Garg 2004).

Children need guidance from parents or adults who are able to take their place in their life. In the absence of adults they take the easy and pleasure offering path especially in street situations. One of the children comments about the beginning of his addictive habits.

… When I recovered from my sickness I began to relate with my friends but I was not taking any alcohol. After a few days I began to take drinks. I did not want to take but my friends forced me to take it. As I was coming towards the house I fell down on the road. My family members do not know that I am taking alcohol (FCHB. 3, 24 November 2014).
Children are expected to grow up in families with the support of parents or their substitutes. They need family atmosphere for human growth which helps them to be social beings. They become part of the society when they feel wanted, loved and supported. They start their school life from early age. In the school they are helped for a balanced growth with the presence of teachers and peers.

The child expresses that he suffers from loneliness. He misses the presence of his parents. He does not enjoy public recognition. He does not have the benefit of public institutions. The child has to fend for himself. At times his survival methods are not healthy as he has to face the inhuman street situations. Child may need to beg to satisfy basic needs for which he normally depends on adults. He needs to make street as a place of stay with all its uninhabitable conditions.

The child is estranged from the mainstream society and he gets estranged from normal human life. He takes on to a life beyond the limits of children. Very early in life a deprived child begins an adult life as he earns, spends and saves. This leads him to deviant behaviours. He does not learn to live with peers, adults and others in the society. He does not depend on anyone at a tender age which needs protection and support. He is led astray due to lack of parental guidance.

In the street the researcher finds children who smoke, drink, do not go to school and do not live like mainstream children. The deviancies developed can eventually ruin the child. For many they do not return to the mainstream and for the others it is a long struggle to become part of the mainstream as they are wounded mentally and physically.

The child, in the interview says that he does not want to take alcohol. He is worried about his family members getting the information. However, peer pressure leads him to unwanted behaviours. Many children that the researcher meets are victims to peer pressure. In the absence of guidance deviancy develops and the child becomes a misfit in the mainstream society.
4.3.12. Unwarranted Emotional Reactions

Initial days are filled with fear. They find difficult to trust anyone. They do not know the place where they reach, live, earn and the people that surround them. For some each day is a new day with a new place to begin. To survive they need to search for places that can brings them food or money, live in unaccepted, non-permitted and unwanted areas. They live in fear though they show lot of courage in the way they talk, work, play and live.

Children need enjoyments and have adequate childhood experiences. When impoverished of the normal childhood growth opportunities one can notice deficits in their emotional, social and intellectual learning (Sondhi-Garg 2004). People realise when children are hungry and they are fed. When they require any help for any physical ailments they get that. However, when they suffer rejection, anger, neglect they suffer and it is noticed in poor and dysfunctional families. Children do not get the needed affection and care and they grow emotionally misbalanced. One of the respondents recalls the way he is admonished.

… And she wasted no time in pulling me home from there and then avenging her anger and shock with few smacks on my back. After having done that her anger subsided and with pitiful tone she pleaded me to swear that I would never ever go begging again. I swore to her also promising that from now on I would earn my bread. Needless to say I left begging after that. From the next day after this event, I started following my mother to her work place where I washed utensils with her. … (FCHB. 1, 06 December 2014).

The child in his experiential sharing talks about his mother who punishes him unjustly. His mother is having difficult times as she has to fend for herself and the whole family. Her husband being an alcoholic could not earn enough for the family. When he is under the influence of alcohol he does not behave well with the family members. The wife bears the major burden as she has to take care of the whole family. She does not get the needed protection and acceptance. That makes her unhappy and she grows weaker in tolerance. She cannot accept anything negative. Her tolerance level is almost on the negative.
As soon as she finds the child doing things against her wish she beats the child. The child feels that his mother is retaliating for her depression or anger. He realises that her anger subsides as a result of the spanking. She is growing with tensions and she does not have proper channel to release her anger and tension. The child becomes the victim. Since he is getting educated he is able to understand the mind of the mother. However he suffers as he cannot react or take it on anyone. He suffers and gets emotionally misbalanced.

The child needs interventions that can make him realise the situation of his family, especially his of his mother. He has suffered; but he is able to rationalize and gain emotional strength through healthy interactions. Children in street situations get emotionally and psychologically isolated from others and have only superficial social contact. For them the street is productive or barren, friendly or unfriendly at different times of the day or night (Sondhi-Garg 2004).

When adults behave with children unreasonably or unkindly they get degenerated socially, morally, ethically and physically. They feel that they are not accepted in the society and they do not have any say in public. They experience sense of shame and guilt. They fail to realise their mistakes. They become helpless. When punished to extreme situation they get physically wounded. They begin to question justice as they feel that justice is denied to them. Being in deprived situation they are not in a position to question or discuss. The parents and other elders in poor families or in street situations are illiterate. They have lost their fine feelings as they suffer rejection and the evils of poverty. Children get physically and mentally wounded as a result of their harassment.

4.3.13. Unsympathetic Aggressiveness Experience
The society turns hostile and negative about children in the street habitats. They criticize children without knowing that they are helpless and that they too are human beings. They happen to be in the street context due to their negative situations. The children have no choice but to be in the streets for survival. The researcher in his visits notices the unfairness with which the mainstream society treats children in street situation.
Children are found begging facing the reactions of the numerous people in the street. Most people insult children as they ask for alms. Some consider deprivations as the lot of the poor and they do not have any sympathy for them.

Children are seen working. They offer cheap labour. Many of the city roadside eateries have children to serve food, to wash and to clean. The owners are able to offer cheap food as children do many of the works in the place. Children do not have rest, sufficient food and recreation which is their right guaranteed by the convention on children’s rights.

… While on the round he notices a boy lying close to the wall on platform number one. The place was just after the food plaza. The researcher took a cup of coffee and took a seat where the boy could be observed. The boy could be 15 years old. He looks feeble, malnourished. He seems to have been busy whole night. He was sleeping (OB. 2, 28 September 2013).

The researcher notices the boy sleeping near food plaza. He seems famished and hungry. This scene clearly depicts the predicament of a young boy who was forced to leave his parents and take shelter in the street situation. Any child, who has the minimum needs met, does not think of leaving his father, mother and relatives.

People are moving about busy with their programmes. It does not disturb the child. Slowly he sleeps, probably tired and hungry. The child seems malnourished. It is an indication that he does not have normal food on a regular basis. He looks dirty and it probably helps him to beg. Seeing his pathetic condition people may offer him money or food items. He has settled himself near the food plaza hoping for the sympathy of the passengers or the owner of the plaza.

Normally people do not like to be disturbed while eating or entering hotels. So the child has to face insults and rejection. His hunger motivates him to stay on in spite of such an odd situation. This rejection and insults add to his misery and he grows mentally sick besides the physical ailments due to malnutrition. He is deprived of the respect and love that he should get as a child.
4.3.14. Susceptibilities of Street Ghetto Life

Children in street habitats feel neglected. At times they think of their wasted life. People at large feel that they are a menace to the society. Their life is such that they are not wanted in the society. For many evils and anti-social activities they are blamed. When they walk through the residential areas people chase them, look at them as dirt and as a problem. They do not realize that they too are human beings. The children feel the uselessness of their life. They feel being thrown out of the mainstream society. Eventually such children make a decision to be out of the normal stream and get into a ghetto street life.

Children in the street habit have their own areas of stay. They may roam around during the day or even at night in different parts of the city. But most of them get into their ghetto at one time of the day and it is mostly for the night. They have the ghetto culture which is evolved to accommodate their lifestyles. It is mostly poor, shabby with hardly any facilities for human survival. They welcome new children and help them to get into the ghetto life. Once the researcher observes a place with many children involved in varied activities.

… After going about for some time in the city the researcher comes across many children below an over bridge. He takes a convenient place to observe them. Children are shabbily dressed with unkempt hair. They look famished and not clean. No one likes to be near them. However among them there is no repugnance. They look friendly and happy. They are below the bridge, in a very grassy area walking around freely; some playing, others sorting out their things from the bag they are carrying. All of them look friendly. But each has his/her own bag. Some smaller children are more casual and look very happy as well. Some are seen playing, some with little fights and some accompanying the elder ones (OB. 1, 24 September 2013).

Being in street situation the researcher observes a group of children. They have their life style. They seem well accepted among themselves. They have their belongings. They share whatever they have among themselves. They are noticed as a deprived group. They are shabbily dressed and living meagre subsistence level of life. Often they live like drudges.
They are of different age groups and mixed gender. There seems to be lot of understanding among them.

It is a happy group though they look poor and miserable. Children are smiling and playing. They are cared for by the elders in the group. One of the smaller one is fed by a senior one. They accept everyone in the group. They look to the outer world which is better and richer. They see wealth moving about but they know that they have to survive with the minimum. The mainstream society treats them like skivvies.

They seem to be satisfied. The way they live they welcome anyone who is helpless or shelter-less. They can enter their group and they are ready to offer their share of food, clothes and place of stay. They are cordial and helpful to one another. There is another side of the story where the stronger dictates terms there. They all have to obey the stronger one. And the stronger one gets his or her way aggressively. Children grow in aggression seeing and experiencing the challenging situation. There is clear division with the mainstream society in food habit, clothes, language, and everything that is related to their living. Children definitely suffer as they are deprived and rejected by the mainstream society. When the suffering reaches beyond tolerance level they become sick. The mainstream considers them as dogsbodies.

Children struggle initially but they get used to the struggle in the course of time. They adapt well and remain happy in their street life. They get a group to support them. One of the respondents talks about the kindness he receives in street situation.

I used to beg around hanuman mandir and unknown to my mother I settled myself comfortably there for my profession. In fact, my earning, so to speak, was quite good. Together with money, the good folks around used to provide me with money, food and even clothes (FCHB. 1, 06 December 2014).

Once they get food and experience love and support from people they continue without thinking of their future. They live a happy life and they do not get a chance to think about the evils of the present life and the possibilities of a future better life. They plod along in the environment as long they are not disturbed.
4.3.15. Homeliness to Emotional Breakdown

Children who have their parents suffer homesickness. They have nostalgic feelings of their life with their father, mother and sibling. Very often this leads them to their homes. At times the eagerness for the home is substituted by others who are able to offer them homely atmosphere. Children in the poorest of situation get attached to their parents. They are born into poverty and they do not realise what they are missing. But the human affections they enjoy are cherished for long. Even if people are poor and suffering from lack of essentials they care for their children the best way possible. The emotional bond with mother and others remain in every child’s mind. But at times the problems grow and they become desperate. They leave their loved ones. One of the respondents expresses his love and longing for his mother.

Respondent: Yes we get to eat… once we get well we work again and pay back
Researcher: Don’t you think of your mother when you are sick?
Respondent: Yes but what can be done
Researcher: Aha
Respondent: When mother’s thought comes immediately I cry… (INT SHB. 1, 22 November 2014).

The child is very weak and he lives in the streets. He expresses his struggles. But he always has fond memories of his mother. Children think of the loved ones when they are weak physically or emotionally. When they suffer physical ailments they think and dream of the care they had when they were young. But somehow they have to live with it as circumstances do not permit them to go. If they get any possibility when they grow sick or weak they go to their houses.

There are times when they feel emotionally weak. It can be due to extreme physical ailments with lack of support. It can be in moments when they feel maximum rejection. Once they are in the streets they prefer mostly to continue in it. They do not get the courage to make a decision to go back home. Probably those who have their mothers know well that their mothers wait for them anxiously. But the other problems in the home can prevent them from taking that decision. At times they also feel so depressed and feel that
their mothers may not accept them in such a miserable situation. But the fact is that many of them suffer homesickness.

4.4. SKILLS IN PROGRESS IN STREET LIFE

Children are born with potentialities for contributing to individual and family welfare and social progress. Environment helps their development in the right or wrong ways. Their talents are developed in the environment they are brought up. Many of them develop skills for survival in whatever situations that they are growing up with. Children living in street habitats develop skills that help them for their street life. The skills developed in challenging situations can turn out to be life skills while being mainstreamed. The children become multi-skilled as they go through street life. Gardner speaks about seven relatively independent forms of information processing which eventually turns to be skills and he says that individuals differ in exhibiting intelligences (Gardner & Hatch 1989). The various interventions enable the skills developed to become life skills as they enter the mainstream society.

4.4.1. Deftness in Street Activities

Children in the street move fast from place to place. They make initial moves to find out various possibilities for their living. They are swift in carrying out their various activities. The researcher, while visiting the railway stations notices that children enter the arriving trains. They move fast from compartment to compartment to collect things left behind by the passengers. They know that they have to be fast or else they lose their collection of the day. They do everything fast. They get enough to survive on in the streets.

Since they are fast and able they are made to work by others to get various jobs done. Many work in small tea shops or restaurants. Some work as errant boys. At times they work with other street workers for pulling or pushing cart, to go on errands and any other work which can bring them food or money. In different street crossing children briskly approach the different vehicles that stop for the red light. They have to be swift to earn and be quick to avoid accidents. Any slow move can cause them big losses as there are others
in the same activities of begging or selling. The researcher observes a train entering the platform.

… Another train slowly pulls into the free platform. That seems to be the last stop of the train. All the passengers come out with their luggage. As they come out there are many boys and girls jumping into it. The researcher follows them into the train. He tries to watch the children. They move very quickly. Some of them have a small sack with them. They go around collecting bottles. All the things collected are put into the bag. Some of them get some newspaper. All that are collected and the way they search is amazing. Very quickly they are able to look up, look down under the seat and all over. The move is very quick to get the maximum. It almost looks like a treasure hunt competition (OB. 6, 28 July 2014).

The researcher visits the biggest railway station of the city. In it he finds a maddening crowd. The numbers are more in the morning and in the evening hours. Many people are coming from outskirts of the city for work. Many of them are distant travellers. It is quite a difficult time for anyone who wants to walk across through the sea of people that come out of the trains as they stop. Sometime trains come on both sides of a platform and it is a difficult time for the elderly and the weak. In such busy hours children who are in the street habitat are able to manage to make their moves.

In the busy station the researcher notices many children who are of a different nature. They look poor, famished and dirty with poor clothes and dirty as well. They move in groups. They survive on the things especially food that is left behind by the passengers. The passengers are trying to get down slowly with their luggage. Before they could get down many children sneak in very briskly. They do not bother about the ones getting down. They are well focussed to get inside. Once inside they search compartment, collect whatever is available like bottles, newspapers and other food items.

The researcher notices that the children in the street have urgency when they are focused. They are earnest about the daily rag-picking, movie shows, collecting of food from the different places in the city and bathing especially if there is a river facility. They build up
their capacity to be creative and energetic through these activities. They need to know the names of trains and their arrival times with possible delays. For those who live with the streets need to be smart with the places of bigger waste-bins, the suitable time for good collection, the prices of various items collected and the best buyers.

4.4.2. Adaptability to Varieties of Jobs

Many of the children who are in the street habitats are used to hard work prior to their street life. Many of them have left their homes due to hard work and lack of food. The researcher while talking to one of the children he comes to know the hard work that he had to do in his neighbour’s house. He narrates that he was harassed physically and abused. When it went beyond his limits of tolerance he ran away.

