

Galabhet Program Impact Assessment

A joint initiative of the

Department of Prisons & Correctional Services
(Government of Maharashtra)

Tata Trusts
&
Prayas

(A field action project of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences)

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Prayas

SOCIAL WORK IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

A Field Action Project of the Centre for Criminology and Justice,
School of Social Work

Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Welfare and Rehabilitation of prisoners in 5 central prisons of Maharashtra and 1 Borstal school

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Acknowledgments

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Foreword

“Galabhet” in Marathi, essentially means “to embrace each other”. The ‘Galabhet Program’ was first initiated by the Department of Prisons as a pilot program at the Central Prison Yerwada, Pune. The program was a process facilitated to ensure that prisoners, convicts in particular got an opportunity for a physically close interaction with their loved ones who were invited from beyond the prison walls. The brainchild of Dr. Bhushan Kumar Upadhyay, Addl. Director General of Police and Inspector General of Prisons and Correctional Services, Maharashtra, the ‘Galabhet Program’ is set to begin a trend that is likely to capture the attention of prisons across the country, particularly in lieu of their mandate of prisoner reform and rehabilitation. The pilot was launched in the year 2016, with the hope that the program will eventually be ingrained into every prison in the state of Maharashtra.

At the first glance, one may wonder why such intense focus on a program that facilitates meetings between prisoners and their families. After all, the prison system already has a regularised process for the families to visit their member (s) lodged inside. However, unless one has worked closely with the prisons, one cannot appreciate the relevance that this program holds particularly for the psycho-social wellbeing of the prisoners as well as their family members. One cannot also undermine the contribution that this program will make towards enabling a smooth transition for the prisoner from behind the prison walls to the family, community, larger society in which he will be expected to mingle and merge post his release.

The brief assessment study on the ‘Galabhet Program’ was intended to catch a glimpse of the program as it unveiled from its pilot stage. The present report seeks to highlight the preliminary impact, drawing from the responses of the prisoners, their families, officials involved in the process across all levels of the prison system, etc. The purpose is to appreciate that which is good and to explore that which needs to be added to the entire programs ‘process in order to make it more effective and replicable as well.

One cannot fail to acknowledge the combined efforts of Tata Trusts who extended their support to conduct the proposed study; the staff of the Pilot Project on ‘Welfare & Rehabilitation of Prisoners Project in 5 central prisons and 1 Borstal school in Maharashtra’ and ‘PRAYAS’; and not to forget the initiative and effort put in by the Department of Prisons itself who took the initiative and the ownership to conceptualise the program and ensured its implementation too.

Contents

Chapter No.	Chapter	Topic	Page No.
1.	Introduction	Background	1
		Galabhet – Concept	3
		Objective of Galabhet Program	3
2.	The Impact Assessment	Objective	4
		Methods and Tools	4
		The Process	5
		Data Analysis	6
3.	Key Learnings	Key areas of the Galabhet program	8
		Impact on individuals (prisoners)	9
		Impact as perceived by staff	10
		Impact on children/family members	10
		Systemic Impact	10
		Social Impact	11
4.	Role of social workers	Role of social workers in Galabhet program	12
5.	Children's Responses	To Galabhet Program	14
6.	Conclusion and Recommendations	Conclusion	16
		Recommendations for the Galabhet program	16
		Recommendations for the roles and responsibilities of various agencies	18
6.	Media coverage	08th Dec. 2017, MID-DAY, Mumbai	19

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

The one critical impact of incarceration as a form of punishment is the effective isolation of the individual from the world beyond the prison walls. The purpose of such isolation is the reform and rehabilitation of the individual who has been in conflict with the law. However, what one fails to acknowledge is the impact that the isolation has, not just on the individual but also on the family, community and the society at large.

Every individual carries on their mind the constant “unknowns” of the world outside the prison walls. They are oblivious of the condition of their families; struggles of their near and dear ones; experiences both of joy and sorrows that their families are undergoing and many other such aspects that are critical for their psycho- social wellbeing. It is a constant state of tension, perhaps not visible on the outside yet undoubtedly prevalent on the inside. A telephone call spanning over a few minutes, every week to speak to their friends and family is hardly enough.

The physical isolation also brings in its wake, the lack of critical physical contact – the crucial hug that can comfort, the warmth of holding the hands of a loved one transmitting courage, strength and the like or even the joy of being able to hold a child close to the bosom and express love. Innumerable studies have reiterated the need of the human touch in ensuring a person's mental and emotional well-being. Unfortunately a bi-monthly mulakat (visit) from across the zig-zag fence in the visiting room, leaves no such opportunity. Given the lack of physical infrastructure in prisons as a whole, the restrictive and overcrowded atmosphere in the mulakat section belies all hopes for a prolonged conversation, a simple shake of the hand or for that matter even being able to listen to the voice of the loved one in the midst of the teeming crowd of inmates and visitors. The mulakat sections are more likely to sound like a market place, where voices are raised to be heard within a set time and restricted number of people.

