

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY AND CORRECTIONAL ADMINISTRATION

FIELD ACTION PROJECT ON 'SOCIAL WORK WITH UNDERTRIAL PRISONERS  
AT THE BOMBAY CENTRAL PRISON'

Report of S. Vijay Raghavan, social worker,  
for the period February to May, 1990

(Juvenile Ward : 16 to 23 years)

CONTENTS

- I Background
- II Description of work
- III Process-related issues arising out of worker's intervention

## I. BACKGROUND

### (1) Groundwork:

The project got off the ground in February, 1990 with the appointment of Shri S.Vijay Raghavan as social worker in the Juvenile Ward of the prison. The ward houses youths of the age group 16-23, segregated from adult prisoners in order to prevent their contact with hardened criminals.

A student of the department of Criminology and Correctional Administration, already placed in this section for field work, helped the worker in the initial stages to establish his credibility with the client group. Within a month's time the worker was finding his bearings; moving from the position of observer, he began identifying issues needing attention, establishing rapport and familiarising himself with the system. By the time the student social worker had left, having completed his fieldwork requirements (March '90), the worker had settled down. The pace was slow in the beginning, but it picked up rapidly with time.

### (2) The context :

This prison mainly houses undertrials, that is, persons being tried for various criminal offences in the courts of Bombay. On any day, the population in the Juvenile Ward is between 75 and 150. They are housed in a large hall, usually in an overcrowded condition, sleeping next to each other. There is a compound wall surrounding the hall. The inmates have the liberty to move around within the premises of the compound wall between 10.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., and again between 3.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. They are kept locked inside the hall at all other times. Breakfast (consisting of barley) is served at 8.00 a.m., lunch (consisting of rice, chappatis and vegetables) at 10.30 a.m. and dinner at 3.30 p.m. A TV and carromboard comprise the prisoners' entertainment. Meetings with family members are allowed once in a week, and with lawyers at stipulated hours. Postage and paper are provided free of cost but all correspondence is censored for reasons of security. Money orders with an upper limit are allowed every month with which prisoners can buy items of daily consumption from the canteen. Home food is allowed on a daily basis. No undertrial prisoner can be forced to work,

and if an inmate voluntarily takes up work he is paid wages for the same. (Prison chores and duties are carried out by convicts.) These facilities are permitted to the undertrial because of the special status he enjoys under the law, i.e. every accused is presumed innocent until proved guilty. It is found that most undertrials are in prison for the only reason that they do not have suitable sureties to bail them out.

The average stay of a prisoner could, on a rough estimate, be six months in ordinary IPC cases, but longer in cases of serious offences being tried in the sessions court. (Most cases tried in the metropolitan courts of Bombay take anything between three to six months.)

During this entire period every prisoner, more or less spends an idle life - sleeping, gossiping, quarrelling, or watching TV. His companions are those who are with him inside for similar offences, with similar backgrounds or lifestyles (differences notwithstanding). In this stagnant ethos a process of criminalisation can be observed, whereby negative values and anti-system attitudes are developed and reinforced. In the absence of positive reinforcements in the direction of an alternative legitimate lifestyle, this ethos pushes vulnerable persons towards viewing crime as an acceptable way of life and the possibility of succumbing to this idea seems high. At least, the struggle is visible to the worker.

(3) Preliminary Observations About Inmate Population :

The socio-economic status of a major section of the ward population is very poor. The very fact that these persons are not out on bail implies that they have poor support systems and lack necessary resources. Very often, they cannot afford the services of a lawyer. Coming from a low educational background, they lack knowledge about the legalities of their case and about the nitty gritty of the criminal justice system. Additionally, being often runaways from their homes, they lack the necessary family support or have weak family ties. Most of them have been arrested for ordinary IPC crimes like theft and pickpocketing, or simply on suspicion.

The second major group of prisoners consists of those who have come in for major offences such as murder, grievous hurt, dacoity, drug related crimes, etc. They are inside either because their bail orders have not been passed, or the amounts are so high that an ordinary person cannot avail of the facility. Usually such persons

enjoy family support because of the sheer seriousness of their cases. Sometimes, the support comes from the gangs of which they are a part.