Respondent: Now my mother is no more…. those who were nearby … those who were in the village near my house said… come to my house…
Researcher: Oh... oh…
Respondent: They took me to the house and there... kept me for some time and used to make me work…and hard work
Researcher: Ah… ha…
Respondent: They used to give me a lot trouble…
Researcher: (nods…)
Respondent: I just could not stay any more there… they use to beat
Researcher: Uh… uh...
Respondent: There was one brother bigger than me… and he used to beat me simply
Researcher: Oh…oh
Respondent: One day when he was beating me I ran away from there (INT SHB. 4, 23 November 2014).

Children in poor families are made to work. They need to work to support the family. At times they do all the household work and toil in the farm, also without sufficient food to eat. There are also situations where they have to work in others’ farms as labourers. The family is sustained with their work. When a child loses his mother at an early age he gets totally abandoned. Neighbours offer the needed solace. Apparently it looks fine but in
many of the situations children are not treated well in other families. The child who shares his life says that the neighbours call him after his mother’s death. But they make him work hard. He finds life very difficult.

He not only has to work but face more hardships of being abused physically. He says that they beat him. He speaks of an elder brother who must have been part of the house beating him cruelly. When the harassment goes beyond his tolerance level, he leaves the house uninformed. Many children suffer and leave their home. When they get some hope that they can have a better life they abandon the family. They look out for better pastures thinking of them as good but most of the times they turn out to be worse. Children enjoy freedom. They are ready to undergo any suffering to receive freedom.

For many children the search for freedom and escape from work lead them to the streets. In the street they do not enjoy freedom but have free life. They need to work hard to survive. Most often they have to put up with lots of inconveniences. For most it becomes very challenging to get work that is satisfying; that which can earn them enough for their survival. Initially they support themselves. If they do not get sick and if they are able to earn more money they think of their families. Those who left the families due to poverty return with the earnings of the streets. If they left due to reasons other than poverty they normally do not return. However in the street situation they develop the capacity for work. They are able to work for long hours and do very challenging and difficult jobs. Their motivation is strong as they want more money for food and for enjoyments. The more they earn the more they enjoy; this motivation gets them into the habit of hard labour. They work as hawkers, porters and assistants to others for legal and illegal works such as robberies, drug trafficking, sale of items, smuggling and many more unwanted jobs (Dabir & Athale 2011).

**4.4.3. Growth in Concern and Fellow Feeling**

It is commonly noticed that the suffering children are ready to suffer for others especially children like them. In the street situation children care for each other. When someone is sick they show utmost kindness. The parents suffer a lot to look after their children. One day while visiting the street, the researcher comes across a girl who is a young mother. She
goes around begging. But it is noticed that the child is attached to the mother. That speaks for the care of the mother for the child.

… The mother seems to be only about 18 years of age. She looks very young. She is not sufficiently dressed as she is trying to keep her covered with some torn clothes too. She is moving with the child asking for alms. Some people offer some money. One person offered some food which seemed to be the leftover of what he ate already.

After sometime the lady moves to another elderly person sitting little away in a corner. She was staying near to a platform shop. She too looked quite famished. The researcher moves and takes a seat near the lady. He is able to follow the conversation.

As the lady reaches, the mother (seems to be so) asks: “Did you get something to eat”. She says that she got something; some leftover food from a passenger. And the lady offers that to the elderly person. She returns it saying that she needs to eat. She seems to have said: ‘You have not eaten the whole day. You have a child to look after’. But the young girl forces the elderly person to eat. She seems to be her mother.

After giving what she earned she sits aside to breast feed her child. The child looks very feeble. The mother seems to be very much interested in the child and eager to look after her. Her mother too looks hungry. In the meantime the elderly person calls her and offers her something to eat. She takes that and moves around. But while eating she continues to ask different passengers for help (OB. 6, 28 July 2014).

The girl happily takes the responsibility for the child. She cares for the child and the mother. It is so consoling to notice the young mother giving her earning to her mother who is sick and old looking. The mother in turn offers food to the girl. It is a sign that both are needy. Both are hungry. However the girl happily feeds the mother with her first earning. Later the mother cares for her daughter. Their human sufferings due to poverty and want
have not reduced their love for each other. They have grown stronger in their relationship. It is very heartening to see the three generations; each one contributing to comfort and care for each other through personal sacrifice.

The young mother seems to have been in the street for long time. She looks very young and seems to be the mother of a child. She must have had an early marriage. She takes care of the child. Her appearance speaks of her difficult past. The father of the child is not in the picture. The full burden of the child seems to be on her. But she takes care of the child happily. She needs to beg as it is difficult for her to work being a young mother. As she cares for the child she also thinks of her mother. Even before she thinks of satisfying her hunger she thinks of her ailing mother. The mother and the daughter seem to be very closely bonded. In these struggles the young mother develops all her capabilities. She seems contented and happy in the given situation. She has accepted her past and the present. She makes a living for herself in the given situation giving due share of concern for her daughter as well as mother. She is well in control of her situation and she loves the control of her mother. As a response she takes great care of her mother.

4.4.4. Fortitude and Tenacity
Children in the street continue with their daily jobs. The jobs are mostly painful as they stay in difficult and inhuman situations. They need to earn their living from the street situation which is normally not child friendly. They do the work without complaining. Most children met in the streets look happy. They do not complain to anyone. They can speak openly only to a person who is willing to spend long time with them and gain their confidence. Apparently every child looks happy. Children have difficult times right from their tender age. The researcher observes that children are used for begging.

… The researcher notices a special case in which one girl of 15 carrying a child of one year or so. The child looks almost fainted and famished. The person carrying does not seem very affectionate. The child probably does not belong to her. She makes use of the child to beg. Some look with pity and give a coin or two. Some turn away in repugnance. Sometime the child is in the hand. At other time it is put on the shoulder. The child has no clothes either.
They would accept food or money. They seemed to be the untouchables. The researcher sits down under the tree so that he could closely observe them a little closer and he makes all the possible effort to understand them. They looked filthy, hopeless, helpless, rejected and above all uncivilized.

Little later another person comes and snatches the child. There is a bit of argument. But the first one gives in and the second one continues the same activity little away. People are different as they come and go. The child is being used like a material. The child looks very helpless but tolerates whatever the way it is being treated. At times it tries to cry and then the person immediately pats and the child is quiet (OB. 4, 28 December 2013).

The researcher is presenting his observation regarding a small child. A small child is used by a lady for begging. She draws the attention of the public with the presence of the child who looks very feeble and sick. The public normally is moved with pity seeing the little child and they believe the lady to be the mother. They receive alms seeing the mother and the child.

Little later the child is being snatched away by another lady. From this it is clear that, that child is a victim used for begging. The child is not in a position to understand as it is too young. But it has to face the situation that is inhuman. The child misses true love and affection. It could be a stolen child for the sake of begging. People do such things as they become desperate. They lose their dignity and they fail to respect human being. They only think of their needs and they take to inhuman ways to satisfy them.

The incident brings to light the troubles some children face right from their childhood. These events happen if they are born or brought to street situations. If the child survives standing all the ordeals it grows up with toughness. As it bears all the problems of being handled by different people the child gets used to a very difficult situation. It seems difficult for a child to survive. But a lot of endurance is noticed as the child is silently accepting the suffering in the situation. It could be due to fear, weakness or helplessness as the child is young, aging to few months only.
In another visit to the streets the researcher notices a child satisfying his hunger by eating from the dustbin. He seems sick. He is not able to fend for himself. Regarding food, he gets immune to such harsh and unhealthy situation as observed by the researcher.

… The researcher continued to be in the street situation. He noticed at the other end of the street near a dumping pit three children ranging from the age of 12 to 16 trying to look for something. They all had a bag each. It seemed to the researcher that they lost something. Being curious he goes near them to observe them closely. It is still in the morning hour.

The child looks famished. People are throwing waste in that dumb. Some are coming with smaller packets, others bigger and one or two even in small tins are seen throwing rubbish into it. Together with the three there are two dogs on one side and little distance away two pigs too. Some cows too are seen moving around.

The children seem most alert to pick up as soon as something is thrown. Sometimes it is noticed that the dogs too bark and even compete with the children especially when it is some waste food (OB 5. 26 March 2014).

Children start their life early in the morning. Normally city dumps are active in the morning. People from families even from the municipal department start the cleaning work early in the morning. All the dirt is gathered from the city and thrown into a dumping pit. Every city has smaller place to gather the waste and also the bigger places. While the researcher is looking a group of children are around one dumping pit. They wait eagerly for people to throw their waste. Once it is in the dump, it is property of the children and adults who live in or around who are called street dwellers or slum dwellers. They try to find something useful for them. They normally are confronted by animals that live by the streets: dogs, cows and pigs.

To face such a cruel situation they really need to develop courage. Initially they feel repugnant or afraid and eventually they get used to such a life. They develop high level of immunity, physically and mentally. However they grow sick. They feel deprived and
neglected. As they grow in endurance they also grow in desperation. The group spirit keeps them going on with their life.

Children face lots of hardships in collecting from huge waste areas. Most of the things thrown are dirt and filth. They need to scavenge and see whatever could be useful such as paper, plastic, bottle and similar non-perishable items. They recognize the useful items as they get used to the place and the trade. Some days they gather more and other days they gather less. They get used to life of uncertainty and they continue to live in misery.

4.4.5. Resilience to Confront Inhuman Situations

Children face shocking experiences on a regular basis. The first day on the street itself can be bad, as they start facing hunger, abandonment and rejection. Children need to develop energies to face their uncertainties and problems. They grow strong as the days pass by. Strength is developed faster if they are able to form groups in which they get support. They develop resistance to environmental hazards. They need to face the rainy days, winter days and summer days. They need to depend on the available job and available food. They face accidents while fending for themselves. They face legal troubles as they are considered nuisance in many respects.

The researcher meets a group of girls and he calls them together for an informal discussion. The group consisted of seven together with a care giver who is also assisting them while being in the street situation. The care giver spends hours trying to motivate them to get mainstreamed and protects them to the extent possible in the given street situation. Among the group there is one girl who is just eight years old, quite new in the street being protected by another who is 17 years and all the rest are within the age group of 16 years to 19 years.

The researcher asks common questions about the place, where they stay and how they feel about their life. They answer very briefly. When asked, one of the participants mentioned that she stays in ‘one’ number. She explains herself that she stays in platform number one in the railway station though she spends her whole life in and around the railway station. The conversation continues while everyone begins to concentrate on to the young girl who is present in the group. She is probably just eight years old and quite new in the street
situation. However, she has developed sufficient energy to say boldly that she likes to continue to stay in the station. She is not scared of being with a stranger and accepting the strange ‘didi’ as her own. She feels protected. She feels that she can manage to live her life in street situation. The conversation continues as follows.

Response: I stay in one number….
Researcher: One number
Response: Yes
Others: (Being a small girl the bigger one begins to explain to her to leave the streets…but one girl very specially who is already in the streets for over ten years having her husband (second one) and child but only 18 years talks very authoritatively)
Another senior girl calls Sita: (the bigger one, name changed)… You tell her to go back home … or get her into a foster home….. You look at me… and listen… it is good for you to leave the street… get back to a foster care home…you will grow big well…you can study…. and you can be on your own…
The child: No, I will not go…
Friends: Then what…? You will take dendrite…? (the group go on coaxing the child to leave the street … With lots of concern and love …)
The elder one: Please go… we will come and see you… we see you dancing…singing…. (The child repeatedly says… no…)
Child: I will not go… (FGD SHG. 1, 23 November 2014).

The child grows in resiliency as she is able to stay on in the street situation. The researcher notices that the senior girls feel quite comfortable being in street situation. They are able offer support to younger ones. They have developed sufficient skill, knowledge and power to continue their street life. They accept their life though they do not feel a sense of contentment with such a life. That is made clear when they ask the younger one to leave the street.

They often reflect on their past. They talk about their awful past days especially in the initial days of street life and the struggles they faced to get into the street life. They are
aware that life in the street is not secure. However they find difficult to leave the streets. As they do not enjoy contentment in being in the streets they do not want another child to get into a similar life. So they insist with the smaller girl to leave the street and get into a foster care home.

The smaller girl leaves the family as she feels neglected. As she comes to street situation she is accepted and offered lots of assistance. She does not realize the problem attached to street life. She enjoys being pampered, loved and cared for by the senior girls. The senior girls care for her but they do not want her to be there. Their care and concern is expressed in getting her out of the streets. But it is difficult as she is getting acclimatized to street life. They do everything possible to help her mainstreamed.

4.4.6. Affection and Attachment

Children have wanted and expressed affection. They get attached to people who show concern to them in the streets. They are seen with dogs or other pets. They express their love and affection to them. It is a common sight to see children walking around, playing with and even sleeping with street dogs. People of the general society normally do not touch a dog that goes around in the streets. People are scared of dirt, filth and sicknesses when they see a dog that goes around in the streets. One evening as the researcher notices a group that entertains a street dog.

… Suddenly there appears a dog. It looks very familiar. They all give to it something to eat. And it lies down among them. One boy is noticed pulling the dog to his side and trying to have a sleep by lying down almost embracing the dog. The boy seems so affectionate to the dog. The dog does not look very clean being a street dog. However the children accept the dog in their company (OB, 28 March 2014).

Another observation is of a child pleading for a doll.

… The lady also said that she did not have enough money to buy the doll... and then the shop keeper said it is not possible and he took a stick and started threatening the child... for a moment the child was quiet… but as she moved
away again the child started crying and pulling the grandmother… a terrible situation… most people kept watching…

The researcher was tempted to give doll in the beginning… on a second thought they were offered some food and a small conversation began. The child was still quite adamant on getting the doll… on further enquiry the lady said that she is a TB patient due for admission (OB, 07 October 2013).

The child is seen holding on to the grandmother and crying for something. On enquiry it is found that the child likes to have a doll that is seen in a shop. The grandmother is not able to buy it as it is too costly. But the child, though about eight years is not able to understand the problem of the family. The family is very poor and the grandmother is seriously sick due for admission to a treatment centre. The child continues to beg and keeps on demanding for the doll which can simply be an object of her affections.

It is seen that children in the street miss affection of their parents. They do not get the attention of family members. It is substituted with love of the peer group and at times adults in the streets. It is not always safe to have the street adults very friendly as they make use of children for various purposes where the interests of the children are not taken care of. But children being vulnerable they accept all the offers of affection. They express their affection to others freely even to animals beyond normal limits which can endanger their health and hygienic living. It is the experience of the researcher that they make sacrifices to express their love. Children may look hungry and famished and yet when they get some food they feed the dog they care for. They love to give affection at the cost of their life. They do not get enough healthy opportunities and thus they turn to unhealthy situations.

4.4.7. Care for the Weak

Children offer care to the weaker ones. The senior children mostly have younger ones or newer ones with them and they assist them in all their needs. Eventually the new ones and younger ones become dependent on them. They grow in affection for each other.
During an interview with children from the street the researcher notices a young girl of eight years with a senior girl of 17. There are others who say that the child needs to leave the street. They realise that street life is bad for her. While telling her, the child is adamant that she stays on in street situations. She gets enough protection and love from a senior girl.

The children who feel neglected take to the streets and at the first experience of affection they become very close to them. They forget about all the problems of street life when they experience love and concern. It becomes difficult to change once they get acclimatized in the streets. In a particular group, while discussing the senior girls wanted a young girl to give up the street for a foster care home. But it is difficult as evidenced in the conversation.

