Abstract

The concept of punishment is historically described as a penalty for a deviant behavior and the criminal is supposed to be kept away from the society so that he/she may do no more harm to the members. It is also argued that, the punishment may have a moral deterrence lesson to the society. However, modern prisons are described as correction institutions and the criminal is supposed to undergo a reform through his prison days. In this context criminals are considered as human beings with individual dignity and they are to enjoy the human rights. Prisons are to be reforming centers and thus needs continuous reform and up gradations. Thus prison reforms have become an urgent agenda for the modern state.

Every society wants to reduce crime rates. The prison system is expected to reduce crime rates by reforming criminals and also by deterring the general public from behavior which is punishable by imprisonment. In India the prison system has improved significantly since independence. The state investment of time, energy and money for reformative or rehabilitative prison model has been demonstratively successful in preventing and controlling recidivism among prisoners. For the reform of prisons and prisoners in India, many steps are being taken. However, many of the reform initiatives fail to reach the beneficiaries. There is a set of channel blocks and a number of gatekeepers who prevent the effective realization of the reform objectives in prison. It is in this context, the present study investigates the prison reforms in the state of Kerala. The study traced out the evolution of prison administration system in Kerala. The impact of the reforms on the inmates in prisons was also investigated. Prison reforms have contributed significantly in shaping mental inclination towards social commitment of prison inmates in Kerala. It was found that prison reforms have made significant change in the infrastructure development of prisons in Kerala.

The study makes certain concrete suggestions for the improvement of prison system. Over-crowding of prisons can be tackled by reducing the population of under-trial prisoners by speedier trials in special fast-track courts. The vocational training system should be strengthened to suit the needs of prisoners. The rules regarding parole should be made more liberal. It is suggested that, the NGO’s intervention, religious counseling, family relation rapport creation are to be more participative to the inmates. The role of local self-government in the rehabilitation of prisoners is also highlighted.

Key Words - Channel Blocks, Crime, Gate-keepers, Punishment, Prison, Prison reforms, Rehabilitation