The third category of prisoners comprises of the habituals, or professional criminals for whom crime is a way of life. Such persons are acclimatised to the prison environment, considering prison to be an occupational hazard. They understand their case details quite well, and know how and at what stage to manipulate the law to their advantage. Their families have either accepted their criminality and hence extend all possible help in an objective manner, or have completely rejected them and consequently turned them out of the house. In the latter situation such criminals have built an alternative support system in the criminal world or have a good network of friends. Sometimes, support comes through a symbiosis between family, criminal connections and friends' circle.

It must be noted here that none of these three categories form watertight compartments and the presence of characteristics from all three categories in one individual is a distinct possibility. The categorisation has been done from a conceptual point of view and for the purposes of operationalising the worker's functions and role in prison.

(4) Location :

The location of the worker in the system is that of a voluntary worker who has the sanction of the authorities for his presence. The effort is to make the system understand and appreciate the necessity of social work with undertrial prisoners. Frequent meetings with prison officials about cases being handled, taking their advice and help for optimum utilisation of prison services, and in general, spending time with them to understand and appreciate their perspective, has helped to a large extent, to achieve this objective.

## II DESCRIPTION OF WORK

The worker's role is being discussed under the following heads:

1. INDIVIDUAL CASES
2. GROUP ACTIVITIES
3. NETWORKING

### 1. INDIVIDUAL CASES :

Casework started right in earnest within 15 days of starting work. In the initial phase it implied more or less acceding to individual requests for informing family members about arrest, court dates, etc. or writing the odd application to the court on behalf of a prisoner. These tasks were undertaken to some extent as credibility-gaining exercises. In the process the worker was also trying to assess the situation of persons in prison and identifying issues needing attention. Gradually, as his role and functions began to attain clarity, his work assumed the following dimensions :

- a) Extending emotional support and counselling the client with regard to his case, life style, alternatives, family relations etc. : -

This includes spending long hours with a client, trying to understand and empathise with his life situation. The worker has to be careful not to identify with the client, which can easily happen in a deprived environment like prison. Listening and facilitation of client's expression are two important functions that the worker performs.

- b) Encouraging the prisoner to spend his time more productively in prison : -

The various activities taken up were arts and crafts, reading, writing and the staging of a skit. The drawing and crafts programme was started by the student social worker from TISS placed in the ward and this activity was continued by the worker. The worker provided paper, pencils, cardboard, cloth, gum and ideas in terms of designs - as well as the necessary moral support - and thus encouraged the boys to try out new things. A number of cardboard posters were made with the help of pebbles collected within the ward complex by an imaginative prisoner.

Reading is another activity which the worker encourages. In this regard the worker had made efforts to get the prison library opened. Initially he faced resistance from the prison staff for fear of the loss or destruction of books. However, the new superintendent has himself taken the initiative in this regard.

The worker has been able to motivate an habitual offender to write his autobiography. Apart from giving insight into possible reasons for a 'normal' human being becoming a criminal (and thus contributing to data on the subject), this activity has enabled the worker to develop a firm client-worker relationship allowing for intensive discussions. It has also helped the client to examine his past and think about his future.

Written and directed by a convict warder and enacted by 7 of the boys chosen by the director himself, a skit was staged which dealt with the reformation and rehabilitation of a criminal. It also dealt with the aspect of the criminalisation of a first offender, bringing into light the vulnerability of such a person. The skit was well received in the ward and also appreciated by the superintendent and staff of the prison.

c) Maintaining/reviving contact with the family, or other significant persons in the prisoners' environment (school, friends, neighbours, elders, etc.)

This includes visits to the client's family, his immediate environment, his school, and meetings with important persons in his life. One objective of these visits is to increase the worker's data base on the client. This helps him arrive at a more balanced picture about the person, about his vulnerabilities as well as his potential for change. The other objective is to mobilize support for the client which he will need in the pre/post release phase.

d) Making applications to the court on behalf of the client, meeting police officials, magistrates in courts and probation officers to speeden up or affect the decision-making process :

The worker regularly writes applications to court on behalf of the client. These could be for :

- i) pleading guilty
- ii) request for probation
- iii) expediting the trial
- iv) request for transfer of personal property from the police station to judicial custody.
- v) explaining the facts of the case as narrated by the client.