… Senior girl of the group: (she is already in the street for many years… has already become a mother though 18 only) you stay like small girls… there are so many… it will be good for you… You will get food…clothes… We will come again to see you grow nicely… we will see you… and if you feel like seeing us any time tell your caregiver and they will inform us and we will come…

The child: No… I will not go …

(She is in street life for over a month… and street addicted…though quite young… enjoys street freedom… so it is difficult… (FGD SHG. 1, 23 November 2014)

The senior group that came around is happy to help the child staying with bigger girls. Life for elder girls is challenging in the street situations. They are looked down upon by the mainstream society. They have to depend on others and mostly boys for protection. The boys make use of them and keep them as their close friends or wives. The relationship normally does not last long. They know that they live an inhuman life. They are aware of their predicament and they do not want others to be in same situation.

The child who is new and small to street life is loved and cared for. Their love and care is expressed in the fact that they want her to give up street life. They propose alternatives to her. But she is so much attached to another senior girl that she is not able to leave the streets. She has accepted her street situation and learnt to cope with it with all the support
and affection she receives from the senior girl. When everyone in the group asks her to give up the street the senior girl who cares for her is quiet. She knows that the others are right but she gets deprived of the child if the right choice is made.

The conflicting situation is due to love that is not proper. A child who is to get love from the parents gets love of other girls who live in street situations with all its peculiarities and adventures. The girl who is 17 happened to grow up in the streets and she does not realize the need of children to be in school and be part of the mainstream society. Situations are not healthy in street situation. But the affection for each other is so strong that they find difficult to part ways for a better cause. They are not guided in their life of love and that takes its own course in the street situations causing them harm. The researcher notices extreme sense of concern for the weak by those who are not emotionally involved but think about the good of the child.

4.4.8. Affectation to Elicit Kindness
As per oxford dictionary affectation denotes behaviour or an action which is unnatural and it is intended to impress other people (Hornby 2005). The feeling expressed need not even be sincere. It is to give vent to their emotions. We find children getting attached to other children and at times to other pets such as cats, dogs or even birds. There can be exaggerated expressions in dealing with them.

They exaggerate their problems to get more attention and sympathy. The case mentioned below is personally known to the researcher and the boy does not mind blaming his mother for all his mistakes. The mother happened to be poor and the whole family seemed to be harassed by the father. He does not mind speaking very vociferously against anyone to get his way.

… Boy: Because my mother used to beat me and tell me that I am eating like a giant and asked me to go away from home. My father is also there, he used to beat me and therefore I ran away to Howrah Station…………………….

…………Researcher: Apart from this, what did you do in Howrah?
Boy: I used to collect bottles. While food used to come by car and from there I used to collect and eat. Once a mobile was stolen from three vehicles, the
police took me to Lalbag without any fault of my own. There they tied my leg up and head down. They opened my pant and beat me. Yes father, like that only they beat. Electric shock was given to me. They beat with a fibre danda all over the body and my whole body ached in pain. Shibuda (name changed) was with me. I told them to ask from him. When he saw me sitting in a corner quietly and I was also sick with 103 centigrade temperature, I was suffering so he took me away. He applied some medicines and then gave me some tablets and took me to hospital. There they gave me three injections and then they took out the water… (INT SHB. 5, 27 November 2013

While the researcher is interviewing the child there are many other children around. They are not accepting all what he says. He definitely is in street situation and he has very tough situations to face. His companions seem happy in the similar situations. The boy in the interview blames everyone and exaggerates the harassment done by others. He cries in between the interview showing love and respect to the researcher while keeping everyone else responsible for his present stage.

The researcher comes across many children in the street who disfigure themselves to get themselves free from various situations. A number of times children in the streets look very feeble and miserable. But once they are away from the street they behave smartly. They behave as circumstances permit them to survive.

4.4.9. Generosity Mind Set

Children depend on each other. When they get they share among themselves freely. They struggle together. Each one has his or her lucky days. It is noticed that they have a generous mind to give and to share. Children are more concerned about the sick and the weaker ones. They welcome chances to share and that develops their mind.

… Respondent: Rainy days we sleep inside... Police come and go… During rain some problem... Police used to harass...
We say... Where can we go... it is raining... some were good... Some no...
Researcher: Did you go to hospital...
Respondent: Oh… no… nowhere… yes… when Babu (name changed) got a big cut… I went to the hospital… Another time Kolkata hospital…
Many boys in the station do good to others… if they are sick they help.. Boys also harass… it is better they come and stay and build up their future… (INT SHB. 6, 27 November 2014).

When the researcher interviews one of the children who lives in the streets he talks about the different harassment that he has faced. But he talks about his concern for the sick. He is talking of his companion with an injury and how he has gone to accompany him to the hospital. It is a common scene to see children from the street taking other children who are sick to the hospital or to a doctor. They care for them. They are sympathetic to any one especially if they are their ‘brothers’. They consider every child in the street as his/her brother or sister. They do not hesitate to spend time and money in looking after children who need care as they are sick or new in the street situation. They accept their situation due to deprivation. They cope with such situation and they are compassionate to other children who suffer similar deprivations.

4.4.10. Group Spirit and Responsibility
Children in the street when alone are weak and as a group they are strong. They offer support when sleeping in the night, sick, require a change of dress, in a strange situations and when met with legal authorities. Normally children move in groups. They depend on each other. Occasionally some loners are found. It is useful to keep the group spirit and develop a sense of positive support. Children express their joy in being a part or a group.

… There (referring to a shelter) I saw many boys and I felt so nice because I had many friends there… When I was in Howrah station I did not have any friends. Now I feel so nice. I came to such a nice place. Here we had study, work and training. Slowly there came a change in me. Here (referring to the foster care home) after a year I was made a captain (FCHB. 2, 27 November 2014).

Children like to belong in a group. The child who shares about his life above is relishing the fact that he has many friends. He feels confident and comfortable being part of the
group. He is appreciated for his qualities and that is expressed in the way they make him the captain of the group. He feels that group brought in lot of positive changes in him.

4.4.11. Develop Family Attachments

Children begin a homeward journey as they bid goodbye to street situation. They experience a feeling of security. They find new rays of hope and make the decision to march ahead with the assistance received. The children leave their homes due to the fact that they cannot be contained in the little family that cannot meet their basic requirements. They feel the loss of a home which is one of the basic needs for every person. There are children who work in the street and go home. There are children who stay with their parents in the streets. Children living alone in the streets and having their homes, like to get back when the situation becomes friendly. One of the respondents expresses his plan to be in a home.

… I, no more hate going to school. In fact I look forward to it every day to learn new things, to see life from a new vision. Now that I am in class-x, I have a dream, a goal to achieve. I plan to go for ITI and to get a good job; to make my mother proud. She was the only one who supported me when I was a baby now it’s my turn to see that her head is proudly held high for the achievement of her son and be in a home (FCHB. 1, 06 December 2014).

The motivating factor for his studies is the love for the mother. He appreciates of all the support she has had for him. He is aware that his mother suffered for him. That realization of love motivates him for further studies and training.

Children experience homely feeling through affectionate meeting with care givers. They dream and get back to their home life in their minds and at their earliest they go back to their homes. Many children once they are out of the street they keep regular links with their parents. They wait for the day when they can stand on their own with a job and a family. Many children once they start earning they return to the family and support them. Those who do not have family form a family of their own. With the training and experiences of the past they are able to live happy family life.
4.5. PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS HEAL

The second question looks into the various stages of healing which leads children to the mainstream society. The researcher notices positive aspects in the children while living in streets habitat. They live like adults, being able to earn, spend and save. They have difficult times as they need to fend for themselves in inhuman situations. However they are able to make a living by themselves in the given situation making use of the existing facilities. The capacity to be in touch with positive memories and the availability of heroic models to imitate helps children to grow. They have to be made aware of the need for survival and the possibilities to progress. They need to know the value of helping others (Apfel 1996). Need based intervention are offered to children. Maslow talks about the lowest level of needs to the highest level. These include physiological, safety, belongingness, love, esteem, cognitive, aesthetic and the need for self-actualisation (Harper & Guilbault 2008). While planning interventions for children in distress the theory of Maslow can guide the care givers to assist children who are deprived. Every child in the street needs basic care from which he can be taken to higher levels.

The children talk about the process of mainstreaming. They recall the various instances or events that have helped them in their growth process. Various psychosocial interventions have helped them as expressed by the children during the study. They have made an impact on children. Children on the streets are battered due to the absence of emotional and social support. The study explores the process of healing through psychosocial interventions. The children are healed from ‘woundedness’. In the recent years psychosocial support has become more and more central to human development especially for people who have the past with negative growth experiences. The way people respond to conflicts and disasters are varied greatly, however with the right support the majority of persons are able to overcome their difficult experiences (Ager 2011).

Children in the street situations are termed as delinquents. Ahuja (2014) suggests that they be treated through psychotherapy, reality therapy, behaviour therapy, activity therapy and milieu therapy. Restrictions and reprimands too can be effective in treatment approach.
The researcher explains the process of healing through psychosocial interventions. In the present study he considers children who have deviated due to the non-child friendly environment in their earlier life in families and later in the street situations. Many of the children met in the street situations have the capacity and the energy for normal mainstream life with ordinary interventions which are termed ‘psychosocial’ as they affect their mental growth and social integration.

Schutz (1996) talks about the three needs that are essential for human beings’ growth: inclusion, affection and control. He explains inclusion which stands for acceptance which is required. Individuals try to compensate for being under or over social.

Secondly, he talks about control which expresses competence where the person is able to control and be in control. The child on the street keeps on trying to gain control of the situation and people around him. He becomes bossy in controlling when he is around new or younger children. He becomes passive and dependent, feeling helpless being in street situation with strong powers to control him.

The third element is of affection where the child meets his need to be loved and to love. The child can turn over-affectionate or cold and cautious in situations which are beyond him. In all these three stages he develops skills or qualities which can be monitored and modified for the mainstream. The researcher finds out the skills and qualities and groups them in the three aspects as explained by Schutz (1996).

Children are born in families and they are meant to live in homes under the care of parents or their substitutes. Some lose their home and homelessness being in street situations. The process for home coming is to be initiated in gentle, loving and kind ways. This is the base from where one can be helped towards healing and empowerment. Real home situation is a place or a stage where the children feel included, competent and loved.

**4.5.1. Inclusion**

Children being members of a family belong to the larger group of people in the society. The family and the society offer them sufficient possibilities for growth. The child who is deprived of his family joins other groups as he feels the need for inclusion. The child gets
deviated from the mainstream as they join a group that is out of the mainstream society. The researcher in his field work notices strong bonds and the need in children to belong to a group. They move in groups and they get back to groups in any emergency. They also get adjusted and feel included in their group. This need for inclusion grows strong and the child goes beyond limits to belong in a group. They become part of the group and members develop their own life styles to get acclimatized to street situations. While each child plans inclusion strategies they develop their skills and grow in various qualities that can help social life. Due to lack of guidance they grow over-social or under social (Schutz 1966).

4.5.1.1. A Meal Shared

As the major reason for the children to be in the street situation is poverty, as they long for a good meal. Though they do not express verbally to a known/familiar person that they are hungry they love to have food. Most of them are hungry while living in street situations. They have a habit to eat plenty when someone offers them food as they are not too sure of their following full meal. They appreciate adult company while having food. This adds to their confidence in the adult who is willing to assist/offer better possibilities for their future. Sharing time during meals can turn out to be part of the process to make them understand the problems of their choice in being in street situation. It is an opportunity to understand their desperate situation and tell them that they still have an option.

Children as a whole are scared of people in the mainstream. They live on the mainstream. People in the mainstream are scared of children in street habitat as they may steal and beg. This barrier has to be broken by the caregiver. One of the best ways is to share a meal with them as shared by one of the children.

… One day that brother told me: you beg ... it is OK. But how much do you earn per day... I told him... one day 10 to 12 rupees... then the elder brother told me: now onwards in the afternoon you will eat with us. After hearing this I was so happy. I thought that someone is helping me. Then onwards I was with that elder brother…. I used to go with him. Every day I used to eat something nice. I used to feel so nice. That my money is safe and I used to get meals two times a day (FCBH. 1, 22 November 2014).
The caregiver in street situations is able to get into the life of children through a meal. Many children in the street do not enjoy good food on a regular basis. They eat whatever they get at different times as things are available. When they are offered a good meal they enjoy it and they cultivate good relationship with the person who is able to offer them such basic necessities. The boy must have been very hungry normally and he probably needs the money he earned, for his family or to help his companions. The relationship built up helps to wean children away from the streets.

4.5.1.2. Street Presence and Accompaniment

The researcher in his visits notices a number of children roaming in and around the railway stations and in market places. Children are found dirty and using unclean clothes. They smoke and take addictive substance. They have long hair which is unkempt. Among them they seem to be very friendly and cooperative. They look apparently happy. They long for a healthy adult support. When someone shows them kindness they respond easily. One of the respondents expresses his joy in meeting an adult who is caring.

... When we ran away from home to Howrah then we never understood what we did. After staying in Howrah station for long time we met an elder brother. He used to conduct meeting with us. I used to feel nice talking to him. Then with him I use to come to the night shelter... (FCHB. 5, 27 November 2014).

The child runs away from home without knowing what awaits him. Once he reaches the street he repents. But he does not have the courage to go back. Healthy adult presence helps him to give up street life. The earlier he is helped the faster he gets rehabilitated. One of the key informants says: “to help a child he must meet a healthy adult either in the beginning of his street life or at the end of it…” (KI. 1, 12 July 2013).

When he mentions beginning he means to say that it is very difficult for a village boy to get used to the street. Once he reaches, his problems are immense and he accepts any offer of assistance. If he is not met by anyone initially he gets used to and he begins to enjoy his street life. Once he is used to street life, it is difficult to take him out of such situations. The next easy possibility is when he is tired of street life which can be stated as the end of his
street life. It could be in moments of accidents, sicknesses or any legal implication. When he is helpless he accepts interventions.

Living together is enjoyed by everyone. Human warmth is essential for everyone’s growth and is made possible in any comfortable group. Normally children get together for food, games, sleep or chit-chat especially around fire in winter season. Healthy adult presence is well appreciated and effective. Children accept suggestions for mainstreaming from elders who love them and care for them. One of the key informants talks about accompaniment.

… She was average in her intellect, hot tempered, found difficult to get along with her friends, less interested in studies. But staff did not give up and followed her up very closely as we knew the condition of the family. She has stepfather and five young ones. She does not have proper house and all in the family are in the streets; her main job is selling fruits. X girl was quite happy in the streets. Our staff used to meet her often in the street, sit with her and the family to discuss various issues. She was made to realise the problems she faced and more than that, what she would have to face by being in the streets. The step father drinks and fights with her mother; this was like a daily business. X girl was lucky to be brought by her mother and get admitted to the home (KI. 2, 11 October 2014).

Once children are in the streets, they live a life of their own. But they look forward to adult support. Initially they get it from other children who are senior to them in the streets. They may find some adults who are willing to care for them, treating them like their own. Some do care and take advantage of their vulnerability.

A child-friendly adult can become part of children’s life in street situations. Once confidence is built up children long for his company. By being present in their life with their struggles and difficulties he can inspire them to give up streets with all its charms and allures. The starting point for a change of life is meeting a person who is interested in the children in street situations. Mostly it is a staff member of an NGO working with children in street situation. At times it is the police who direct children to welfare situations. There
are situations where concerned citizens who come across some cases refer them to centres that can help children.