Similarly, families too face the same agony. Many a time families that have travelled long distances, making overnight journeys are left with shortened interaction across the fence. Children caught in the crowd can hardly sense the touch or hear their parent's voice. Sometimes families reduce the visits disheartened by the conditions they face during the mulakat in addition to their existing ordeal of the journey and the other expenses that are incurred. Many children have grown without actually knowing or feeling what their father, mother or any other loved ones are like. The gaps between the prisoner and the family only widens over a period of time. The one group that faces the effect of incarceration very harshly are the children of prisoners.

The agony of the parents and the child not being able to communicate is unimaginable, particularly when both the parents are behind bars. Families lodging the children outside make the decisions. Some families think that bringing children to prison might have adverse effects on their minds, while in some cases, the children themselves have witnessed the crime and it is therefore considered dangerous to take them to the prison. Sometimes, children themselves refuse to go to the prison out of their own fears and concerns.

The challenges of children placed in institutions such as government/non-government hostels, boarding schools or ashram schools, due to lack of resources for sustenance, education, absence of guardians because of the imprisonment of the father and the mother also needs to be considered. Government Regulations about arranging regular meetings between these children and their parents in prison exist on paper. However, mechanisms to operationalize them are poor, and hence such meetings rarely take place. There are cases where prisoners have not met their children for long durations, ranging from 7 to 10 years. The implications for prisoners who have been incarcerated due to involvement in the death of a family member, relative, neighbour, person in the same village, etc. is even more far reaching. They are not just isolated but also practically abandoned by one and all. One can only imagine the impact on their mental and emotional health in the long run once they step out of the iron gates.

One needs to understand that for a prisoner, the family alone is a channel to connect to the fast changing world outside the prison walls. When that critical link is affected, the spiral downwards begins. Not only does it affect them physically, mentally and emotionally but it also creates a widening rift between them and the communities that are meant to go back to. Rehabilitation is not a process that begins when a prisoner is released from the prison. It is a process that needs to be set in motion when a person steps into prison either as an under trial or a convict. In this context, ensuring the critical link and connection with the families, near and dear ones becomes one of the core areas of focus in rehabilitation of prisoners.

In fact the Prison Manual has the scope to provide for various measures focusing on the rehabilitation of prisoners. *According to the Maharashtra Prison Code 1979, Chapter*

XXXI Facilities to Prisoners, Rule 6, Section ii, Non-Statutory Rule (iv) (h), the Prison Superintendent, for the purpose of rehabilitation and other such reasons can take initiatives in implementing special measures for the welfare of the prisoners.

The Galabhet program is not a mere extension of the mulakat system but a platform that has enabled both short term and long term effects for the prisoner, their family and in the days to come for the community as a whole.

1.2 The Galabhet Concept

In the light of the various aspects mentioned above, Dr. Upadhyay conceptualised the scheme and conducted a pilot in the Central Prison, Yerwada, Pune in the year 2016, under the aegis of the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Prisons (Western Region) and the efforts of the Superintendent of Prison, Central Prison, Yerwada. The entire team, under the able leadership of Dr. Upadhyay translated the concept into action, effectively utilising the mandate and framework of the prison rules.

The current Galabhet Program is mainly directed towards prisoners who are serving life imprisonment. However, other category of prisoners including under-trial prisoners have also been extended the benefit of the scheme at the discretion of the prison authorities. In addition to allowing children living in the community being allowed to meet their parents in prison face-to-face, instructions have been issued to all prisons in the state on 26th July, 2016, by the Additional Director General of Police (ADG) and Inspector General (IG) Prisons, that children below 16 years of age living in government residential institutions for children, which fall under the purview of the Department of Women and Child Welfare vide a government circular no. Misc-2004/case no.53/ c-3, dated 31st January 2005, should be facilitated to personally meet their parents in prison under the innovative Program called Galabhet.

1.3 Objectives of the Galabhet Program

Uplifting the social and emotional strength of the prisoners: To create a positive feeling in prisoners that they are a part of the society and will eventually be able to re-enter it.

Uplifting the self-esteem of prisoners with respect to their families: To create a feeling that they are part of their families and that the family feels affection towards them, in order to promote a feeling of doing something worthwhile for their families.