The objective of making these applications is to compensate for the absence of legal aid, and also the inability of most prisoners to assert themselves in court (for a variety of reasons). It is a service offered to the client, keeping his legal rights in mind, and contributes to the overall humanization process that the project sees as its objective. Such an approach is the foundation for the work of corrections, as it creates a positive relationship between worker and client.

Sometimes the filing of applications is followed up with a discussion of cases with the concerned magistrates. The worker identifies problem areas in a particular case, eg. delay in disposal, consideration for probation, plea for innocence, and discusses the matter with the magistrate in his chamber. The worker may also appear and speak on behalf of the client in the witness box at the request of the magistrate. It must be noted here that the worker takes up a case with a magistrate only after sufficient investigation and after he is sure of his facts. At times the matter is resolved at the level of the Judicial Clerk or the Interpreter.

Where a particular case has been referred to the probation office by the court for consideration of release on probation, and the case happens to be the worker's client, he has met the probation officer concerned and given him information about the client. In one case, the worker did the work of liaising between the court and the probation office. His meeting with the magistrate resulted in the case being referred to the probation department. The court, anticipating delay on the part of the probation office, authorized the worker to deliver the referral letter to the department and bring the report, after due enquiries by the P.O., to the court on the next date of hearing.

The worker has met senior as well as concerned police officers with the objective of :

- i) gathering more information about the case, and
- ii) working out a rehabilitation plan with the help of the police.

This includes trying to minimise the possibility of repeated police arrests on suspicion, finding out job avenues with police assistance, and maintaining joint supervision over the client.

e) Maintaining contact with sentenced prisoners (keeping avenues for further work open) :

With some clients a more long-lasting relationship develops. As the client starts developing trust and confidence in the client-worker relationship he moves into a phase whereby he gets more interested in what the worker can do to help him after release,

rather than getting the worker to expedite his release. He gets interested in what the worker's job is, where he stays and how can he be contacted, rather than what the bail amount is, whether he can get probation, etc. The worker on his part encourages this movement in the relationship. His focus also shifts, because the pressure that was on him to get the client released is taken off and he is now free to concentrate on the 'person' rather than the 'prisoner'. What now develops is a more realistic interaction: the worker and the client, being interested in each other, freely discuss a variety of issues. Thus even if the client gets a sentence and is transferred to another prison, the worker is able to maintain contact. Letters become an alternative means of communication.

f) Post-release follow up :-

One of the main aims of the project is to explore the possibility of post-release follow up. It is being increasingly realised that cases get 'lost' after their release from prison, and a good relationship between client and worker ends abruptly. One would need to look into what happens to an individual after he is released: what kind of influences act on him, who are the significant persons in his life and what are the pressures he faces as well as identify the kind of support he enjoys. A client may be quite serious about change when in prison, but these intentions may change once the above factors start acting in a dynamic environment. Besides, the project has been able to offer few concrete alternatives in terms of opportunities, being itself in a fledgling stage. (Exploration is going on and resources are being identified.)

The strategy adopted by the worker so far has been to leave his address with the client after he feels that sufficient input has gone into the relationship, and asks him to get back to the worker after release. No promises are made but willingness to work together is shown sufficiently. Having helped the client towards a fair trial, better prison services, improved family ties, and having opened up possibilities of rehabilitation, the worker feels the client should make the next step forward, based on the principle of self determination. (So far, one client has renewed contact with the worker after release.)



## 2. GROUP ACTIVITIES :

Every worker placed in prison will have to face up to the reality of group living. Boys often share even their undergarments with each other. Deprivation coupled with the pains of imprisonment together induce feelings of a shared common life, creating a bond which sometimes develops into deep friendships later outside prison. Groups get formed on the basis of type of offence, frequency of offences committed, personality factors and also around socio-economic parameters like language, educational status, ethnic background, financial resources, etc. It is as if group formation is natural to the setting. Perhaps this is particular to the juvenile barrack, assuming that peer influences are more significant for this age group.