The researcher during his street life experience meets many children who are inspired in the presence of an adult who is kind, concerned and caring. In their struggles they welcome assistance that they receive. One of the respondents talks about his experience of kindness.

… It happened one day, that while begging I reached Howrah church, when a sister called me towards her and questioned me where do I stay and what was my name. To reply her question I answered that my name was Raju (name changed) and for the time being my home was platform No. 7 at Howrah station. On hearing this, that elderly lady further asked me about my mother and my family, to which I told her the truth about having only a mother as a family. She started to ponder over my answers and on seeing her receding to deeper thoughts I went about my errant, asking people to spare a few coins for a poor boy. By fate’s will the next day too I encountered the same person at the same place. This time the situation was different. …………

A few moments passed after which she with the same caring voice asked me to take her to my mother. I did so. After the preliminary introduction she enquired about my father to whom my mother replied “his father died before his birth and left us nothing but grief and poverty.” Sister started to think again and then told us that if we would accept she would provide us shelter but only for the night (FCHB. 1, 06 December 2014).

There are situations where children meet regularly NGO staff members. The meeting takes place also with others who spent time in street situations as trainees or volunteers. While growing in friendship and concern some of the children decide to leave the street.

Movies form a major part of deprived children’s life that interests them. Some of them go from hall to hall as long as they can afford with the money that they have earned. Once they earn money they look for food as their first requirement and then they look for movies. It takes them to the dream world. As they watch the heroes in the movies in good
situations they fancy being a part of it and they get into the dream world to forget their past and present misery. It keeps them away from their miserable life for some time. Every child longs for a movie especially if it’s of his heroes and heroines. One of interventions offered by a caregiver is to go for a movie with the children. His presence helps them to watch a movie that is entertaining and educative.

One of the key informants shares his experience: “Another thing I can remember is that I have managed to show my concern for them by taking them for some movies. They love to see movies. My presence keeps them on the right path” (KI. 1, 07 May 2014). The key informant finds movie as a means for being present with children. His presence keeps them away from different problems that they normally face and eventually they give up street life. The children with the caregiver choose the movie and it motivates them to mainstream life. The presence of an adult inspires children to watch movies that can inspire.

4.5.1.3. Listening to Counseling

The presence of adults in street situations at regular intervals builds good rapport with children. Children become friendly and they love to talk to loving adults. They all need a listening ear. They have a lot to share. Most of them are in the street situation due to poverty. They do not have options in their little villages which are poor and under-developed. For many children, it is pangs of hunger that has driven them from their villages. For some it is their parents who could not live together. In parental quarrels children feel deprived. Once they begin to talk they have a lot to share. As they feel confident more children come around the caregivers, each one trying to talk over the other for attention. One of the key informants has a similar experience to share.

… When I meet them first, they are strangers and do not want to approach me, but my approach to them brings familiarity in the course of time and they come closer to me. I used to listen to them a lot. Many talk about their life. They like to talk a lot. The older children want a listening ear. I love listening to them and they love to talk. That brings about close relationships which help them to follow the directions that I offer to them. The regular meetings make them feel that they are noticed, cared by us and slowly they would like to come to us… (KI. 2, 11 November 2014).
Children do not easily find people who are ready to listen. In the streets everyone is concerned about themselves. Hardly anyone has the time and the patience to listen. When an adult is ready to spent time with them they share a lot. The sharing eases their difficulties. They enjoy certain amount of peace and serenity when someone listens to them. They begin to trust and eventually get into the mainstream.

4.5.1.4. Dignity Advocated

Children like to belong to a group in which they are accepted, respected and wanted. Children born in families belong to the mother, father and others in the family. They grow in self-esteem as they feel accepted and cared for. They feel proud of their parents irrespective of their status. However at one point of time they leave the ‘safety’ environment and reach in street situations due to unhealthy situations. Children with the loss of family do not want to lose their human dignity. They may be forced into works that do not uphold their dignity. Out of necessity they go beyond a dignified life. If someone hurts their ego they feel strongly hurt and react to people and situation.

The children in the street are aware of their background, capacity and possible future. They try their best to keep human dignity. They look joyful and adventurous but they look forward to a dignified life where they need not beg or live on others. In early stages they accept proposals for mainstream without delay however they are not willing to sacrifice their dignity.

One day while the researcher spent a whole day with children he notices that children are very careful about their dignity especially once they become part of a foster care home or any organized and socially accepted group in a society.

……..As the vehicle comes to take them one boy is adamant that another boy to be out of the group for the picnic. When asked by the caregiver he said: he can bring bad name to us. His clothes are not decent enough and he always uses slangs (bad words). He is not a good boy. The care giver who is accompanying them try to tell them that he can be helped to behave better and that he could be allowed in the picnic. They insist that he cannot as he is not decent enough to
be in a group for a picnic. The researcher heard a boy saying: ‘He also wears shabby clothes. His behaviours are all street type’. Even though all are from the street situation children know how to behave according to situation. They like to uphold their dignity in good situation (OB. 5, 26 March 2014).

The children who are quite fresh from the streets notice that their companion is not sufficiently well-dressed to go for a picnic. They have come to a shelter for some time. They have seen the average life where children remain decent and clean. This is a clear indication that children dislike their street life. They happen to be and they go to any extreme situation of living with dirt as they have no other option. The child who objects his companion going for the picnic is quite serious about the behaviour patterns as well as dress code. When they go formally they like to be well dressed to equal their status to that of children in mainstream society.

Another experience of the researcher meeting a child begging in the streets is quite revealing that he does not like to be known as weak to familiar people. He is known to him for some time. The research observes as follows:

… As the researcher is moving he notices a child begging. He seems to be a familiar face. The researcher observes him. He is in tatters, he is almost crying. He is asking for alms. Some people help him while others do not. And as he is coming forward he is covering his face. He cannot see well. But suddenly lands up in front of the researcher. He opens his eyes and notices him. Immediately the child changes his presentation. He smiles. He tries to be active. He is no more the miserable beggar. He wishes the researcher. Ignoring what he has seen, a friendly conversation develops. Though he looks miserable he talks all positive about his life and that he promises to meet him again. He says that everything is going fine with him. The researcher notices a sense of shame as he was begging. He has some bad feeling thinking that the researcher must have seen him begging. They talk as friends and part as friends without entering to the details of street struggle as the boy seems not sufficiently prepared to talk freely in such a public situation (OB. 4, 28 December 2013).
The child feels totally at a loss due to hunger. He has no option but to beg to appease his hunger. He feels insulted as he is not respected. He knows well that he is human being with dignity. But the situation does not permit him to live up to his desire to be a dignified person. The child is begging but he dislikes living the harsh realities in his own world. In a known world he likes to be a hero. He likes to say that everything is well with him. It takes a long time for a child to open to someone that he is struggling and that he likes to be helped. The pride is so great that the child can suffer and hide his feelings of suffering that he needs to face in street situation.

The very look of the child is famished. He wears poor and dirty clothes. He is putting up a miserable attire to get the attention of people to get more alms. But he does not want known people to recognize him as a beggar. Children beg only in extreme weak situation. Generally they are able to manage their life by working. They do not like to be called as a beggar. It is below their dignity. The researcher knows the boy personally and whenever possible he is dignified in his behaviour, attire and performance.

Sense of dignity and need for privacy are needs of children; however this sense can be lost when they experience extreme deprivations. The researcher’s experience with children on the street is that most of them have not lost their dignity. However they find it a big challenge to uphold the sense of dignity when they are deprived of basic necessities. They had to demean themselves to survive. This affects them mentally. However the child who meets the researcher likes to feel included as a smart child, able to fend for himself without exposing their struggles. He wants to tell others that he works, earns and spends to keep his dignity in the group.

4.5.1.5. Peer Association Promotion
Children in street habitats live together, support each other and learn from each other. The researcher finds children moving around in groups. Every child walking alone or working alone normally belongs to a group. Some may be more independent but they all report to a group. It is important for them to be together to survive especially in a society that is alien to them.
One day while the researcher is observing a street scene near a railway station in an open space he notices the group spirit of children. They all look shabby, with clothes that are dirty looking, carrying sacks which carry the ‘filth’ of the society yet useful to them. For the researcher it is a pitiful scene seeing children young and old living in inhuman conditions. But he notices friendliness, feeling and care for each other.

While they are playing they are able to relate to each other well. At one moment there comes someone quarrelling with one of the boys as the ball they were playing with hit him. Suddenly all stop the game...they all stand together and they tell the one concerned to ignore and leave them free. They stood as one team and the man had no option but to ignore and go ahead. The children once again got into their games and continued. Their love for each other is very strong (OB. 1, 24 July 2013).

Children are happy and united as a group. They have managed to take time out of their regular routine of earning activities, movies and roaming time and spend time in a game. They enjoy and it looks very healthy to give up their sad past or tough present. They feel relaxed. While playing they do not care for anyone watching them or passing by. They play very earnestly.

In the scene while playing they happen to hurt someone. Probably the one who caused it must have been scared as he would be scolded and punished. But as they are together they stand up as a group. There must have been a leader among them who could get them united. Instead of running away they stand as a group and show enough courage to face the public. They do not want to let down any one or blame anyone in the group. The unity among them pays them well. They are left free to continue their game. It is a clear indication that they feel included in the group and they stand by the group. They understand and support each other in good and bad times.

Children as a group feel that they are deprived of their rightful place in society. They stand together to feel strong. They know that the society does not stand by them. That realization makes their support for each other stronger. The feeling of weakness as individuals and as a group helps them to get united to feel stronger as a group.
The researcher during his interaction with children who left the street situation realizes that they have strong feeling for one another. In their ordinary conversation each one speaks for and with the group. They are together for various activities. They are treated as a special group when in public. They do better in their performance in school life with curricular and co-curricular activities. As a result they are appointed as leaders at various levels. Students and teachers look up to them for leadership and guidance. They feel proud of their achievements. They feel happy that they can perform better. In one of the focus group interviews the feeling of acceptance and greatness is well expressed and appreciated.

Response: They all feel that we are really privileged… they say that their parents are too strict and they really cannot learn much… they do not allow us to go out... we are in the house... work and study only… they also say… these are learning guiding.. (Means to say that they are in the Scouts and Guides movement) Learn from them… this foster care home girls study... so learn from them… and they come out as leaders…

Researcher: Is that so…

Response: In the home we learn everything…

Researcher: Ah…ha…. ..

Response: We are mostly the leaders… many of our girls from the foster care are leaders…. Vice captains...captains… and we take lots of responsibilities. We got to check the nails… and other requirements like uniform.... we check… we are given plenty of responsibilities…

Researcher: (nods)

Response: We also get lots of respect and love…only we have to live well…

(FGD FCHG. 1, 25 November 2014).

Children mainstreamed feel that they are privileged. They are treated as a special group. Their speciality is noticed, appreciated and looked up to by others. They are ready to make any sacrifice for their friends. It is noticed as they live together as a group. They carry out all the activities of the home. They prepare food, look after the cleanliness of the house and enjoy working in groups. In the group some are more capable. However they do not
complain. They are happy to remain as a group supporting each other and growing up as a group.

The way they talk about themselves is always in “we” which is an indication that they feel as a group. They have good relationship among them. Probably they get attached to each other so much as they have faced similar problems. They have similar future goals to work for. They feel definitely different from the other girls. They feel closely related to each other as seen in all their sharing. In one of the focus groups discussions the researcher notices strong and healthy relationship among the mainstreamed children.

Response: When we go to school…when we first go to school the teachers ask us… ‘what do you learn in your houses’…. Then we say that we learn… dance, song…guide, karate… and all…then outside girls simply say that they learn cooking… and dancing… and study… They are not getting the opportunities that we get… Then we have a happy feeling or experience… That we have learned so many things… We are much more smart than them… (smiles with joy and contentment) as we learn so many things… and as we learn we can also teach someone else… that is our experience.. (FGD FCHG. 1, 25 November 2014).

In the focus group discussion it is evident how they loved each other and supported each other. They continue their life as a group helping each other. All the activities they talk about they stand as a group.

During the whole discussion no one says: ‘I do that’ or ‘I do this’. They express that teachers like them. They say that they are efficient in dancing singing and many other group activities. Definitely there are some among them better than others. One among them may be the best dancer, another best in karate, a third best in cooking or any other activity. In the discussion they do not talk about any one person. They talk as belonging to the group. They share about their life with joy. This adds to say that their peer relationship is strong. Good peer relationship is significant as it promotes their holistic growth.
4.5.1.6. Rights-Based Governance

Children live and move in clusters. They belong to a group that promotes democratic ways. They do discuss regarding their various plans and programmes. They do not like to be excluded. Hence they comply with the group’s decision which normally is evolved through their interaction. Among them some emerge as leaders and they take the lead to organize their life in varied situations and places. They do have informal meetings. They discuss their problems and find solutions to support each other. In all the discussion they do whatever is good for their life and they also show lot of concern for the weaker and needy ones in the group.

A book named ‘be happy stay happy and make others happy’ (Chempakathinal 2010), summarizes the system that mainstreamed children evolved for their developmental process. It is a guide book that assists them as they are in the process of mainstreaming. The children have had the possibility to meet together on a number of occasions. They discuss their needs and possibilities. They also discuss their limits. Eventually they spell out guidelines for foster care homes. The number of discussions helps them to reach consensus regarding the various guidelines.

The book talks about a process that went on for some time. The senior children belonging to a project staying in different foster care homes comes together to discuss about their past, present and future. “After a number of meetings together with ………our director we evolved a set of guidelines of happy living. We are happy to present this to all the children……” (Chempakathinal 2010, p. 4). Children have their meeting in different groups. Finally the children’s council comes together and finalizes the different articles in the book.

There is a sense of responsibility prevailing among them. They feel that they need to take hold of their life and use the existing facilities responsibly. They realize that they got life building opportunities after joining the foster care homes. All the children participate in the process. They own up the book with all its decisions mentioned in it. Initially they have discussions in smaller groups and later in group with representatives of all the groups. Children are active in their participation as every article affects their life.
This is an indication that children enjoy freedom to regulate their lives. The freedom received is never misused if guided or motivated to build their lives. Children feel that they are in control of their life. Once they evolve a system all become part of the system and the system leads them on. They feel that they have planned their life. So they do not feel pressurized. They feel happy to be part of it. They also include a monitoring system. They do not feel the pressure of discipline as they prepare and plan their life. It is specially noted that the children participated in the project from planning to formulation, to execution and evaluation to assess the progress. The children get into a democratic system and they feel included and happy to be a contributing member which eventually helps them for happy mainstreamed life.

4.5.1.7. Upward Journey in Needs Fulfillment

Children in street habitats love to live a happy life. In the rural villages they are not provided the basic necessities for their growth. While the researcher is interviewing he meets a group of boys and they talk about their difficult days in their early life. They have memories of lack of food in their earlier village life. As they remember they say that they tried what is possible and when everything failed they came to live in the city. One of the boys expresses his past and the causes for him to have left the home situation.