Promoting positive thought processes within the prisoners: To create a feeling that they can hope for a new and better future and a confidence that they have the capacity to create their own future.

Promoting peace and unity between prisoners and the prison administration: To eliminate the anti-administration feeling among the prisoners through their changed behaviour and to encourage the prison administration to look at prisoners as human beings.

Enhancing and sustaining the emotional and mental stability of prisoners' children: To enable children of prisoners to lead life with self-esteem, to undo the stigma which they have lived with since childhood as being homeless/orphans/institutionalised children, etc. and help in their emotional and mental development.

Chapter 2

The Impact Assessment

2.1 Objectives

The brief and concise study on the program had a three-pronged objective:

1. To study the effect of the program on the prisoners.
2. To assess the extent of the change in the behaviour and conduct of the prisoners.
3. To suggest measures, based on the learnings of the study, to further enhance the impact of the program and plug in the gaps (if any).

2.2 Methods and tools

Primary and secondary sources of data were used in the study, the details of the same being as follows:

Primary sources

1. **Interviews:** Information from prisoners, their family members, prison staff and senior officers from the prison administration was collected through personal interviews based on interview schedules.
2. **Questionnaire:** After sample selection, the plan was to interview the participants personally. However, due to constraints of workload and time, some prison staff and officers were interviewed using a questionnaire instead of an interview schedule.
3. **Focus Group Discussions:** FGDs were used to collect information from multiple participants at the same time, facilitated by individuals who facilitated the assessment.
4. **Observations:** While collecting data for the assessment, the participants' non-verbal communication, expressions, surrounding environment was taken into account and recorded.

Secondary sources

Government Resolutions, circulars, published documents, research papers of government and non-government organizations, news and information on websites available in the context of the innovative 'Galabhet' Program were included in the secondary data collection process.

All resources used in the gathering information from secondary sources have been listed in Annexure 5.2

Sites of data collection

The assessment was conducted across Central Prisons located in seven administrative divisions in Maharashtra, as listed below:

1. Central Prison, Pune
2. Central Prison, Kolhapur
3. Central Prison, Nasik
4. Central Prison, Aurangabad
5. Central Prison, Nagpur
6. Central Prison, Amravati
7. Central Prison, Taloja

Sample selection: The details of the sample selected for the assessment are as follows:

Sample in the research study

S. No.	Respondent type	Number
1.	Administrative Officers/Staff	27
2.	Prisoners' family members	25
3.	Prisoners	239
	Total	291

10% of all male and female prisoners who had participated in the 'Galabhet' Program were selected in the sample. Out of them, 30% were selected to be included in home visits to meet their families. Interviews were conducted with prison staff and officers who were present at the time of the visits.

To make the assessment more comprehensive the sample selection focussed on including:

- Prisoners and family members who had never met before the 'Galabhet Program'.
- Prisoners who had been refused meetings so far.
- Prisoners who were meeting their children after a long time.

The researchers used a qualitative approach and method of data collection for the study.

2.3 The Process

The preliminary step for the study was obtaining the information about all the prisons where the program was conducted, along with the total number of prisoners

who were shortlisted to participate in it. Considering the magnitude of the numbers covered in the program, the facilitators narrowed down on the Central Prisons in Maharashtra. This was done based on the fact that it is the Central Prisons in each state that lodge convicts in large numbers and the preliminary focus of this program was the convicts.



Prisoners who had participated in the program were interviewed and the interviews were also extended to include home visits to meet families of the same prisoners. The prison officers and staff of various cadres were also engaged by means of informal conversations, in order to elicit their responses. Some of them preferred expressing their thoughts in writing rather than answering structured questions. They were given the leeway to do so, so that their voices could be captured effectively to be included in the study.

The interview guide for the prisoners was based on three broad areas:

1. The effect of the 'Galabhet' Program on the prisoners.
2. The role of the prison staff and officers and the effect of the Program on their work.
3. Expectations of the prisoners from the prison administration.

The interview guide for the prisoners' families was based on three broad areas:

1. The experience of meeting the prisoners before the 'Galabhet' Program.
2. The actual experience of the 'Galabhet' Program in the prison premises.
3. The emotional and psychological impact of the 'Galabhet' Program.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis began with the thematic analysis of all information obtained from the primary sources. The analysis largely focused on

- The physical, psychological, emotional and social effects on the prisoners.
- The prisoners opinion on the entire program, their assessment of its effect on them personally
- The families' experiences and their take on the entire program.
- The perspectives of the prison staff, their challenges, their observations on the impact of the program.