Given this context, the worker's presence also results in the formation of a group. This group is a mixed one, its members ranging from habituals to first-timers, from the partly-educated to the illiterate, those from well-to-do families as well as those of poor economic status. There is, to start with, one common factor: each member enjoys a personalised relationship with the worker. The worker has either written an application or paid a home visit, given legal advice or discussed the case with the magistrate, provided a notebook to write in or craft material to make something with, or simply provided moral support by listening to each one's life story.

Thus, every time the worker enters the barrack, all who look up to him for support or want something of him gather around. Everyone does not come everytime: sometimes a boy is asleep, or simply too bored to come and talk. But there is a core group which is always there as a support base for the worker. The worker also depends on their emotional and moral support and assistance in his work. New clients get introduced to the worker and his role through these boys. Useful group discussion has taken place on a range of issues such as police harassment, role and methods of police, facilities in prison, constituents of a fair trial, legal aid, prisoners' rights, issue of guilt v/s the owning of responsibility, relations with family, friendship, attitude of society towards criminals, rehabilitation and future lifestyle.

The group has also been used to encourage talent and the positive expression of feelings. and stimulate creativity through art and crafts. Itt must be stated that such activities are on the wane as the worker's caseload has increased (resulting in more home visits, police station and court visits). Consequently, less time is being spent in prison. However, the worker is conscious about the importance of group work here and spends time with the group whenever he can.

### 3. NETWORKING:

#### a) Gaining legitimacy within the Criminal Justice System :

By introducing the role of the social worker vis-a-vis undertrials the project has undertaken to work with the system that is, by working from within. For change to come from within, the system must be able to genuinely understand the role and usefulness of the project. Once the authorities are convinced, that we are there to help and not to interfere, cooperation will be forthcoming. Coupled with a non-confrontationist attitude, there has to be a no-nonsense approach by the worker towards the job at hand. Keeping an open mind, he has to constantly look for data and base his work on it. Every visit that he makes, every discussion that he has, every job that he does adds to his data base. Attitudes, assessments and style/strategy of functioning need to be a finely tuned response to these experiences. There is no place for preconceived notions or personal prejudices. One believes that if one works with total honesty and a professional approach, results would come in terms of gaining legitimacy and credibility within the system.

The permission obtained from IG of Prisons was the first step towards the gaining of this legitimacy by giving the worker a semi-legal status. The association with the Institute through the last five years of student fieldwork and now the present project have given familiarity and continuity to the concept of social work in prison. Daily attendance and interaction with staff and inmates has helped the worker being increasingly accepted as part of the system. For example he is no longer asked about the purpose of his frequent visits.

The support extended to the project by changing prison superintendents has been another factor in establishing the credibility and legitimacy of the role of the worker in prison. The worker has free access to the superintendent's office with regard to any problem that he faces in course of his work. Maintaining a balanced approach, not getting carried away by the sheer desperation of the client group and appreciating the security functions of a prison has helped achieve this rapport

with the superintendent,

The tangible and visible aspects of the legitimacy granted to the worker's role can be seen through the facilities provided to him: an office space in a room used occasionally by one of the jailors, provision of a table, a chair, a trunk and stationery. Free access to all prison records, and the help rendered by the staff in interpreting these records, are other indicators of the cooperative relationship that has developed between the system and the project.

Apart from the prison administration, there is a need to establish networks with other agencies related to the CJS. Being the 'accused', the client group is engaged with the police and the courts in a relationship mutually antagonistic for the most part. The police suspects the accused of involvement in a crime, and is trying to get him behind bars. The accused, on the other hand, usually views the police as an agency which is bent on harassing him. Sometimes there is an earlier history of negative experiences. This situation is true also as far as the relationship between the court and the accused is concerned, but to a lesser degree. Delays in trial, a huge case load, unethical behaviour by lawyers, and corruption are all contributing factors to the growing mistrust about the legal machinery.