… Researcher: What is your name…?
Response: My name is Raju (name changed)
Researcher: Now that you are staying in the streets can you tell me about your home situation… Why did you come away from your village life…?
Response: My house situation is not too good. Once I took away a mobile from the neighbouring house… I did not have enough food… I do not feel like going home… (FGD SHB. 1, 19 November 2014).

The child does not mind talking about his past sad story. Though his companions are present he talks plainly of the mistake that he made. He is not ashamed of being laughed at or scolded. He trusts his company. He talks about the need for stealing for survival and for a good life. The child does not like to go home. He must be having tremendous fears and
the worry of deprivation. This affects him mentally; he has to leave his kith and kin and adapt to a new way of life with unknown people who eventually turn out to be his own.

Basic need for every child is the food. He has spent many days in hunger. The family must have been very poor. Normally in families children are given the best care. A mother cannot think of leaving the child hungry. Now as he faces hunger he does not feel accepted. He finds no means other than stealing. He is not feeling bad about it as he is helpless and he owns up his mistake. There is every chance for this child to make his life well in society as he is open, serene and honest. This honesty is helping him eventually to live a happy life. He accepts harsh realities and gets the support of his companions by being genuine and ready for hard work.

In the focus group discussion another child expresses the reason for leaving the home. He is not happy in the street but he does not have possibility to stay in his house. He leaves the home situation being deprived of basic necessities. He wants food, a place to stay and possibility to study. He talks more about his interest for studies. The parents could not afford to send him to study. One of the respondents speaks about his dissatisfaction for getting a chance to study.

… “Response: I was not happy at home.
Researcher: Why were you not happy?
Response: Father did not allow me to study” (FGD SHB. 1, 19 November 2014).

The child says that he is not happy about his house. Immediately the thoughts of the researcher are of poverty or other problems in the house. But the child here talks about his desire to study. He is not sent to a school and that makes him unhappy. But coming away is not the solution and all the more, staying in the street situation. Probably he is looking out for possibilities. Before he gets addicted he can be helped to be in the mainstream.

This could be a case of a child having illiterate parents. They seem to be poor and require his help to work in the home or farm. As they are not educated they do not feel the need to send children to school. They do not realise the need and advantage of school education. They want him to grow up and be in the house as another earning member. They suffer due
to acute poverty and consider one more person as another means of income. But some children understand the need for studies and they leave the home to fulfil their desire.

Many of the children are aware that they need education to be someone in society. The researcher in his street contacts came across many children who really want to study. This is another intervention which helps them for mainstreaming. Children are convinced that they need studies for a happy living.

4.5.2. Control

According to Schutz (1966) control is expressing a person’s capacity to control situations and people. It considers the extent to which the person can be controlled comfortably. This is understood as capacity building as a child is helped to be in the mainstream society.

When children are not comfortable with controls that are essential for living in a group they develop deviancy behaviours. When their needs are not met they fail to accept control. Children need to get satisfaction in being controlled and they also need sufficient opportunities to grow in control. When they are not trained into it they face confrontations and their growth process gets deviated. Children in families that cannot offer them essentials fail to stay on. Need fulfilment search takes them away and many of them reach the city streets.

Once in street life they cannot survive alone for too long. They need support. They look for support. There are people waiting to offer them support to take advantage of them. Children give into them as they do not find other option for basic needs for survival. They remain under control for some time and they develop sufficient energies to stand on their own and control others. They may do it aggressively causing harm to other children who are new or weak. They can eventually become bossy-controlling or passive dependent (Schutz 1966).

In one of the field visits the researcher gets a chance to talk to two boys from the streets. One looks very active and the other very quiet and submissive.

Researcher asks: And you… (To boy B and he does not answer)
Boys A asks: (to boy B)… When did you come? (Basically a very quiet boy)
Boy B: (Answers very feebly)… Probably in 2010 or 2011… it is almost 4 years in the station
Boy A says to the researcher: He came in 2009 or 2010…
Researcher: He came to the station…
Boy A: Yes…
Researcher: But your house is that side and his house is on another part.
Boy A: Yes, Budge…Budge...
Researcher: You look like brothers anyway…
Boy A: We are only friends... came from different places but we stay as brothers…
Researcher: To Boy A: you are smiling a lot… why doesn’t he smile
Boy A: He does not smile much… show him some cartoons and then he will smile…then Boy A smiles loud… (FGD SHB. 2, 21 November 2014).

The conversation looks very friendly. The two boys behave like brothers. While talking, boy A takes upper hand. He controls the other boy. And the other boy is totally obedient to him. He is mostly quiet. It is quite clear that he is bullied and kept under control. The boy does not have a chance to react or to be part of any conversation in the presence of the first boy. The first boy is bossy and controlling while the second boy remain passive dependent

In most of the questions asked to boy B is answered by boy A. He is very aggressive and active. He is ready to answer any question. The whole conversation clearly states that boy A has a lot of initiative. The boy B is quiet and almost like a slave to boy A. He follows all what he is asked to do. It is evident that boy A takes advantage of the boy B but they live together and share their life together. Both enjoy companionship but boy A exhibits lots of qualities of control. He is able to develop his competency in his situation making use of others. He is quite confident of himself. He is well in control of himself and his friend.

4.5.2.1. Street Corner Meeting
The researcher has a number of meetings in street corners. The meetings normally are conducted in the evenings. That is the time children are most free after having done the day’s job and having completed their regular cinema. Most of the children start searching
for things early in the morning onwards from the waste and they get them sold to have a
good meal and to have other entertainments. Some go around for kilometers searching
different bins of the streets. For those around the railway station they search in the
incoming trains. Some of them beg and work in the tea shops or as porters (*coolies*). By
evening they are free and before they go to sleep they love to have group meetings in
which they talk about the movies and discuss about more serious issues depending on the
closeness of the group.

Many share their difficulties of the day or their achievements. The presence of a friendly
adult figure makes them happy. They feel wanted, loved and cared for. They talk more in
the presence of a concerned adult. It has been the experience of the key informants that
many got inspired to leave the streets through the street corner meetings. They are inspired
to join the open shelter which eventually helps them towards mainstream.

… From the next day again as we continued to spend our days in street
situations. One night when I was going to Howrah railway station to sleep I
saw that elder brother again. He was talking with three friends. I thought I too
could join to find out what was happening. I went and sat there and then that
brother told me that if I had any problem I could speak. We will solve them
together. Then I told them that for me whatever happening is good enough.
And those friends talked about their problem to the brother. Brother told them
that he will try to solve them (FCHB. 4, 22 November 2014).

In the interventions made with children many of them speak about their first meeting with
senior people which has inspired them. At times they have given them signs of hope. As
they are in despair they find a solace in someone and they take the step to the open shelter.
This opens a huge world of change for many to proceed to the mainstream.

### 4.5.2.2. Children’s Get-Together

Children in the streets live in clusters. At times they are with the peer group and at other
times they are with their families. When they work they do it as a group or as individuals
according to the work category. But it is a common practice for them to gather in street
corners to sit and eat, to play, to sleep and to spend time in talking. In such gatherings an
adult presence makes a difference. Those gatherings become spontaneous but meaningful. A respondent shares about his experience.

... Here we have every month Howrah mela. We all go there together and enjoy. Many who do not understand used to go back. When I grew big I used to go and meet them in Howrah station. I used to talk to them and bring them from there (FCHB. 1, 27 November 2014).

The first meeting is with a game, a meal or medicine. After the negative experiences in the village and in street situations they are happy to find someone who offers them their basic needs. This instills hope in them that they can meet more of their needs. This hope leads them on to follow the caregiver.

......There comes a group of boys calling all the children. There are almost 130 between the age of 12 to 20 and a group making them sit down in a large circle. Another group come in with tea, biscuits and some more eatables and distribute to all. They manage to give everyone attention and equal share of the food. Apparently it looks difficult as they are children living an undisciplined life. All of them enjoy the good party while music is going on.

Once the small party is over there is person announcing about tickets and chance games. It is one of the senior boys. On enquiry it is found that he has left the street about 18 months ago and that he is admitted to a nearby school studying in class seven(OB. 5, 26 March 2014).

The researcher becomes part of the children’s party. All the children enter with their street dress and habits. They are offered all that is needed for a festive dress: bathing facility and new clothes. They do not look like children from the street anymore. Many do change their style of behaving as they improve in their attire. They feel happy to look clean and to have regular food and enjoyments. They get inspired as the whole programme is being organized by children who are their elders who left the streets. Many of them are known to each other from the streets.
The feast conducted makes children experience comfort and care. They love to be part of it as they do not need to struggle for their survival for that day. They are offered lots of enjoyable moments through games, movies and good food. All their needs are taken care of and some of them decide to give up street life to get back to their homes or to any of the foster care homes. As they belong to an organized fest they need to follow guidelines. They fall in line as they have benefits. The joyful experience inspires many to give up their street life.

4.5.2.3. Life Skill Training

Children need to learn to adapt to environment and people. Children in street habitats need to assess and adapt the ways that can suit their survival. They are kind to some and aggressive to others. They take a beggars attitude to the people in the mainstream. These can be termed as skills for life used for their survival. They are able to manage their life in street situations. They develop enough skill to fend for themselves according to their abilities. Children who live in and around a street dumping pit develop skills to earn enough to look after themselves from the waste that is dumped. The researcher observes a street scene.

… The pigs and the cows are not bothered; they keep moving about trying to find something for themselves. There were some people coming to feed the cows as well. One of them offered to children some bread. Some people offered food only to the cows. Children were looking with so much eagerness and waiting to see if they could be the lucky ones to get something from them.

After a while the children walk away with their bags. They seem to have got some plastic items and some food too. They move away and sit together to sort out whatever they got. There were some fruit juice cans and they were sucking it to empty to the last drop. It was part of their collection that morning (OB. 5, 26 March 2014).

Children do all sorts of work. In the observation mentioned above the researcher comes across a group of children that are able to struggle with the pigs, dogs and cows and collect enough for them to sell and manage their life. They get some plastic items, a few bottles,
some paper and some tin/iron pieces which are thrown away by some family or other. They find enough use for them. They know what is saleable and what can bring them more in their life. They learn to earn, spend and save. When they do not earn enough they borrow. They also take up other works to earn money.

Besides taking care of survival requirements they learn to live as a group. They support each other. They are able to cook, clean places, help in a variety of trades as per requirement of the area. When they are able to meet the requirements of the place or people they also get money. Some get food for their work. If they are not skilled they do not get enough to survive. Children take care of each other especially the younger ones. They learn to support and care. Thus they develop various skills that can help them to survive in street situations.

4.5.2.4. Soft Skill Development

In today’s society people have to be nice to get accepted and wanted. Soft skills help better communication that lead to stronger relationships. It is important for children to get trained in soft skills. They need to learn live with comfort and ease and communicate to others with concern and care. Kindness and softness in dealings can take them to the mainstream society successfully. They learn and get trained in soft skills while living in the streets as they go through situations where they need to depend on the society for survival. One of the key informants talks about soft skills.

The boys look rough and tough when they arrive from the streets. Once they come and experience care where their needs are fulfilled they begin to be soft in their talks and dealings with all. They do not accept corrections when they are aggressive. While living together in groups they develop lots of skills that help them to get along with others and get along well. They can easily be guided and they understand better the need of good relationship with others (KI. 3, 17 January 2015).

This is the experience of a caregiver who worked with children in skill training. Children who came to the open shelter are offered possibilities for craft work and later as per age they are directed to academic life or technical training. A sense of security develops and
that helps them in their behaviour. They are able to perform well and relate to others attractively as they attend schools or training centres. In the training centre it is easy to train them to relate to different types of people. This eventually helps them in the social life. Living in such training centres builds their social capital.

4.5.3. Affection

The third area that Schutz (1966) talks about is affection that is required for every child in a balanced form. Children learn to be personal when they are given sufficient attention and care. They feel satisfied when affection is extended to them. They are comfortable in situations where they are loved and they are able to love others comfortably. In situations where they avoid personal ties they grow under-personal. They do not like to meet people. They experience rejection and they refuse to develop close relationships. The third group is over-personal where the person keeps trying to be popular. They make all the efforts possible to be liked by others. They do different things to get approval. Children in the streets get affection and give affection. Often they do not get balanced attention and care. In such situation they grow over-personal or under-personal (Schutz 1966). One of the respondents talks about the absence of affection from her family members.

I live at Howrah about three to four years. I am 15 years old and have finished third standard. My home is at Tarekeshwar. At home there live my mother, stepfather, elder sister and brother-in-law. They live at Bale Chuk. My mother beats me and my father says this and that (bad language), I do not want to live with them. My father and mother do not allow me to stay with them. My father and mother drink, use abusive language and tell me to go away from home.

When I came for the first time from Tarekeshwar I did not feel nice. I was afraid. In case somebody beats me as I came away without telling anybody. I was wondering what will happen to me. First time the members of my sister’s house searched for me everywhere along Burdwan line but could not find me. However, they did not look for me in the Howrah station (SHG. 1, 18 November 2014).
The girl meets with the researcher after having lived in the street situation for four years. She leaves her home due to the problems she faced. She does not accept to be at home as she has her stepfather. The parents do not live an upright life. The father and mother take alcohol. The poor and the illiterate do that due to the various problems they face. But their drinking habit affects the children. Children do not get sufficient affection and care. The child mentioned above leaves the home for the streets.

From the home to the street is not a happy alternative. She seems to be a nice child. She feels bad for having come way without informing. She is still attached to them in spite of their behaviour. She expects that they be attached to her. She suffers rejection. She knows that they searched for her. But she expects them to search in more places. She feels bad that they did only the minimum search. She definitely is suffering from being rejected and not received sufficient affection and attention.

Another child who meets the researcher talks very positively about his mother who cares for him so much.

……and our mother would sacrifice her food for us. She would not take lunch but keep that for us for the night. Most of what our father would earn would be spent for himself. He would drink and also give his friend and wasted all the money. After drinking he would come home and beat my mother. Every day and night there was big fighting in our house. We could not sleep at night. Whenever my mother protested against these, he used to get angry and beat her (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

The child feels nice to recall the affection of his mother. He realises that the mother gives up food for the sake of the children. The child notices the bad situation in the family. Father does not care for the house. He is selfish and looks after his needs. He does not care for the children. The child knows that it is the duty of the father to work and take care of the whole family. He feels sad seeing the father beat mother.

The helplessness of the mother is well expressed by the child. The child does not seem to be fond of the father. However he is not against him. He feels bad that the father does not
care for the mother. He is very close to the mother as he sees the mother making lots of sacrifices. Being too young the child helplessly watches. This feeling is positive as it can help him later on in life to be affectionate and to accept affections which are very essential for a balanced growth.

4.5.3.1. Medical Aid in the Street Habitats

One of the major rights of children is to enjoy protection. Protection includes essential facilities. Children in street habitat need support to face the cumbersome environment. They need assistance to keep themselves clean and healthy. They appreciate medicine when they are sick. If not assisted they may not take care to look after their health. They love to bathe in rivers and ponds. Offering of soap, sanitation facilities and other essentials make them feel that they are accepted loved.

The respondents in their statement made the point that they have had friendly caregivers and teachers who constantly encouraged them and supported them. They have inspired them to a meaningful social living. The key informant in his sharing talks about the way children appreciate the care given to them in their difficult times. Children feel most helpless when they are sick. One of the key informants shares his experience.