Chapter 3

Key Learnings

The significance of the Galabhet program can be grasped in all its totality only when one understands the context of mulakat or the visiting system in the prisons. The Prison Manual stipulates that every prisoner can meet their family members once a fortnight. The interactions during these visits are held across wired fences, in visiting areas that are over-crowded, with several prisoners standing at close quarters and interacting with family members across the fence. By virtue of the set-up and the lack of adequate infrastructure, the visiting sections in prisons look and sound like overcrowded market places. The number of prisoners waiting their turn to meet their kith and kin puts pressure on those who are in the process, to hasten their conversation and complete it so that the next prisoner can take their place and meet his or her family. Not only is it difficult to hear or hold a peaceful conversation, there is a severe dearth of physical touch especially between father/mother and children or even between the spouses.



While the set-up is limited by the systemic challenges of overcrowding and lack of infrastructure, the families on the other hand are disheartened by the visits and over a period of time, the number of visits begins to dwindle. The families reason the same by calculating the time, the cost and the effort it takes to make this possible. For those coming from poorer backgrounds, a day's labour is lost and not much gained by the entire ordeal.

Additionally it is indeed a harrowing experience for a child or an elderly person to see their loved one behind bars in such a condition. For many of them, it gets their imaginations racing to grasp what their family member must be facing behind the prison walls. The entire experience leaves a lingering bad taste and there are high possibilities of the gap between the prisoners and their family member widening over a period of time. The prisoners' only channel of support or contact with the world outside is effectively reduced or nullified. There are other instances where families do not visit the prisoners at all for various reasons – fear of being stigmatised, anger, stigma of paying a visit to the prison, etc. For all the above reasons one can only imagine the psycho-social impact on both ends, for the prisoner and their family as well.

The uniqueness of the Galabhet program is that it has been able to evolve within the

parameters of the existing systemic challenges and provide for the much needed psycho-social mechanism that is bound to have ripple effects, beginning with the life of the prisoner while serving sentence and even when he moves out into the society post his release. The Prisons Department has made provisions to contact families in advance, provide intimation on the program, arrange for a more common yet private space for interactions, allowed for critical elements of time and touch to be factored into the program and ensured that the quality of the meetings sees a shift that has thus far been not thought of in the area of reforms for prisoners.

The study reflects a multi-dimensional impact of the Galabhet Program. The program has provided avenues to enhance emotional and psychological well-being of the prisoners and their families but also brought about a positive impact on prison environment and the prison administration as well.

3.1 Key areas of the 'Galabhet' program

- **Conveying information about the program to families**

Typically, the information about 'Galabhet' is conveyed 15 to 30 days before the program through a letter or a phone call. This prior communication becomes very helpful, for families to plan their visit and particularly for those who commute from distant areas of the state. The time it would take for the journey, the costs entailed particularly when children accompany the family members are determining factors for the families. Moreover, there is a necessity to make arrangements for food and care of the elderly who are left behind at home. Therefore, it becomes necessary that the families be informed in advance in order to enhance the possibility of their visit.

- **Time allotted for the program**

The prisoners had varied experiences as far as the time allotted for the Galabhet program was concerned. Some mentioned that they were able to spend half an hour, some said they had an hour, while others said their interactions stretched for two or more hours to interact with their families. Prisoners who had less than two hours to spend with their families said that the time allotted was insufficient. Therefore an average time of two hours becomes necessary in order to derive maximum effectiveness from the program.

- **Topics Discussed**

The prisoners reported a wide spectrum of issues that dominated their conversations with the family members. The issues spanned from

- Financial difficulties
- Health condition of different family members
- Payment of fines
- Finances required to pay the lawyer's fees

- Family weddings
- Concerns about family's security,
- Issues related to relationships with extended family members
- Property, work, business, agriculture
- Opinions about the case
- Possibilities of release from the prison
- Children's upbringing, daughter's security, security of the house
- Financial planning for the future

However, they also reported that children's education and health, family's security and the prospects of the prisoners release dominated large parts of their conversation.

- **Emotions Expressed**

For reasons that are evident, the Galabhet program witnessed highly emotionally charged atmosphere. There was immense joy in meeting with the family at such close quarters, which was also expressed with tears that said more than words. Being able to emote with their near and dear ones is definitely a positive outcome of the program.

