PREFACE

With each passing year we are confronted by the sheer magnitude of change in the various spheres of life. Humanity renews itself in different spheres in keeping with this change. People not attuned to this dictum of change are left behind in the race. This widely acclaimed change in the spheres of science, technology, market economy has both positive and negative dimensions in a shrinking globe. Its impact is on both developed and developing nations. The positive forces are many and are sources of justifiable pride, yet several other forces are eating into the vitals of humanity. Several voices are raised in defence against mindless change in certain areas; the disparities arising due to changes are giving rise to new problems. The multi-cultural pluralistic society emerging is slowly infusing new norms and value systems. Fashions, fads and modernity have triggered several stresses of life. Substance abuse is one such problem. Alcohol and drugs seem to hold sway over nations and peoples universally contributing to the global burden of diseases leading to death and disability of young productive lives.

As ever before, families are sought to respond to this scene. By the nature of its lifecycle, families seem to be the harbinger of change. Families of substance abusers have been much maligned for contributing to alcohol and drug abuse and also its effects on the children. However, the survival of such families despite such severe strains and their ability to find meaning in life lends credibility to certain qualities in such families. This has set the platform for a new perspective of these families from a deficit to a strengths or challenge model. What makes these families
function as a unit in society? How are they coping? How is their adaptability and cohesion? Do they emerge as its strengths? Can these strengths be considered to help develop interventions? These are some of the questions that are explored in the study.

The exploration through a systematic study of a community cohort of families of substance abusers and non-users revealed that families do cope with the stress of a dependent member in addition to the stresses of living. The prolonged duration of such a situation has a bearing on their cohesion and adaptation. The lower levels of cohesion and adaptability in the families of substance abusers as compared to the families of non-users can still be considered a positive feature of Indian families, as the families hold the member within the family. This can be tapped to build better functioning in the family.

The first chapter in the study is an introduction to the various aspects of the study. This is followed by the review of literature focusing on substance abuse patterns, stress, coping and familial adaptation. The methodology of the study and methods of data analysis are presented in the third chapter.

The findings of the study are presented in two chapters – Chapters IV and V. Chapter IV focuses on the socio-demographic profile of substance abusers and non-users and the substance abuse pattern. Chapter V focuses on the stress, family coping and adaptation in the families of substance abusers and non-users.

Chapter VI discusses the results of the study and the hypothesis leading to the theoretical formulation on family adaptability. The last chapter is a summary of the findings and provides suggestions for the study.