One of the major lacunae with the criminal justice system that is increasingly being realised is that the system in operation fails to distinguish between the habitual and the first offender, between a pickpocket and a robber, between a murderer by circumstance and a professional killer. The system, no doubt, is sensitive to this issue, but the pressures of a large case load reduce the chances of meting out individualised treatment. People get reduced to one diffused category - criminals. All of them are huddled together, humiliated in the same manner and made to go through the same delays in court. Many of them do not need this harsh treatment. What they need is a justice system with a human face. Instead of resulting in genuine guilt and remorse, such processing leads to a hardening up in attitude - it pays to be smart, one must learn how to beat the system. Ironically, functioning within the context of economic and social disparity the system seems to be unintentionally encouraging the petty criminal to get into 'big time' crime. Once you grow into a 'big fish', you can evade arrest, afford the services of a good lawyer who will help you wriggle out of the trickiest of situations. If you are small fry, then you are

treated roughly, put behind bars, cannot go out on bail due to lack of resources and probably end up with a conviction. It may be likely that the frustration and anger that arise within the system from this unintended consequence get transferred back to a captive group which may not deserve such a reaction. In this vicious cycle, sweeping generalisations, ill-feeling and mistrust become the order of the day.

In this entire process a major objective of the criminal justice system, namely reformation, gets sidelined. It is one of the objectives of the project to demonstrate that the individualised treatment of offenders, and also projecting the 'human' face of the system will facilitate reformation. Networking with the CJS hence becomes basic to the overall strategy of the project. Here again, the approach consists of adopting a non-confrontationist stance, understanding and appreciative of ground realities. Further, avoiding identification with any part of the system and keeping an open mind on issues has paid rich dividends in terms of the response of both the system and prisoners to the project. This fact, that the worker enjoys the status of being both an insider as well as an outsider, is essential to the design of the project. An approach aimed at arriving at a wholistic picture of a particular situation leads to a willingness to listen, and explore all options. The worker is not there to interfere in anyone's work nor is he threatening their status, but simply seeking the cooperation and assistance of all concerned to arrive at a mutually agreeable definition of the situation.

This approach has helped the worker establish working relationships with police officers, magistrates, court officials and probation officers. He has easy access to officials, can get relevant information from them, discuss specific cases and involve them in rehabilitation plans. He has found in the system, to a large extent, a willingness to open up to the worker's efforts.

b) Networking with Other Related Organisations/Resource Persons :

Any attempt towards rehabilitation of prisoners would necessarily mean gathering as much support as possible for the client from the larger community. Networks to facilitate this process are being established with various individuals and organisations. A positive response has been forthcoming due to various individual interests/reasons. With some, it has been the cause or plight of prisoners that has appealed, with other it has been the credibility of the Institute, while with still others it has been a matter of inter-organisational coordination between NGOs. Most often, it is the sheer novelty of the project that has appealed the most.

Children's Aid Society, the Coordination Committee for Vulnerable Children, Sneh Sadan as well as committed and responsible members of society like Mr. P.D. Kunte and Mr. Madhu Rao have all come offering help in the areas of :

- 1) Information on previous history of clients
- 2) Shelter
- 3) Rehabilitation
- 4) Financial assistance for prisoner's welfare fund
- 5) Positive support to released prisoners.

### III PROCESS-RELATED ISSUES ARISING OUT OF WORKER'S INTERVENTION

#### 1. Referral of Cases :

By and large inmates come forward on their own with requests for help. Sometimes an inmate who is familiar with the worker introduces a shy or reticent boy to him. The issue at hand is that there may be inmates who are so reserved that they may never come forward, and may be altogether missed by other inmates too. In such a situation, is not the worker's role to approach all the inmates rather than wait for inmates to come to him ?

Inside the barrack, the worker makes every effort to ensure that he is seen as being available to any prisoner who wishes to approach him. He does not sit in a fixed place everyday but randomly chooses different spots. This is because subgroups in prison have their own 'territory' and the worker, on his part, would like to avoid identification with any single subgroup. He takes pains to smile at anyone who he thinks is new to the barrack, to give the message : "I am available if you need any help". Sometimes boys may make fun of a newcomer; the worker consciously distances himself from any such event/process for the above reasons.

The logic behind this entire exercise is to give clear messages of availability on one hand, and to facilitate the process of self determination on the other. A new inmate might initially just hang around while the worker is talking to others. The worker is conscious of being closely observed both as a person, the way he sits and behaves with inmates, and in terms of statements he makes and solutions he offers. Gradually, the new inmate starts smiling, nodding, talking and finally comes up with his request. The worker here perceives a clearly discernable movement towards him, and allows the process of relationship-formation to take its time. This meets with the social work principle of voluntary participation in

the problem-solving process and, of course, makes the work much easier.