- **Staff Perceptions/Observations**

The staff perceptions and observations make an interesting note in their responses to the program. The staff unanimously agreed that the key objective of the Galabhet program was to create a peaceful environment in order to facilitate the meeting between the prisoners and their families. They mentioned that special care was taken to ensure that the families did not face any difficulties during the visit. However, they also expressed concern from a security point of view. One of their primary concerns was to ensure that the visitors were the genuine relatives of the prisoners. Another area of concern was managing the highly emotionally charged atmosphere on the whole. Considering the fact that the prisoners were meeting their families after a prolonged period at such close and open quarters, the staff mentioned security was a cause for concern. They emphasised that emotionally charged outbursts are quite likely to take place and sometimes staff intervention may be required to calm down either of the parties and to avoid any untoward incidents, likely to cause harm.

3.2 Impact on individuals (prisoners)

- Prisoners have reported an improvement in their physical well-being post the Galabhet Program. The wait spent in anticipation prior to the program and the memories of the times spent with their family members after the program has been reflected in an improved appetite, enthusiasm to work, greater interest in their routine tasks and completing the same with more efficiency.
- Families being the corner stone of the social structure, the Galabhet program

renewed the much-needed sense of belongingness for the prisoners. Prisoners reported a decrease in the sense of loneliness and sorrow that loomed because of the separation from their families. It also created optimism towards life and a sense of sympathy. Love replaced anger, jealousy and hatred, likely off shoots of prolonged incarceration.



- The optimism also created an anticipation and hope in their own future. A close physical interaction particularly with children, facilitated the prisoners to think about acquiring new skills, pursuing education and mentally exploring possibilities of productive areas of work after their release.

3.3 Impact as perceived by the staff

The prison staff reported a marked improvement in the mental and physical health of the prisoners, as observed from the changes in their attitudes and behaviours. Complaints of sleeplessness, headaches, stomach aches, etc. seemed to have reduced. Arguments with staff and strife among the prisoners themselves also declined. Prison staff observed that a sense of camaraderie was developing among the inmates; there is more adherence to orders, timely completion of assignments. Visits to the doctor for minor ailments has also reduced.

3.4 Impact on children/family members

The incarceration of either one of the parents or both the parents, leaves children feeling orphaned and abandoned and it is only fostered by the lack of opportunities to maintain the connect with the imprisoned parent (s). This experience is more profound for children who have been institutionalised post their parents incarceration. The Galabhet program has been able to bridge this gap. Irrespective of whether the children are lodged with extended families or in institutions, prior intimation, networking with local voluntary organisations to facilitate the availability of the child for the meeting, has indeed brought remarkable results for the children and the parents.

3.5 Systemic Impact

The systemic impact of the Galabhet program has been felt at different levels and in different ways for the prison administration. At its most basic level, the program has

quelled a negative atmosphere created as a result of the impact of imprisonment. Disruptive behaviours could place a great deal of strain on the already stretched and stressed prison staff. The Galabhet program has been able to create a more positive approach between the prisoners and the prison staff. By virtue of its very nature, the program has provided an opportunity for the Prison Administration to break free of its reputation of being stringent and not so sympathetic, to those placed under its control.

It is no secret that prison staff are over-worked due to lack of adequate human personnel and are also limited as far as their resources are concerned. Prisons are also at the constant risk of being subject to a lot of negative media attention. However, the Galabhet program has created a significant platform from where the Government's motto "corrections and rehabilitation" to be disseminated beyond the confines of the four walls. *The "chirping" of children's voices in the prison, their tearful embraces with their prisoner parents, has shown to evoke the "human" inside the khaki uniform and their eyes have often turned moist.*

As a result, while carrying out their duties of ensuring security in the prison, they are able to be professional and human simultaneously.

3.6 Social Impact

Prison is supposed be a place that provides an opportunity to individuals to reflect on their past and make attempts to re-assimilate within society. Isolation from their families, local communities and society at large is likely to make re-integration post their release challenging and difficult. However, regular contact with their families also facilitates a via-media to the world outside the prison walls. The required bridges to the world of incarceration and the world beyond the four walls, through the medium of their families is a good starting point for future re-integration.



Chapter 4

Role of Social Workers in Galabhet Program

One of the critical aspects of the study on the impact of the program has been the role played by the social workers in ensuring that the benefit of this program was maximized at all levels – for the prisoners, their families, children and not to forget the prison administration itself. The study has shown that at every level where the Prison Administration was likely to hit a roadblock, the social workers had stepped in to play not just the role of facilitators and mediators, but as catalysts whose contribution has yielded far reaching results for all the stakeholders involved. Their role at every step is elaborated to bring in their specific contribution in creating such an impact.

