

# **Chapter I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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### INTRODUCTION

The present dissertation is a sociological study of street children in Howrah district of West Bengal. It aims to enquire about their socio economic background, underlying causes of leaving the home, their work, activities, nature of participation in informal economy; problems faced by them and of course their rehabilitation.

#### **The Background**

In an ideal family situation it is expected that a child would stay with his / her parents in a house. Child is innocent, energetic, enthusiastic and impressionable. S/he is always lovable and admirable. 'The child is no doubt happy in the familial and loving atmosphere of home. It is quite likely that he may be destructive in some of his activities and grow obstinate and peevish in the absence of proper guidance and midst of too many don'ts. There should be sweet reasonableness in the home environment to influence the growth of the child' (Vyas, 1939:157). A child certainly needs care and protection in the process of his/ her upbringing. Baker and Panter-Brick(2000) describe that a child is entitled to have a safe and secure environment and caring parents, only then a child can develop to his/ her full potential, in terms of educational achievement, economic security, healthy attachments and practices.

In reality the children of the marginalized and impoverished sections are the victims of the system where they are compelled to fight for their survival. Their family could not provide them their basic needs and requirements. Many of them

thus turned into street children. The inequality phenomenon has been well perceived by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) while addressing this problem. Being unprotected and uncared many children of impoverished families are compelled to move out from the family and reach at a vulnerable situation. They start staying in places like street, railway platform, footpath, under flyover, etc. leaving their parents behind. In this process the number of street children increases over time.

The critical mass of street children in developing world is growing, giving them 'a visibility difficult to ignore' (Cosgrove, 1990:185). Children are coming to cities in response to rapid urbanization and the 'bright-lights' syndrome, combined with reduced state capacity and socio-economic restructuring which has left families impoverished, forcing children to eke out a living on the streets (Payne, 2004). These children remain at the street with lot of vulnerability.

Of the varied cases of victims of modern city life the most pathetic is that of the 'street children'. The country as the foster-parent and the society, as the guardian, of the children of the city, are alike responsible for the causes that lead to their dependency, delinquency and degradation. These children as a community is deprived of family, secure housing and as a consequence of that, they are further deprived of education. They are socially excluded from the community( Srivastava, 2013:503).

The government of India has introduced several schemes for rehabilitation of the street children as laid down in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000. That includes restoration of those children from their vulnerability and put them to their family, adoption of the unwanted new born

babies, foster care of the orphan, semi orphan and destitute children, after care of the young adult and counselling of the young urchins. This Act gives special emphasis to the rehabilitation and social integration of the children and has provided for institutional and non-institutional measures for the care and protection of children. Non institutional alternatives include adoption, foster care, sponsorship and after care. This act also envisages a system of partnerships with local communities and local governments to implement the legislation (Sharma, 2010:353).

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in 2009-10 introduced a comprehensive scheme, the 'Integrated Child Protection Scheme' (ICPS) under which financial and technical support is provided to the State Government/UT Administrations. ICPS brings several existing child protection programme under one umbrella. Those include (i) Programme for Juvenile Justice (ii) An Integrated Programme for Street Children and (iii) Scheme for Assistance to Homes (SishuGreh) to promote adoption (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2012). The goal of this scheme is the prevention of destitution and withdrawal of children from a life on the street and their placement into national mainstream. This scheme provides shelter, nutrition, health care, sanitation and hygiene, safe drinking water, education, recreational facilities and protection against abuse and exploitation.

An agency was set up in 1990 to work as an autonomous body in facilitating adoption of children from poor families. It was suppose to regulates and monitors the working of recognized agencies engaged in intra-country and inter-country adoption. From a government report it appears that as against the target of

10000 adoptions to be completed during the first two years of the Eleventh plan, only 6254 adoptions were actually materialized. In a country where there are so many destitute children living in distresses circumstances this number was inadequate (Mid-Term Appraisal of the Eleventh Five Years Plan, 2011: 244).

### **Street Children: A Social Phenomenon**

The sense of euphoria that emanated from the 1979 International year of the child has almost completely dissipated as countries throughout the world have struggled with the effects of a worldwide economic recession. The stresses brought about by this recession have resulted in an abandonment of poor by the governments of almost every country, in favour of maintaining, or indeed even improving, the benefits accruing to the ruling elite. The evidence is overwhelming. Children, as a sub-class, have experienced a devastating downturn in social mobility. Poor children have become poorer and many children of the lower-middle class have become poor. Even more disappointing is that this development has been greeted with a stunning degree of apathy on the part of many of those responsible for framing social policy. For many others, such developments have been welcomed and deliberately used as a means of social control (Jupp, 1990:131).

In the rights based approach, the children should be in a position to formulate for them what their interest are, rather than to leave them to others to determine. Rights based approach is progressive and represents a welcome step forward from a dependency model of childhood. There are potential problems when it comes to address a subset of needs associated with street living children who are distinct from those living within well established social and political structures. It

is obviously true that most of the principles of the convention of the rights of the children are enshrined, in the childhood and family welfare, which ultimately conceptualized in the stable nuclear family in particular and joint family in general. In addition to that children can get care and protection from the blood relations as well as the non-blood relations.