2. Worker's Inability to Approach All Inmates :

Apart from the above mentioned reasons, the worker's inability to reach out to all prisoners is one more reason why he has adopted the policy of "wait for the inmate to come to you". This inability to reach out to everyone arises from two factors :

The first is the time factor. The prisoner-worker ratio being as high as 100:1; the caseload is very heavy. The appointment of one more worker, therefore, is necessary. The situation is such that the worker is hardly able to meet the needs of all who come to him. So going up to an inmate to ask him if he needs help is difficult. The most that the worker can do is to be observant and look out for someone who seems shy and hence not likely to come upto the worker. Even here, the desperation in prison is so high that although a person may be hesitant, if his need is great he will break barriers and come to the worker. When he comes, the worker must ensure that he makes the person comfortable, and this the worker does by his personality, behaviour and words.

The second factor is that some prisoners, especially habituals or those in for serious offences, give a clear message to the worker that they do not need either his company or his assistance. The worker's interpretation of this message is as follows : The prisoner seems to be saying that he does not feel that worker can affect any of the dimensions of his situation - case, family, conditions in prison, etc. Now the worker may not fully accept this view and is sensitive to the fact that certain inputs on his part may alter the picture. But he does not have the time to work with such a person. He feels he is morally bound to attend to such inmates who have come to him for help, first. He may feel that, professionally, working with an involuntary client would be a more useful and satisfying experience from the point of view of corrections. But his hands are tied by a heavy caseload.

It must be pointed out that the worker does not ignore such people. He tries to befriend them. Some of them are part of his support system in prison. He takes their advice in legal matters, or discusses the logistics of rehabilitation, or the attitudes of the CJS towards the offender with them. Through various indirect methods, the worker here is trying to give the message that "I may not accept your interpretation of the situation you are in, and yet that will not prevent me from building a relationship with you. I

would like to be your friend without any conditions attached". At the same time the worker is introducing various ideas - like an alternate way of life, family reconciliation, rehabilitation, - through discussions, hoping that the 'tough' prisoner would be receptive to them at some stage and come to the worker for help. The worker could then make a positive intervention. Till then, the message is: "I am available if you need me".

3. Resistance of worker to some prisoners' requests for help:

The worker has found himself at times uneasy with, or unwilling to respond to, certain requests for help, especially in relation to contacts with the outside world. This is usually in relation to prisoners who are habituals, and do not appear to be open to the question of changing their lifestyle. The difficulty arises because the worker sees himself as representing the positive values in the criminal justice system. This perspective also permits him to work towards remedying lapses in the system as he feels that respect for the system must be ensured. Therefore, despite the fact that the worker is clearly making himself available for help in a number of areas, if a prisoner does not indicate a desire to change but seems to merely want the worker's help for expediting certain matters, the worker feels 'used'. This, however, does not mean that the worker has closed his mind to the individual, but that he requires some time to understand his own feelings and decide whether even such requests for help are legitimate or not. Two examples here may indicate the difficulties in the process of decision-making and how they were resolved :

- 1) A boy working for an illicit liquor vendor asked the worker to make a visit to his employer who would bail him out. The worker asked him if any of his family members were residing in Bombay. He said that two of his brothers were staying in Bombay; one owned a tea shop and the other a grocery shop. He had fought with both of them over his deviant ways, and now for him to go back for help would be to lose prestige. He would rather remain in prison. At the same time his desperation was apparent in the manner in which he was pressurising the worker to go to his employer. The worker assured him that he would speak to his brothers in such a way that they would not taunt him about his past, provided he decided to change his ways. Help and support in starting life afresh would be given to him. The worker pleaded with him to

it was also the issue of what values he represented in prison and the effect that such a visit would have on other prisoners. All the work that he was doing to make an alternate lifestyle look plausible would be nullified. At the same time, there was sympathy with the boy's situation and a desire to help him. The worker was in a real fix.