1. For inmates whose families are not able to meet them due to certain conditions (inmate cannot make a phone call, or the family cannot afford to travel to visit the inmate, etc.), social workers make a list of such prisoners, discuss it with the prison authorities, make the necessary phone calls or home visits and explain the concept of the Galabhet program to the inmate's family. In case the family is reluctant to meet the inmate due to some previous circumstances, the social workers counsel them. Similarly if the family cannot make the visit due to financial constraints, the social workers identify resources to take care of their travel needs. The social workers maintain constant communication with the families, right until the day of the Galabhet program.
2. For Children of Prisoners (COP) who are institutionalized for care and protection, the social workers, with permission from the prison authorities, contact the concerned officers from the children's institutions and explain the concept of the Galabhet program. They also request them to assist in bringing the children to the prison to meet their parents. An official application process is also completed for the same. This intervention by the social workers has resulted in some of the children's institutions agreeing to get the children to meet their inmate-parents. These institutions have been regularly bringing the children for the Galabhet program in order to facilitate the children's meeting with their parents.
3. In those prisons where the Galabhet program was not being implemented at all or was irregular in its frequency, the social workers with the help of the official circular issued by the Prisons Department and through meetings with the officials in those prisons, ensured that the program was initiated and also implemented regularly. This was possible due to the sustained follow up done by the social workers at the prison level, and the

project director at the Headquarter level. This resulted in initiating the Galabhet program for the first time in the female section of the Aurangabad prison as well as in the Taloja prison. Similarly, in the female section of Nagpur prison, the regularity of implementing the program improved after the social workers' intervention. The Galabhet program in the female section of Nagpur prison is conducted in the social worker's office and the female social worker takes the entire responsibility of successful implementation of the program.

4. The Social Workers provide counseling to inmates' families on the day of the Galabhet program. The formal procedures to be followed during the program are explained to inmates' families. Children are accompanied by the social workers inside the prison to meet their parents.

By the end of July 2018, 366 such meetings between prison inmates and their children under the Galabhet program were facilitated. To witness unity after a long spell of separation, and to see their emotions brimming during the meetings, is a highly touching experience. It is evident that the Galabhet program helps in bringing about a positive impact on the psychological well-being of the inmates.



Chapter 5

Children's Responses to the Galabhet Program

The impact of incarceration is felt most intensely by the children in the families of prisoners. The trauma of being separated from either a parent, both parents, grandparents or for that matter any loved one in the family, is rarely expressed in the language of the adult world. The language and expressions of children, quiet often speak louder and clearer than several words put together. The galabhet program became a platform for the children to express themselves, through smiles and tears, their questions and doubts, through the joy of receiving a hug from the inmate or even a simple snack received from the hands of the one person missing at home. If one were to summarise the impact in a single sentence expressed by every child, it was their longing to stay a little longer, their desire to come back the next time and the hope that the next galabhet will not be too far in the future.

The power of an affectionate touch by the father was dearer than any snack or sweet. While there were many little ones who held dearly to the memory of being given something to eat by the father or the mother, for this child, the one thing that stood out was that Papa had hugged them and gently kept patting the siblings. In fact, one of the siblings refused to free himself from the father's embrace, the reflection of a longing for an absentee father. But the promise of another time very soon, instilled hope in the little heart, giving him the courage to let himself go from the father's embrace.

The children quiet often repeated the assurance given by the incarcerated parent, particularly when the parent was the bread winner of the family before being imprisoned. The child's world perhaps secure until then is bound to have been shaken at its core. Every child was aware of the struggle of the single parent, struggling to hold the family together or struggling to make ends meet. For one of the children, soon to complete her schooling, the father's assurance that money will be sent from his wages in the prison, was music to her ears and her heart. Her young mind grappling with questions such as – what would happen next? Who would pay her fees? Will she have to discontinue her education or give up on her dreams? All these and many more, were being put to rest, knowing that her dad has it in control. As she shared – “Dad said he will send money home and he asked me to tell my mother that it is to be used for my fees only.” The assurance was enough for to make it through for the days ahead.

The isolation from a parent very often raises questions in a child's mind about whether a parent really cares. The child is impervious to the parents' circumstances, unable to understand why the mother or father is behind bars and not at home taking care of them. In such a scenario, even the basic enquiries about the child's daily routine, food intake, health, school, friends, all that matters to a child's world, goes a long way in enabling the child to know that the parent cares. One of the children

enthusiastically repeated every query his mother asked about him. The final good luck from his mother, for his computer exams and the snacks she gave him, meant she cared; where ever she was, she cared for him and that is all that mattered to the little one.