I felt a stranger to their life, kingdom, method, life-style and so on; until one day, I saw a boy sitting down and sorting out all his collections from the sack, on platform No. 14, a very neglected area, in those days. I went and stood near him.

On the way, I had seen other boys playing some gambling, one had given the other a hit on his nose and was bleeding profusely. I did not have the courage to go down and settle the fight. The bleeding nose fellow had lifted a broken brick and when he saw me looking at the scene, he threw away that brick and said some "good-words" and left the area.

I went and stood near the one who was sorting out his findings, paper, leather, glass, iron, and so on. He did not care to look at me; until I noticed a scar on
his left hand and I asked him what it was …with a casual wave of his hand he said, ‘It is a cut’ and continued his work without spending a glance on me.

Few minutes later I asked him if he cared to put some medicine, he waved his hand to show that he had not done anything. Then I volunteered to put some medicine. He stopped with what he had in his hands and kept looking me up and down until he thrust his hand towards me. I sat down and took out some dettol I had in my shoulder bag and scrubbed it. He cringed at the pain, but I continued saying that dirt of two weeks seems to be there. Then I put some cream and plastered it while asking what his name was and where his house was….as plaster was stuck well, he left everything and ran, I called him again and again, but he disappeared into the crowd. I sat there for some time, not able to decide what I should do, protect his stuff, or leave it to his fate. Finally I left it all and went away.

Two days later he met me in a crowed exit of passengers; as he recognised me he came pushing the crowd; stretched his bandaged hand and shouted, ‘change it’. I caught his hand and asked why he ran away the previous day, he pointed to two of his friends and said one had stomach trouble and the other, headache. Number of people started standing around and listening. So I pulled him to one side and sat down to treat him. All three watched my mild way of handling the process; then I gave a tablet to one with head-ache and another capsule to the stomach pain-guy. The pain was two days ago. They got up and disappeared into the crowd.

Daily they kept looking for me, for medicine and someone to talk to. Gradually I grew in fame; I became the "Doctor on the Platform" more and more boys and girls used to be round me (KI. 1, 28 June 2014).

The key informant who has worked with children in street situation for many years states that it is difficult for him to enter into the life of children in street situations. He finds children needing medicine and that becomes an opportunity to enter into their life. The children appreciate the help received and acknowledge him as a doctor. They find a person
whom they can approach to take care of their medical requirements. The key informant took that as a chance to talk and listen to them about their life. The sharing brought them close to him which helps him to guide them further to the mainstream.

4.5.3.2. Brotherly Bonding in the Ruggedness of Street Life

Children are in bondage while in the streets. They are in the state of being a slave to the street situation. They need to keep alert against various harassments. They suffer various pressures placed on them by street elders, their job masters and senior street children. They feel slavish as they do not enjoy the normal freedom and facilities which children enjoy. In such situations they develop strong bonds for others. They become close to peers and close with their relatives if they stay on in the streets. In one of the focus group discussion one of the boys expresses his close bonds with his companion in the streets.

**Researcher:** What is your name?

**Respondent 1:** Sajim (name changed)

**Researcher:** And your name?

**Respondent 2:** Ajmer (name changed)

**Researcher:** You look like brothers... is that true

**Respondent 1:** We are friends but we are like brothers

**Researcher:** Oh like that

**Respondent 1:** On the one hand we are brothers and on the other way we are friends

(The smiles of respondent 1, which is loud...)

**Researcher:** You came together to station or stay together

**Respondent 1:** I came earlier and he came after that... (FGD SHB. 2, 21 November 2014).

The researcher gets a chance to interact with two boys who stay in the streets. They move about together. He meets them and he asks them some details about their life. He notices that they move about like brothers. In the little conversation that he has with them the senior one seems to be very familiar. He answers whatever question that is asked. The second boy remains silent mostly. He answers only the minimum. It is most interesting to note that he owns up the fact that they are actually friends but live like brothers.
Further enquiry makes it clear that they became friends after having met in the streets. The first one is senior in age and in street life. They are happy with each other. They stay on like brothers and mostly move together. The children and adults come closer to each other very easily. They face common difficulties; they have common problems to share about their past and present. They need the support of each other to survive in such complicated situations. Loners find their life very difficult especially in moments of sickness or accidents. The more they suffer, the stronger the bonding among them as they stay together. They support each other when they have to stand against any opposition or enemies or anyone who harasses them. They do have great allegiance to their group.

Another child who lives along the footpath shanties recalls his past where he has had many friends who care for him. The child lives by the side of the city street and he talks about the way they earn money.

As we live in the Dharmatola we became familiar with the people and we started gathering money by selling plastic. Then we made small house where I lived my life; I did not feel any hardship in my life. My mother used to love me very much and also my relatives (FCHB. 3, 24 November 2014).

The boy stays with his mother in the little plastic house they made. It is quite a challenging task to live in the city with the plastic roof above them. They have to face rainy days, winter days and stormy days. They are not well protected. They are prone to get sick. In spite of all these the child says that he does not feel the hardship. The reason he expresses is that he is loved by his mother and relatives. Probably his relatives stay in similar situations. As they face the hardship they are closer to each other. The emotional bonding becomes strong and they gain strength to face their day to day problems. The boy says that he does not feel any hardships living in the shanties along the streets.

The researcher meets another boy who stays in a foster care home and he talks about his happy life in the home with varied activities.
… Every day we used to eat … I started my schooling and a miss used to teach us. During the tiffin break, we used to eat maggi and there were articles for playing, therefore, we used to enjoy a lot in the school.

As I grew up and as I was studying, they sent me to another house. … Here also I enjoyed with my friends. I was relating with everybody. We used to laugh around during the night time … Whenever we had any programme we used to dance together. I was a good dancer and I passed my examination with good result therefore teachers used to love me very much … I never thought what to do next. We used to go together with the girls and the boys. We used to share our life with each other therefore I used to learn… (FCHB. 3, 24 November 2014).

In a foster care home children stay as in a family. They are more in number and they enjoy living there with many activities. The boy talks about the food that they share. He talks about the games they play. Even the change of homes is liked by him as he has friends. He talks about dancing and other activities that he participates. Everything makes him happy.

He talks about the affection that he receives from the teachers. For him even the examinations are not difficult. He talks happily about his studies. Probably the bonding that he has with the whole group helps him to be happy. Being happy makes him progressive. He does not have time to weep over his sad past. In fact the boy is talking about all the happy days that he is spending. The group spirit took away all anxieties and worries. They share their problems and make life happy and easy. Being bonded together they support each other.

4.5.3.3. Compassion and Social Concern
It is a common sight to see children roaming around in the streets of the major cities in groups. It is noticed that the small children always have some adult or senior children’s presence in their life. The seniors take care of the children whenever they are in need and whenever they need help of any sort. While the researcher having the discussion with a group of children who are still living in street situation he comes across a small child among them. As the conversation proceeds the attention is turned to the child. She is asked to give up street life. Though she is under the care of a senior child she is told to give up
the street life. The concern shown in the conversation is very great. They feel for each other, especially for the weaker ones.

... you come with me and stay with me... or you will get lost going here and there... but she did not want to listen to didi and came away... we said many times that she goes with didi...
Researcher: So run away and came...?
Response: We said many times that she should stay with her...... but she does not comply...
Researcher: Why... you will not go.... Now where do you stay...and with whom...
Response: With me (another girl)
Researcher: Where....?
Response: In the railway station
Researcher: Where...
Response: In platform number 8
Researcher: In 8 number... (FGD SHG. 1, 18 November 2014).

The concern of the seniors is praiseworthy. They know that they are not in the good situation. They know that street is not the place of the children to grow up. Though they are protecting her while being with them they want her to be away. They care for her and they offer help. They are worried about her being lost. Street places are big and varied. Anyone can get lost and never return. As a girl she faces more dangers. She can be kidnapped or abused; she can get lost or get sick. In many ways she can have a bad life if she continues in the street situation. The elderly children are ready to do anything for her to get her away from the street out of love and affection.

The child also feels attached to one of the members present. Their love and concern for her helps her to tide over the difficulties of the streets. She feels safe enough to continue there. This is an indication of a group that cares and a person that experiences the care of seniors and feels safe. The child is not able to foresee all the problems like the senior children. The child feels comfortable in their company. The companions have deep feeling for her and that is expressed in the care and concern that they offer to her.
4.6. INTERVENTIONS FOR EMPOWERMENT

The third part of the study is to assess the various interventions that empower children to be part of the mainstream society. Once children are rescued and healed they need to become part of the mainstream society. They need to learn, train and be empowered for being part of the society as responsible members. They grow as individuals and assist society in its progress with their contribution as children and as adults in the years to come. Within the human rights approach children are part of the planning, piloting, implementation and feedback stages. Participatory methods can help children to get inserted into society as well as help society to respect their rights (Thomas 2003). During the study the researcher comes across various stages that have helped them. In the various stages the varied interventions assist their progress.

The researcher interprets all the interventions under the same concept of psychosocial as every intervention continues to assist children in their healing process besides empowering them. Being empowered they feel accepted, wanted and useful. They feel capable of living life with vitality and joy in a society.

4.6.1. Street Fest to Weaning Process

Children are gathered for a celebration. Children enjoy celebrations. In the street fest various life oriented skills are developed through games and playful interactions. Various competitions give them a sense of worth as they are able to win personally and as a group. They have the possibility to see others who are similar to them, doing well in society. This gives them the message that they have the possibility to achieve many things in life. One of the respondents talks about the fests that he has attended.

… Then my brother told me and to other children who were with him … the next day you come to Angel’s school (name changed). There is Howrah mela. (mela means celebrations) You will go there. We said ok. Then I together with the friends went to that school and saw that many elder brothers came… wearing clean clothes and I think there were also some sisters and one father
also was with them. Then I did not recognize them. There I saw there were many boys and girls like me. I saw and I felt happy seeing them. There they involved in many types of games, dances, songs and I felt nice. Another thing I felt so happy was that it was nice for all. It was a happy day for all (FCHB. 1, 22 November 2014).

The *mela* is an occasion for people to gather. In the present situation it brings together many children from the street situations. They are offered possibilities for bath, medicine, food, entertainment, games, counselling and other group activities. These give them possibilities to shine in public. They get recognized for their talents and skills. They are able to win more friends. It works as a motivation stage for them to channel their energies to creative activities. They find that life can be meaningfully spent. Once they enjoy this program they invite others and they feel the need to be part of the mainstream society.

### 4.6.2. Camp Life and Personality Development

Regular study and activities can be monotonous and boring. Children from the street miss their actual family situation where they are able to visit friends and relatives for different festivals and holidays. They stay in foster care homes which can become quite monotonous. To avoid such a situation they are offered possibilities to attend annual camps. These are organized away from the foster care homes. In it a group of two hundred children live together for a week with a variety of activities that help to develop their mental, intellectual and physical abilities. They learn many things through visit to various places, interaction with peer group and by taking part in various competitions and mind relaxation programmes.

It helps children to be free of guilt and shame when their companions in the school talk about their visits to their relatives and other places. The feeling of ‘orphanness’ is reduced to a certain extent through camps. The child who is depressed to the various harassment received gets mentally refreshed through various enjoyments. The have good food, friendly staff members, brotherly and sisterly peer group. This helps mental healing.

We had lot of food...then we reached there… then all of us were in line and we were told that we could come back after meal...all with half pants.. I was given...
The boy recalls the various activities that he has had during the time of the camp. He seems to have enjoyed every bit of it. In the analysis it is found that every activity helps the children to build their future. They feel that their capacity for works and studies has increased. The child explains his experience with lots of enthusiasm and excitement. Thus camp is a joyful experience which builds up their personality. Mind-blowing experiences are narrated by every child when they are reminded of camp days.

The boy enters the camp with minimum knowledge of his companions. He narrates that he does not even know their names. He learns their names and then they all become his friends. His circle of friends is widened. The camp has some experiences of sightseeing. It is an occasion for them to meet ordinary people of the mainstream society. The child notices families and people who work and live their life. This eventually motivates him to enter the mainstream with education, various skills and a job.

Children also receive awards for their performance. The boys talk about prizes. Lots of prizes are given during the camp for various items. Different children can perform and shine in different types of activities. These encourage them to work harder for the camp of the coming year. Many look forward to camps and prepare for this. This preparation enhances their empowerment process.
4.6.3. Picnics and Social Rejuvenation

Children enjoy picnics and it is a good means used for empowerment. It helps relaxation and motivates them to be more effective in their day to day activities. It helps them to come across new places and new peoples. For children of the street it is an occasion to see and interact with people of the mainstream. They are trained to meet the people of higher age, position and power. This helps them towards social integration.

One of the key informants recalls the first picnic he organized for a group of children who lived in the street situation.

The children were told about a picnic. They got up early morning, got ready and thinking of the picnic they were well dressed. They wore their best. They were told that they would be visiting a technical school with large play grounds and that they would be offered lunch…

Once they reached there they were offered some food. They relished it as they never tasted homely good food for quite some time. All the children were with street background of three to five years or more. After the good game they were offered a nice lunch. Then they were taken to see around the technical workshop. They saw the machines and the workers. They also interacted with them.

At the end of the picnic some asked if they could be part of the training centre. They were challenged to give up street life and that it would be very difficult. Many took the challenge. Seeing the children’s earnestness the training institute accepted to train them. They evolved a training that would suite even the illiterate. They began to go to the institute on a regular basis. Soon many of them managed to get employed (KI. 1, 07 May 2014).

Picnics can help in the rehabilitation process. Children love to go for picnic. The caregiver cautiously plans the picnic. The children seem very enthusiastic. He allows them enough time for games and relaxation. He makes use of the opportunity for a visit to an industrial
centre. Children seeing the different works in the industrial centre get motivated to undergo training. They realize that they take to street life as they have no option. The moment they find an option they give up the street life. Most of them welcome the idea of training for a job. The offer is according to the capacity of each one considering their differences.

Children feel that they are wanted and that they can earn honestly to become part of the mainstream. For some it takes time. They wait for others to proceed on. Once the training begins many more joins and it helps them to work honestly and walk uprightly as earning members. They become confident as they are able to protect their dignity as human beings and as responsible members in the society. They feel empowered to belong to the society. They begin to have more friends and they receive more acceptances in the society. This brightens their life. Henceforth they need not be at the mercy of anyone.

Another child who is already part of the foster care home shares about his experience of picnics which has a positive impact on his life.

Once a month we were going for picnic. If one got sick we all took care of him like a brother. We brought medicines for him and looked after his needs. We were good in games our famous game were football, cricket and rugby. In the summer vacation we all used to go for long picnic. Those picnics were guided by fathers and many teachers. We had a lot of activities. We enjoyed those days of picnic (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

The children in the foster care are used to going for regular picnics. They spend their time in playing games, meeting new people, visiting new places and enjoying the friendly presence of adults. This empowers them for social life as they are able to find out their own hidden talents. They move about freely and spontaneously. They learn to plan, execute and evaluate which helps them for mental development.

4.6.4. Competitions and Self-Confidence

Competitions, camps, seminars, workshops and exposure visits challenge the children to perform well. As they have developed resiliency and strength by living in street situations,
they perform well in different activities and that add on to their personality. Two key informant share about their experiences.

We encourage them to compete with children outside, and equip them with necessary knowledge and provide them opportunities to perform their talents, they are constantly encouraged. This enables them to do better in life to build a confidence in them that they are capable of doing many things (KI. 2, 10 October 2014).