It was the inmate group that rose to the occasion. The worker was amazed by the way in which the group came out very strongly against the boy. The members told him that the worker was no pimp to accede to requests on any terms and conditions. He represented some values and principles and was working towards a pro-social change in inmates; there should at least be an effort on the part of the inmate to explore the possibility of an alternate lifestyle. They came down heavily on the boy for having a closed mind. The group had decided - for the worker - that the latter would go only to the boy's brothers and not to his employer. All that the worker had been trying to introduce in the minds of the client group through many subtle ways came out in the open in such a crystal-clear manner that he did not know how to react to this response of the group. The worker eventually did not make the visit because to back out now would have had disastrous consequences.

- 2) The second case was that of an habitual offender who was observed to be bossy and manipulative. He wanted the worker to make a home visit to pass a message. The place was very far and the workload was particularly heavy at that time. The worker was also very involved in two cases who were seriously exploring the idea of a fresh start in life. Though, objectively speaking, there could be no objection to making a visit for the boy, emotionally and physically the worker was under strain and getting the same feeling of being 'used'. He felt irritated by the boy's persistence and slightly sarcastic comments.

One day the boy came up and said he had been sentenced to two years imprisonment (or Rs. 6500 fine) and requested the worker to make a visit at least now. Suddenly, the worker's sympathies went out to him; the pressure experienced in fighting his adamant ways and his closed mind was released. The court had passed its judgement, thereby conveying the same message the worker wished to convey. It would be inhuman not to go to his house any more.



The home visit proved to be extremely fruitful. The family offered a wealth of information about the boy's past life. The father was fed up of his ways, but was willing to give him one last chance to change after his release. He wanted the worker to intervene. The worker gained considerable insight into the reasons for the boy's deviant ways, and was subsequently able to develop a meaningful relationship with him. The client was so grateful for this visit (he had almost lost hope) that he responded beautifully to the worker subsequently. The relationship ended rather abruptly because he was transferred to Nasik Central Prison, but follow up is possible after his release as there is now access to his family. This case taught the worker that the most closed of persons can open up in a matter of moments provided you are able to strike a chord in his heart.

#### 4. The Issue of Authority :

The prison setting imposes on the worker the position of a person in authority. The existing staff-inmate culture reinforces the fact that in prison any request of a prisoner that is acceded to is almost like a favour done to him. He cannot demand anything. Anyone who is nice to him is being kind to him and hence he must be given due respect. His life in prison revolves around obeying orders without questioning. Discipline and obedience are the order of the day.

The worker, who sees his role differently, is constantly struggling to distance himself from this culture. He tries to give the clear message that for him all are equal. The worker is being paid for what he is doing and it is not a favour he does to prisoners or their families. Prisoners have the right to demand accountability from him. He is like an elder brother or a passive guide at the most. He is also creating awareness about prisoner's rights. In spite of the fact of being law violators, they have a right to be treated like human beings. This entire exercise becomes difficult when all the symbols of authority behave in a diametrically opposite manner. The worker is often referred to as 'Saab' or, occasionally, someone touches his feet out of gratitude. The worker gets very hassled at such times and tries hard to negate this process. He realises that this is a time-consuming process and only the adoption of a consistent approach over a sustained period can produce results, namely, a relationship of mutuality wherein both worker and client share responsibility. For it is believed that corrections is successful only when offenders are able to assume responsibility for self and others.

5. Legal Aid v/s 'Social Work' :

The worker realises that most of his time goes in arranging for legal aid and moving the CJS for his clients. His time is spent either in writing an application for a client, or meeting the concerned magistrate, or attending court or discussing a case with the concerned police officer, or taking advice from an advocate regarding future course of action, or convincing a particular P.O. about the merits of granting probation to a boy. He has little time left for constructive activities like arts and crafts, indepth study of a client's lifestyle, group discussions on a variety of topics, inviting a guest speaker in prison or even intense counselling sessions. He is often left with a feeling of dissatisfaction that he is neglecting the real work of corrections due to his preoccupation with legal aid, which is a matter of highest priority for the prisoner, because legal assistance is not available. He is unable to respond to other felt needs but must "start from where the client is". The worker tries, within his limitations, to reach a balance but once again feels that the presence of one more worker could help improve things. It is very important to just "be there" in prison and spend enough time with prisoners to understand their lifestyle and its characteristics without which no correctional work can be fruitful. The way things are at the moment, the worker is out on visits for 2-3 days in a week and feels helpless about it.