Surprisingly, for many children, being told to study well, to go to school regularly, being instructed to obey the parent back home or take responsibility of the other siblings, not cause trouble or even get into trouble at school, were words that reflected deep care and concern too. The fact that they mentioned it so specifically in their interactions with the researchers, was indicative of the impact those words were having on the child. It was an indication that their well-being was the parents' priority, irrespective of whether the parent was physical present with them at home or not.

It is also important to mention that not all interactions were simply one way and not reciprocated from the children's end as well. It was indeed heart rending to hear the child ask the first question to the parent – “Did you have your lunch? What did they give you to eat?” Yet another child was deeply disappointed that the father had so much to offer and he had not been able to get anything in return for the father. He left with the promise of making a special greeting card for the father on the next visit. Two other siblings, left making a solemn promise to their father that come what may, they would make it for the next galabhet too. It was indeed the father's turn to be assured of their unchanging love for him.

One other amazing aspects noticed among most children was their surprised looks and glances at each other. Like one of the children said – there are so many children like us. They also come to meet their father or mother who is in jail. It would perhaps not be too farfetched to say that it was the comfort of being together with peers, peers who came from experiences similar to theirs and whose parents were also where theirs were, unlike so many others who had both their parents at home. In fact, during the waiting period, many had started interacting with each other and for those who did not meet the next time, the father was asked – why did that uncle's son not come today.

The questions raised by the children opened the doors to all that was going on in their young minds, largely expressions of how the family member was actually being missed by the child. For example, one little girl had a barrage of questions about why her grandparents stayed with the policemen and that too in different clothes; why couldn't they come home with her, since it is not too often that her parents can set their work aside to meet the grandparents. It was simply but surely her way of saying –“I miss you both and want you home with me”.

Nothing can sum up the impact better than the experience of a child shared by a prisoner – “My child's joy on meeting me lasted for an entire week. I am told that she would not stop talking about her visit, about the talk she had with me and the snacks that I gave her. She shared her experience with everyone who came home. Now she is looking forward to the next visit.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The following are some of the salient points regarding the benefits or positive changes that have occurred due to the Galabhet program, as observed from the study.

With respect to prisoners

- Significant positive changes in the behavior of the prisoners has been observed
- Improvement in the physical, psychological and emotional health of the prisoners
- A positive attitude towards life is seen to take root among the prisoners
- There has been an increase in productivity of the prisoners

With respect to families

- Families have experienced more satisfactory meetings
- Although families had to overcome several obstacles to attend the Galabhet program, meetings with prisoners definitely gave them hope and joy.
- Families and prisoners felt re-connected as the prisoners are now able to participate decisions with regard to their families.

With respect to prison administration

- Although there is an additional strain on the prison administration to organize the Galabhet program, the resultant changes seen in the prisoners has proved to be motivational for the administration
- Attitude of the administration towards the prisoners have been transformed and there is a change in their perceptions of inmates as 'criminals' only to approaching them as 'human beings' too.
- The relations between the prisoners and the staff/officers has become friendlier and cordial, thus improving the atmosphere of the prison.

6.2 Recommendations for the Galabhet program

The role of the prison department in initiating and carrying the program forward has been an enriching learning experience. However, as the study reiterates, it is very critical for the long-term sustenance and success of this program, that the involvement of Social workers be keenly considered. The Social Workers hold the potential of contributing in areas where the prison department by virtue of its

challenges is likely to fall short. Streamlining the role of Social Workers as enablers and facilitators will ensure a definite and credible impact on the program.

- The duration of the Galabhet program should be increased to a minimum of two hours to allow a more satisfying experience.
- In the meetings held inside prisons, it is important that the individuals get a chance to talk to each other with greater clarity. Thus, it is important to have excellent communication facilities during the Galabhet program.
- The frequency of the program was once in 6 months during the time of this study. It is recommended that it should be changed to at least once in 3 months. Currently there are prisons where the frequency of the Galabhet program is twice a month.
- Galabhet should also be included for male and female prisoners who want to meet their grandchildren.
- Galabhet should also be allowed in special circumstances for women prisoners (as per the rules of the prison and at the discretion of the Superintendent).
- Girls and disabled children up to 18 years and boys' up to 15 years can be allowed to come inside prison for Galabhet.
- If both husband and wife are in prison, their children are granted permission to meet only one parent. This needs to change and they should be allowed to meet both parents.
- During the Galabhet program, the prisoners as well as the police staff/officers should be allowed to wear civil clothes instead of uniforms, so that minor children are not intimidated by the prison administration.
- Dates of the Galabhet program should be pre-decided and maximum efforts should be made to convey to the families as early as possible through social workers in order to increase the extent of the program as well as for better co-ordination.
- For children of prisoners who live in institutions, if the dates of the program are conveyed well in advance, the social workers can facilitate the Galabhet of children residing in institutions with their parents in prison.
- The venue of the Galabhet program should be fixed by the administration at a place which is most convenient from the point of view of implementing security measures. However, the environment at the program should be stress-free, pleasant and such that it enables enough privacy for the prisoners and their families for interaction.
- Refreshments for children and prisoners benefiting from the Galabhet program should be made available in all prisons at government cost so that the prisoners can feed their children with their own hands.