The second key informant talks about the performance capacity of children.

One of the most remarkable things is that children participated in Boscoree, the all India scout convention in which over 3000 boys and girls participate in various competitions and activities. On two occasions, in 1997 and 2011 they were declared national champion competing with over 100 teams. The competition is more skill oriented and the children from the foster care home do well in skills (KI. 3, 17 January 2015).

The experiences of the children in being part of youth groups gives them confidence. The possibility for to them participate in various activities helps them to feel that they can perform well in the mainstream society. This feeling motivates them to continue in the process of rehabilitation accepting the challenging situation. The more they feel rewarded for their effort the better they are able to face the various programmes for empowerment.

The achievement capacity is proved as they merge with the mainstream children and perform better than them. Children participate in various competitive items in schools and other areas at the invitation of clubs or various youth programmes. They are not second to any other mainstream groups. Their performance at Boscoree (national convention of scouts and guides) is a clear indication of the extra abilities; the children develop more skills due to their challenging past.
4.6.5. Exhibitions and Creativity
The children have the possibility to participate in various art, science and cultural exhibitions. They learn by doing and they get encouraged by the appreciation through the position or prizes they get. Children develop self-confidence and balanced mental status through many success and failure experiences. A key informant makes a remark about his experience with children being part of exhibitions.

I used to take them for exhibitions. Wherever I find there is a gathering of people I would go with my boys with all the different handicrafts. It has two fold aims. First it brought some income to the children. Secondly it offered them sense of confidence as the things made by them are sold and thirdly, it gave a public face to the children (KI. 1, 28 June 2014).

Exhibitions promote lot of creativity besides giving an opportunity for children to exhibit their talents. This encourages them to go ahead in life as they are able to earn on such occasions. A sense of dignity prevailed as they are appreciated. They feel wanted and happy.

4.6.6. Getting Accustomed to New Places
Once children come to the night shelter, simple practices evolved such as regular bath, washing clothes, cooking food, brushing teeth and general health care. As they stay longer a sense of ownership dawns on them and they begin to take care of the place. They learn to distinguish between common things and the personal things. They get attached to persons and things. They take care of common things as they use them regularly for their comfortable stay. A sense of belonging develops eventually.

Change of places and training in different situations help them to be flexible. Initially once one gets used to a place, the first secure place, they find it a struggle to leave it. But through counselling the child is helped to move on as per need of their training or studies and that make them flexible. They begin to trust people and accept change of places. This keeps them on a progressive mind set. One of the respondents shares about his experience.
....father informed me that two of us (me and one of my friends) would be taken to another home in this new abode which called ....... I did not feel much comfortable. It was new and moreover I did not have any friend I continuously missed place A and its fun-filled environment. However with time I learned to manage, I made new friends, I mastered the rules and regulation and I started to like everybody there. Slowly but steadily, it became for me a second home – place B. And together with the environment the best thing I liked here was the pond. Every morning we used to have a splash there, diving, bathing. Though I did not know how to swim, but it never mattered since my friends were always there to help me out. It happened so that as I was settling down slowly in the new place (FCHB. 1, 27 November 2014).

The child is comfortable in a homely situation. He is with the group that is small and well knit. They live their life as in a family doing the household chorus and they have a pleasant stay. When he is told of a change he is unhappy. He does not want to change the place that he is familiar with. He does not feel confident to go to a new place. But the system is in place and the child has to move.

Once he reaches the new place he finds children who are already there for some time. They all look happy. He finds a new way of keeping himself fit and joyful. He does not know swimming but the new friends are experts at that and he learns swimming. He slowly becomes part of the home with varied activities. This teaches him that in life he needs to move on. He needs to face new situations which may seem challenging. Once he accepts the challenge he becomes a new person ready for further change and progress.

In situations where the child has a variety of activities he feels happier and more comfortable to continue and progress. Children in street habitat are used to a host of activities. They move from place to place. They keep doing things as they please them. They enjoy some freedom. In a foster care home setting variety is offered in terms of various activities and different places. Everything is planned with a future orientation that helps in empowerment.
Another child who talks about the way he enjoys nature. Most children in the street are from village background. They are closer to the mother earth. But circumstances led them to city atmosphere. They express a feeling of coming back home.

I was very excited as I had already started liking the place. Within the boundary of my new home there were even fields where the missionaries grew rice and other vegetables. My new home too had a huge number of plants, trees and shrubs which bore sweet smelling flowers and fruits. Moreover the big compound fascinated me it was even more huge than my previous home. The spirit of the village, the humble behaviour of my new friends and the love of my new ‘sister’ helped me settle down in the new home more easily and comfortably….As time passed on, sisters admitted me to a school outside…

(FCHB. 1, 27 November 2014).

The child talks about the big compound. He is fascinated with plantations. It is clear that the child loves nature. He enjoys the spirit of the village. Probably the child is from a village. He gets reminiscences of the past that is good. He feels more at home as the place is similar to the place where he is born and brought up. Fineness of children is developed better in situation that is closer to the nature. The child joins in different activities of cultivation and care of animals. These help him to get reformed from his street ways. He gets mainstreamed by getting into a regular school. Another child talks about his camp experience as helping him to progress in life.

This year I went for a camp and a new experience once again. I enjoyed being in a team, all the more because my team always comes first in everything. I did not know much about camp but that did not stop me from enjoying it. Everyday each team used to work together and at night we used to sing and dance and share our experience. The camp taught me many new things, so much that even after coming back to the convent, I relished the experience, and used to share it with practically everybody I met. After the camps my spirit came down a little, I started thinking about my studies and as my final exam were drawing nearer my very good friends used to wake me up at four so that I
could study properly and get good marks. This was particularly one reason why I liked my friends so much (FCHB.1, 27 June 2014).

The child loves to belong to a group. He can express himself in the group. He is able to develop the various talents that he has. The group’s support and encouragements help him. The camp is a good occasion for the child to expand his horizon. The child learns humility, democratic way of functioning and cooperation in living together with various activities. He participates in competition and he collaborates well in all the activities. The camp offers chances for failures and successes which helps better reflection about his past life. He experiences the love of the caregivers as many of them come and be with children in all the activities.

4.6.7. Progressive Indicators
Evaluation conducted regularly by the school, counsellors and others make the respondents come to realize that they are progressing from the street life to life in society. This motivates them to go further. One of the respondents expresses his satisfaction for his progress.

Now I study in class-ix. I became first in class nine. I am so happy with my success. Although I have many responsibilities, I manage to study well. I thank caring staff members of the wonderful opportunity. My teachers are very happy with me. They are surprised with my performance. I am learning stitching in VTC centre (FCHB. 2, 27 June 2014).

The child expresses joy in being class nine. He knows that he is capable and that he is able to do well in studies. He acknowledges that he has lots of work in the house as the children participate in the management of the home. He is happy with lots of works and study. One of the things that make him happy is the thought that teachers love him. The boy feels proud to belong to a foster care home and to be part of the home in all its activities. As he looks at his past he notices the successes which make him feel confident. He feels that he got enough opportunities to learn many things in the home system. The sense of progress that is being kindled with success-experiences leads him. He is ready to work hard for examinations and for other curricular and co-curricular activities.
4.6.8. Group Living and Brotherhood

The children in the street face helplessness and eventually they form groups that can lead them to empowerment. By staying in the street for some time, sharing their life together, working together, playing together they get attached to each other. They are able to distinguish between people who stay in the homes, who are the neighbours and who are the people required for their various requirements. They feel that those who stay with them are their own brothers. It is expressed in simple ways when they are sick and also by addressing them as bhai (brother) on a regular basis. They address them as brothers as for example: rajubhai.

Normally children in the streets move in groups. They love group activities. At times they are seen playing, fighting, looking for materials and sharing meals. One of the respondents talks about his family feeling in a foster care home.

… When I grew up a little I was sent to a new place. In this new place I was put in a new class. I have many friends here. I got the chance to make friends. We stayed together in harmony. There was no quarrel among us and there was understanding among us.

Some time I went to see my brothers. On Sunday we had an outing and I used to go to see them on Sundays. We went to church to pray. The atmosphere was a village set up, which I liked so much. Father used to come often to see us and spend some time with us. When we grew up we had to cook our food we had to clean our kitchen and other places of the house. We had to take care of all the things of the house. We all worked together. We had two captains who used to guide us. We had to wash our clothes (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

As they stay in the group they support each other. The child mentions about the way his companions care about his studies. They wake him up early so that they are able to do well in school. In the foster care home they take care of everything in house. The bigger boys have a personal care for the smaller ones and that adds to their growth and capacity building. The more heavy jobs are done by the senior children in the house. Though they
have street life background they take care of all their things. This attitude trains them for their future life in becoming part of a family and society. Another child feels very strongly that his friends help him to build up his future.

... It was only for my friends that I passed my final exam. In the convent I really found friendship which was true. My friends were my real advisers, when at time I used to go wayward and did not study properly they used to tell me to forget everything of the past and once again concentrate on my studies (FCHB. 1, 6 December 2014).

The child enjoys good friendship. He goes on to explain the way his friends guide him. They are helping him to go along the right part. He feels grateful to them for all the help receives. He lives his life with them for studying, working and for all enjoyments.

4.6.9. Social Compassion
Awareness created in the society helps the members to be understanding and compassionate. Social awareness programmes at different levels initiate fellow feeling for human beings irrespective of the situation. Persons with compassionate hearts help children to change over their street life to mainstream life. In one of the interviews the respondents talks about his eagerness to help children in the street situation. He gets inspired seeing others.

... Apart from police we have number of volunteers who go out into the street and railway station and bring the lost children. Here we have R.C project. All the volunteers go to the railway station and talk to the children and bring them to the centre, which is a centre for children in Howrah. Every last Sunday of the month, we have a mela (fair), where many children come. I too go and help them. Many children would talk during the fair... (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

The child in his experiential sharing talks about the way he grows in social concern. He boasts of the fact that many children are helped in the street situation. He himself is happy to be a volunteer. He has been in the street situation. Now he looks at the street situation
from the foster care home where he gets all that he needs for his growth. He is sympathetic to other children who are similar to him. He offers his help generously.

In one of the children’s fair the researcher observes the following.

… By seven p.m. there is a stage set up in one corner of the ground and soon there is the announcement asking all to sit down. The major part of the ground is cemented and all the children sit down in front of the stage. The volunteers help them to sit in order. Many of the volunteers sit in the midst of the group. Every now and then there are boys getting up and the volunteers are to assist them and to maintain discipline. It is surprising to know that the volunteers are children formerly in street situations, care givers and some even from abroad (OB. 5, 30 March 2014).

Children look up to adults who come as volunteers to assist them. Seeing the volunteers children also get into the habit of assisting others who are weaker and who need adult support. They experience the concern of the society through many volunteers from different parts of the world. This leads them to social concern.

4.6.10. Mild Forms of Disapproval
In the street habit children freely move from place to place. Some of them stay with their parents. They have some control over them. But most children in the street live free lives and the parents who live with them are not equipped to guide them. Many develop deviancy behaviours due to lack of guidance.

As children leave street life they need guidance to get used to socially accepted behaviours. The caregivers play a vital role in influencing children through their various interactions. Children accept strangers slowly and once they accept they own them up. In the process of interactions mild forms of disapproval is accepted and children change their course of life patterns to suit pleasant responses from the caregivers. The situations must be created where children feel responsible for their performance. They need to make a choice of their behaviour as per acceptance in a group. One of the respondents talks about his growth in social concern.
Once we grow big we also go to the streets to help children. And we help them by bringing them here and talking to them... sending them to their homes... and we also take some responsibilities... cleaning our house... we also share our jobs... and we play... under someone’s care... we have our team. and it has captain... we also have meeting in teams... all our problems we solve through meeting... we also go for training outside... we can learn many things... all these and study we do... we go ahead in our life... and from there we go for outside jobs...

We try to make our stay to make life nice... we make others captains... and they fulfill their duties well... at time they even scold us... we stay together as friends... we also cook, we clean the house together. I feel nice being a captain... I am able to learn my responsibilities... (FCHB. 6, 14 December 2014).

The child talks about group life and their leadership roles. They live under the guidance of an adult care giver. But situations are such they learn to demand and they also learn to comply to demand. These are requirements of group living. The child says that they solve their problem through group interactions. The researcher has been part some of the group meeting. In the meeting the children point out their mistakes. They suggest remedies for harmonious living. The responsibility of the home is on the children and they manage their life. In it they get mild forms of disapproval which help them to be focused and be on the right path.

4.6.11. Healthy Peer Exchanges

Children who have left the street situations make regular visits to the streets and that inspire the children in the streets. They have interactions and they realize the difficulties they face. They see the possible future if they give up their street life. At times an adult talking to them is not sufficiently convincing. When children of their own age talk about their past and their change process they get inspired.
Earlier I used to go to Howrah mela then elder brothers used to conduct mela for us. Now I and my friends organize the mela. I remember my past but I feel nice that I was with them once. Now I am new as I have changed my life and my ways. Now when I organize Howrah mela I feel so nice. And when I see any boy from the streets I notice and able to understand him fast as I was in his place earlier. I came to the home and saw that we do have every week a meeting. During the meeting I think of my past days, that one brother used to meet us being in the streets. …We have life skill class. Goal setting...group meeting and many different types of group meetings and we get our mind clear and changed (FCHB. 4, 22 November 2014).

Once in the open shelter the child meets many different groups of people. They become close to each other through various interactions. They understand each other as they come from similar backgrounds. They get together as they have common goals. The group is guided with healthy interactions to manage in the group and this gives basis to social living. At time mainstream groups inspire children for their future.

With many discussions children develop a sense of purpose. They begin to work in a focused way. They visualize their future life through their interactions with others who are successful in life. They learn healthy ways of interactions among themselves as they do everything in the presence of an adult caregiver. The presence of the caregiver guides them on the right path with socially acceptable behaviours. The children are offered various possibilities such as games, movies and works of different nature such as: study, art work, creative projects, and visits to various places of interest which can instill in them a sense of purpose.

4.6.12. Street’s Learning Space
Once children get addicted to the street situation they feel at home and they are happy to stay on there. They get used to the inhuman environment and develop skills to survive. They feel secure in the most insecure place. They do not like to leave the place as they feel ‘homely’. In such situations they love to get into groups. They welcome new learning; learning to read, write and speak. The social workers use child-friendly methods of teaching. They are accompanied in their learning at their space. Efficient teaching
materials can enhance educative interaction. Many of them love to learn as they feel that learning can help them in their life. They appreciate learning when it is interesting.

This street class gives them knowledge and builds confidence. As they progress they make a difference to their life. Learning adds confidence and assists the children to leave the street situation. Once they experience progress they begin to take active participation. The level of participation varies but the motivation level goes higher through counselling and friendly interactions. They begin to succeed in various activities. This gives them sense of confidence that they can manage to be like any child in the mainstream society.

The researcher has attended a number of classes conducted in street corners. Children love to visit their class space on a regular basis as they get a lot of joy in coming together as a group. They learn many things and eventually are motivated to leave the streets for the mainstream society. The researcher observes a street class.