- The Galabhet program should be institutionalised in the form of a GR issued by the Home Department, to ensure institutionalization of this innovative and creative scheme.
- These recommendations should be made applicable to include under-trial prisoners, especially female under-trial prisoners and convicts serving shorter terms of imprisonment.
- The program should be implemented uniformly across all prisons in the state.

6.3 Recommendations for roles & responsibilities of various agencies

Police Department

- If the address of the prisoners' families cannot be located or if the family has relocated to another area, the local police station could be approached for help in tracing the family.

Women and Child Development Department

- Probation Officers (PO) working under the Probation of Offenders' Act, 1958, from the Department of Women and Child Development should regularly (once a week) visit the prison and discuss the problems of the prisoners.
- POs can convey the message about the Galabhet program to the prisoners' families and counsel the prisoners' children and family members about attending the Galabhet program.
- POs can help the family members by linking them with voluntary organizations to attain their financial help vis-a-vis travel expenses for prisoners' children to attend the Galabhet program.
- The POs can organise financial aid for the education of COP and inform them about the relevant government schemes (Bal Sangopan Yojana, Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana, etc.) that could be of benefit to them.

Voluntary Organizations

- Voluntary organizations should coordinate between the prisoners, the POs and the families of prisoners' to organise the Galabhet program.
- They should provide financial help if necessary for the prisoners' family members and children in order to take care of their educational and medical needs.
- They should be in regular touch with the families of prisoners and COP to provide socio-legal counselling from time to time.
- They should support COP living in institutions and facilitate meetings with their parents in prison.

Media Coverage

08th December 2017, MID-DAY, Mumbai

mid-day Friday, December 8, 2017 | www.mid-day.com | twitter.com/mid_day | epaper.mid-day.com

Jail inmates enjoy emotional reunion with their children

In a rare move, Talaja Jail authorities decide to get inmates to meet their children outside prison environment to help forge bond; sources say initiative to be held once every six months

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IN A rare gesture, Talaja Jail extended 12 inmates the opportunity to meet their children inside the jail premises yesterday. While authorities usually don't encourage kids to meet parents or relatives serving time in prison, jail superintendent Sadanand Gaikwad felt that there was a need to create a platform, for the benefit of the children.

"Often, kids are not aware that their fathers or mothers are behind bars. They also end up missing them a lot. We decided to allot a day, where the prisoners could meet up with their kids, and engage with them freely," said Gaikwad.

To begin with, the staff informed the 270-odd inmates about the initiative. Around 12 to 14 of them came forward. "After this, we got in touch with their family and scheduled a date for the meeting as per their convenience," added Gaikwad.

The meeting was held for an hour from 11am to 12pm in a hall within the premises, where breakfast was provided for everyone. "We also informed the staff against interfering," the superintendent said.

Rupesh Beekar, 39, who is serving imprisonment in a chain snatching case, was among the many inmates, who got to meet his four children.

"Mummy told me that my papa works as an electrician and that he would return home soon. We took a holiday from school to meet him. He promised to bring me chocolates, biscuits and toys," Beekar's nine-year-old



Prisoners seen enjoying breakfast with their kids in a hall within the Talaja Jail premises yesterday

'Often, kids are not aware that their fathers or mothers are behind bars. They also end up missing them a lot. We decided to allot a day, where the prisoners could meet up with their kids, and engage with them freely'

Sadanand Gaikwad, jail superintendent

daughter said.

Rupesh's wife, who accompanied her kids, said it was an emotional moment for her too. "I didn't tell my kids that their father was arrested. This is a good initiative.

Even if for a brief while, we felt like a family again," she added.

Saheer (name changed), a Class VII student, who lives in Raigad, said that it was the first time that he had seen his father. "My father is a busy man. He does vakalatnana for inmates, so he has never been able to come home," the boy said innocently. "But, he promised to return home soon, and even bring me a cycle," he added.

Sources said that the jail authorities plan to organise the programme once every six months.



'I didn't tell my kids that their father was arrested. This is a good initiative. Even if for a brief while, we felt like a family again'

Rupesh Beekar's wife



12
No. of inmates who got to see their children yesterday