… In one of the empty spaces he notices a group of children sitting together, all engrossed in an activity. As he goes closer he notices that there are three adults and about 30 boys and girls. They all have some writing materials with them. They seemed to be drawing pictures. On one side there was a movable blackboard. Something was written in Bengali. He continues observing the children.

Some were drawing and at one corner two were sleeping. There were also few of the children playing with toys and two others playing small game called ‘snake and ladder’. One of the adults present was guiding them in the drawing. The other two adults are seen supervising the children. Children are distracted and they are all with street life dress. They have dirty look with unkempt hair. Once drawing came to a close there began an action song being taught. The children were following one of the adults and singing. They seemed very happy. On enquiry one of the children said that it was their regular class and they have it for two hours a day.
Then he found that they all got up and went away to a nearby street side hotel and had their meal. One of the children told the researcher that the meal was offered to all those who were present in the class. Children seemed very happy and contented (OB. 2, 28 September 2014).

Children who live in the streets do not see or use a pencil or a pen. They do not like writing. In the street classes they are taught to draw and eventually to write. Many of them like drawing and then slowly they begin to write.

In the class they are taught various things through the play way method. They are taught about the necessity of hygiene. They are helped to play games and enjoy. They are assisted to interact with others in a healthy manner. It is an occasion for the caregivers to understand their situation. There are children who require special attention. Some may need medical attention and some others a shelter. The classes are occasions for the caregivers to come to know the children and be of assistance to them as per need of the individual. They are motivated to give up the street life. They understand the benefits mainstream life.

4.6.13. Craft Centre Visit

Once children give up the street habitat and get used to a shelter they feel wanted. They are inspired to study and work. They have earned during street life and managed their life. Once in the mainstream they look eagerly for safe earning possibilities. While the researcher observes them in the shelter they are busy with various activities. Some activities are productive and they feel happy as they are able to earn some money.

Once in a shelter they are exposed to various skill training possibilities. The researcher meets children in the craft centre. He finds them busy with various productive works: candle moulding, envelope making, painting and other similar handicrafts which interests children. One of the respondents writes about his experience in a foster care home.

… Through studies I learnt a lot… I also work… and get training… like tailoring… I can also help other children… and I continue happily my life…
I want to grow big and help the poor... I am grateful to those who brought me too happy life from bad life... same way I want to help many. Now I study in class 10… in 2015 I will give the class 10 examinations… I like the most is that I who could not write own name has reached a good situation… I am still a captain here… here all children get training… whatever I like I do… like tailoring… carpentry… many other trainings too… here we do many things other than study… (FCHB. 3, 24 November 2014).

Once children begin to stay in a shelter they are led to the handicraft centre. They observe and join one of the production departments as per their choice. They improve in their skills being part of the craft centre. This experience makes them happy. They feel happy to earn and support themselves in some areas of their life. They feel useful and appreciated. Their self-esteem grows.


Many of the younger ones from the street habit join the normal academic stream. Those who leave the street habitat at an older age have lesser possibility for academic training; however they get themselves occupied in skill training which eventually brings them a job. There are situations where children from the academic stream learn different handicraft skills which can bring them extra income in the future. As they join different educational or skill training centre they feel more confident. They feel empowered to be part of the mainstream.

Children talk about the education possibility that they missed in their earlier life. Once they get into the world of education some do the minimum while others do well. They are able to compete with their counterparts of the normal society. They get merged into the normal schools and perform like any other child or better as they have a tougher past life while in street habitat. One of the respondents appreciates the possibilities that he received.

… There I started studying again…gave final exams and went to class eight... and I understood the meaning of my life... good to study... all my problem of life was forgotten and I was thinking only of my future. What I will do in future...and passed class and went to class nine... thought that I would grow big
The child realises the importance of education. He is lucky that he got a chance to give up his street life and be in the mainstream school for education. He has done well and he feels happy about his performance. Being in mainstream group he is able to get rid of his inferiority feelings. Through various meetings and seminars he is also able to develop social skills and be part of the mainstream. The researcher notices that children with street life background are not less in any way than the normal mainstream children. In many situations they do better than the others. The skills that they learned during difficult days becomes useful

In one of the focus group discussions with a group of girls from a foster care home they unanimously state that they perform better than the children of the mainstream society and they are very happy about it.

Response: All want to be our friends… I will sit near you… I will sit near you… many say… at times they fight to be our friends…
Researcher: So once there was no demand for you especially in the village and then in the streets… now plenty of demand… how strange and nice…..
Response: even for drawing we are better...our books look more clean….they even say… miss… Sheila (name changed) is a good painter… even for in drawing girls are very smart..
Researcher: ok…
Response: then they compare our note books… their books are so dirty...mostly… look at that of the foster care home children’s books.. so clean and tidy… we are placed as models for cleanliness for the others. (FGD FCHG. 1, 25 November 2014).

Children who are rejected at onetime are wanted by the peer group. The child says that they all want to be friends. A big change in their life is experienced by them. This situation
is due to the fact that the children are smart. They are dependable. They are able to perform in many fields. The chances they got to be in the mainstream education system are well received by them. The results of psychosocial interventions are clearly expressed.

Children feel that they are smarter than the others. One child in fact says that the teachers in the class project them as models of discipline, talents and cleanliness. The child at an earlier moment has felt that she who was unwanted as the scum of the society is entering the heart of the society. Interventions offered in terms of education have empowered them.

4.6.15. Industrial Visit

Exposure to the various job training centres and factories opens the mind of the young adults. Once they are healed physically and mentally they feel that they can live life in self-sufficiency. They come to know the various jobs available and they come to know their suitability for the various work. Eventually they make a choice for training and that lead them to empowerment. The researcher observes a training centre.

… After the breakfast the children are taken to the workshop. There they could see the different productions being done. Their companions are at the tailoring machine, candle moulding machine, printing machine, bakery, carpentry and many more. Some of the boys gazed at the machines and the boys. Some of them recognize the boys as their companions in the street. It is clearly noticed that some of them want to join their companions. They found the visit to workshop very adventurous. Some of them ask the caregiver to give a chance to be in the workshop (OB. 5, 26 March 2014).

Industrial visit is an experience where they feel triggered to be in the mainstream. They see so many of their companions working with machines. This poses the proposal to them. If their seniors are able, they too are able to get into the system and be good workers with the machines. It is challenging and interesting. This inspires many children to be eager to work which helps them to give up their street life. Once they get inspired they build up mental stamina to give their best to join the organized life which can be demanding as it involves timely job and performance.
4.6.16. Training in Self-Management
Once the child joins open shelter he learns many things. He joins the team for cooking and begins to enjoy a good meal cooked in collaboration. He learns to take bath regularly, wash clothes; clean the areas allotted and even learn to make craft items which eventually lead him to education or training. One of the children talks about mental healing.

Response: by being in the class during the day we do Ehsaash class… we come to know more about ourselves… we come to know about our mind.. then we also have so many varieties of activities… we also play a lot… we also mix with children of other foster care homes… we become friendly with them... we become one team… there is unity among us... our elders help us… to improve ourselves we always try to win… we feel so nice in the camp…we also enjoy all together and we feel mentally fresh (FGD FCHB. 1, 28 November 2014).

Ehsaash actually means feeling. It is prepared as a psychosocial training programme. The classes are meant for children to become aware of themselves. It brings to light their problem, strengths and weaknesses. The process helps them to develop the energy they require to cope with life situations that are challenging. This gives them self-confidence, which is a gateway to empowerment. Many children who have been battered with various traumas in street life have been healed through this training. It is a joyful experience for children with lots of varieties. This brings them closer to oneself and others. Thus their mental and social life becomes healthy.

4.6.17. Group Activities and Self-Development
As children stay in groups they develop concern for each other. Initially mutual convenience makes them share their chores. They begin to take turn to cook, to clean various places, marketing and to take the various responsibilities to manage the shelter.

The children’s group system begins to work. The group system functions and takes care of the various activities. In the discussions there emerges a leader, assistant leader and the others. The meetings brings in lot of understanding and they learn to accommodate to each other’s’ strengths, needs and weaknesses. Children love to take part in many activities. It is
interesting to see that they organize many of the activities. One of the respondents in a focus group discussion talks about her learning experiences.

… Response: We came away from home because of harassment from our homes… we never got love in our families… once we are here our caregivers love us so much that parents have not shown… our parents could not manage to give us love and concern… and the way we are being brought us we grow so smart… that in society we can become good citizens… and stay on our own… from all sides we are cared for…and given lots of opportunities… study… dance… songs… all are being taught here… such a way that we need to bow and stay in the society…

Researcher: Ok
Response: We do dance…study…we don’t need to look down any more (FGD FCHG. 1, 25 November 2014).

While talking to the group they talk about their difficult days in their families. They recall the various problems they face in the streets. They realize that their parents could not offer them the love that they required. The caregivers give lot of attention and the children appreciate that. They are reminded of their contribution to society and that they need to develop. In this context they accept all the activities and the positive feeling developed within them make them cooperative.

Children express that they feel dignified. They feel that they are not less than anyone else. Self-confidence is built up and they feel so much part of the mainstream society. People used to look down upon them and that feeling grew strong in them and it is hurting for them. The caregivers get them out of such hurt feelings by making them part of the many activities where they feel capable and comfortable.

4.6.18. Multi-Skill Training and Self-Esteem

Often children want to stay on in the street situation as they are able to earn, spend and even save. It is difficult for a child to give up his earning in the initial stages. The children need to continue the earning aspect. So they enjoy making craft items and getting them sold. Eventually they are lead to long term earning possibilities which require more studies
and training. They accept seeing the immense possibilities ahead of them and accept long term training programmes or studies. One of the boys in the focus group discussion appreciates the various possibilities.

… Response: In this home the possibilities that we have I have not seen anywhere so far… we have lots of possibilities here… we are able to manage our lives by ourselves… we take care of our house…our clothes clean… and our care givers give us training…. Such as bakery…welding… tailoring… and many more… after class ten if we get good marks we are send ahead for studies… (FGD FCHB. 1, 28 November 2014).

The children appreciate the possibilities for training. In the focus group discussion they talk about the many possibilities that they have. They manage to look after themselves. Motivational process has made them happy to do all their house hold jobs. They do not need to depend on any one else for their food, keeping he house clean, washing clothes and all that they need for managing their life. They have understood and accepted that as their training ground for future. Hence they need not be compelled for the various works of the house. This training in self-management prepares them for their life ahead in the society as head of families and responsible citizens. One of the respondents talks about the various possibilities offered.

My friends are working in the VTC centre of tailoring; in the bakery and welding; book binding and paper making; card and calendar making. Here we are taught up to class X and XII. Then we are sent for technical studies. There are many dadas who after passing their class X and XII have to go to study in Vishakhapatnam to study mechanical engineering (FCHB. 2, 25 November 2014).

More life oriented training is offered in the vocational training centres. As they progress in their academic studies they are exposed to vocational training. This enables them to think of different options that they have in life. Some of them are not able to progress in the academic stream. They need to earn fast and they feel that academic life can be too long
and tiring. Thus they appreciate the various exposures to vocational streams. Many of them take up vocational training after having gone through basic academic requirement.

4.6.19. Formal Education and Social Prominence

Education empowers. The children are offered various educational facilities and they get academically qualified and skilled in various talents. While the researcher conducts the focus group discussion, the children express their joy at the various possibilities before them. They talk about their seniors having so many chances in studies as well as in job possibilities. This motivates them to keep going in the mainstream society like any student coming from ordinary families. They fare better as they have developed lot more resistance and power in the course of time. One of the children talks positively about their possibilities in a focus group discussion.

… Response: Madams appreciate us... they praise us.... Saying that those who stay in the foster care home are so nice… that they are so lucky… means… so nice… means… what to say… very lucky...means in every place they go they will notice the girl… that a smart girl is around… they look up to us... they know we are smart..

Researcher: (nods)… earlier in the street life you were hated… and disliked…

Response: Now we are wanted and loved.

Researcher: (nods) (FGD FCHG. 1, 23 November 2014).

Formal education in a formal setting with mainstream children influences them. They feel accepted and wanted. They gain knowledge and that knowledge guides them. Unlike children of the mainstream society they have experienced practical living in difficult circumstances with less family and social support. They understand and appreciate the care that they get. They are saddened at the pain that others undergo to support them. In the foster care home situation they get a chance to guide themselves and guide others especially younger children. They manage well as they are used to so many varieties in living street life.

They take part in many activities which promotes their self-esteem. They are exposed to the job market and they feel efficient as many of them already have the work experience.
They are guided from dependency to self-reliance. In the formal education system they are offered many leadership roles and that helps them for self-management. They are asked to help the weaker ones and that lead them to grow in concern especially for the weaker ones.

4.6.20. Acceptance of the Divine and Prayer
In the Indian context divinity is very much rooted in every child irrespective of their religion. Children accept organized prayers very easily. They are explained well that God is a common father to all. The only difficulty expressed is that, they find difficult to get answers for their suffering. However positive signs of progress enable them to believe in God. They love celebrating the major festivals of the county. They remind them of God’s existence. They accept the presence of God in their mainstreamed life. Through the regular prayers they grow in love for God. That in turn helps them to improve their behaviour patterns. Eventually they accept their past, present and future and they learn to tolerate, accept and appreciate others especially the peer group they belong to.

Religion and spirituality assist children as a source for being resilient. For many children religion is the central part of their identity. They manage stress and come to terms with grief through prayer and meditation. Some find meaning in suffering (UNICEF 2006). During his stay with children the researcher notices that children pray many times during the day. The children who stay in the foster care homes belong to different religions. However, street life has broken the religious barriers and they address God as their loving Father. He asked a group of children the reason for the prayer and they spoke about their need that they have for addressing God.

Researcher: You told me a lot about dance…songs… etc… but you do have regular prayers… what about that… do they come in any way useful to you.
Response: Of course yes… they help us a lot… we believe in God …what we enjoy is not given by our parents but God’s love for us… When we call God we express our belief in him… We believe that God loves us and brought us here and that gives us lots of peace..
And I also believe that God loves us… and brought us here… our teachers are because of God…God guides them… every morning we get up and pray…
that our whole day goes well and true… our day goes well… we live well with all… we do not fight as well… we do not become very mischievous either...

Researcher: Do you believe in God?

Children find prayer sessions consoling. They start believing that God guides them. God brings them opportunities. Without God, they are not able to find reason for the support they receive. They feel blessed in their life. They are aware of the hardship they suffered being with parents and being in the streets. Once in the foster care home they see goodness around them. Many people become part of their life assisting them with love and concern. India with a rich religious heritage and lots of religious practices, the children have no option but to believe in Him. They do not find any other reason for their happy and progressive life.

Children draw strength from prayer and meditation. They grow mentally strong and they are more ready to live for a cause. They accept the bad days in good faith. Children are able to accept the strange ways of God seeing people suffer. But they are happy with their life and life made meaningful with faith in God. This leads them to joyful living. Even in the present situation if they have to face any hardship they pray to God and they get the mental strength to live with them and eventually accept the role of God in their life.

4.7. CONCLUSION

Children are given their rightful place in this field work as most of the themes emerged from the content writing of the children following the phenomenological method. It is corroborated with the ethnographic study of the researcher who spent many hours sharing the life of children. The key informants’ participation added value to the research as they confirm the findings. The effectiveness of psychosocial interventions is clearly identified in the various interviews, observations and focus groups discussions.