Much socialization process also takes place outside of the family. It may true that many interventions of street children's rehabilitation model operates through the rescue approach which ultimately creates a dependency model. This defines that the rehabilitation of street children is being done within the institutional framework and such approach fails to challenge the social and political order. We may categorize the street children into two types i.e. the children who share the family responsibility and a section who are seen as truly abandoned. The second category is defined to include those with no contact and those with some contact with their families. Many street children have made a conscious decision to abandon their families for different reasons that may vary from escaping abuse, work and others. These children require a different form of protection within a different legal framework (Slater, 2000).

### **Street Children: The Nomenclatures**

The phenomenon of street children is not new in India. Many scholars have written about the street children and their misery. Street children are addressed with different nomenclatures such as rag pickers, homeless, *bhavaghure* (destitute), *bejanma* (bastard), *haghare* (homeless), runaway, throwaways in India.

In developing countries, like Kenya, they are called as *Parking boys*, in the Philippines they are known as *Pogey-boys*, in Brazil they are called as *Pivets*. Interestingly, in Peru they are popularly known as *Pajaro-fruteromeaning* fruit bird, in Colombia, *Gamin* meaning kid having negative connotation. In Zaire, these children are called as *Moineaox* meaning chicks (Behura and Mohanty, 2005: 3-4). In Bangladesh, they are called as *Tokai*.

### **Street Children: Definitions and Concepts**

According to Agnelli (1986) 'A street child or street youth is any minor for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become his or her habitual abode, and who is without adequate protection' (Agrawal, 2003:19). Tacon (1989) defines the term 'street children' as 'the poor who have been abandoned and the poorest of poor, the children who have been cast into the streets' which indicates children who do not get their due from their homes and are compelled to find their haven on the streets (Agrawal, 2003: 19).

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 1988 explains street children as, '... those for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word; i.e., unoccupied dwellings, waste land, etc. ...) is more than their family, has become their real home, a situation in which there is no protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults' (Behura and Mohanty, 2005: 4).

UNICEF (1988) also states the term street children in another way: 'The term denotes not only a place of congregation, but also a certain set of working conditions. The vast majority are on the street to make a living for their families and/ or themselves. The return may be paltry, and may be in kind or in cash. For

these children the street is above all a work place. Second, they spend large amount of time in the street frequently because of the low returns on their labour. Third, most make their way in the informal sector as petty hawkers, shoe-shine boys, scavengers of raw material or even thieves and street prostitutes. Forth, by the nature of their work and life, they are normally on their own, largely unprotected by adults. For these reasons, above all others, they are vulnerable to many dangers and abuses, and they tend to receive few services essential to their protection and development’.

UNICEF conceptualized street children as children in difficult conditions. It may be divided in to four categories: (I) some children treat street as their work place, (II) they are compelled to work longtime as they are involved in the low-graded income, (III) these children are usually choosing such job where money may not be involved, (IV) these children are more vulnerable and may be exploited by adults.

Defence for Children International (DCI) (1988) has described street children in the following terms: ‘Child workers are highly visible in many cities not only at market place but on almost every street corner, from shoe-shine boys to newspaper or magazine hawkers, cigarette vendors and all manner of peddlers or messenger boys, waiters in virtually every restaurant or coffee house to helpers in all sorts of shops or establishments. They can be seen guarding parked cars, collecting garbage, transporting material at construction sites, working at automobile repair shops or gas stations and sweeping floors in office buildings. More significantly, they work in many places less obvious to the public eyes, in

the myriad of small factories or industries tucked into back streets or alleys of the cities, weaving carpets and performing all sorts of other tasks’.

### **Categories of Street Children**

Tikhomirov, Shveitser and Shabalow (1926) have identified five layers of homelessness in children. The first type was made up of children only recently separated from their families; they had suffered minimal harm and could very probably be considered as normal children. The second group consisted of those children who had been self-sufficient on the streets for a while and who were still attracted by the excitement of street life, but who had not turned to prostitution or crime to support them. These children were seen as salvageable, but such work would be more difficult than that with the first group and would require separate schools for a time. The third type had become criminals in order to survive and therefore needed extensive rehabilitation efforts. This group was sometimes referred to as morally defective, meaning that these children no longer had attitudes and social habits within the range considered normal. The fourth group, dismissed as uninteresting from a pedagogical point of view was the small number of orphans whose initial upbringing had taken place in the former imperial orphanages. The last one was the most serious and the most hopeless for rehabilitation: adolescents who had spent many years on the streets and who were deeply acquainted with and experienced in all the negative aspects of the milieu (Stolee, 1988: 66).

The United Kingdom Committee (1980) for UNICEF identifies three categories of street children as follows:

- A) **The children on the street:** These children are keeping close contact with their family. They are not going to the school regularly. They are not going for the work regularly also. They usually work at the day time and return at home at night time after finishing their work. The committee saw that seventy five per cent of children were coming under this category. These children have their sense of belongingness with their neighbours. Their life cycle is still family oriented.
- B) **The children of the street:** Though they have their own family but they are not keeping regular touch with them. They feel street as their home. They are purely street involved. The committee opined that twenty per cent of children were under this category. They are more critical in nature. They use street as their place of stay, place to collect food and lead a family life with other companion on the street. They are not abandoned by the family but they abandoned their family.
- C) **Abandoned children:** This group is completely parentless. They do not have any link with their own biological parents. Most of the missing, orphan, lost, ran away, abused children are coming under this category. These children suffer from deep emotional disturbance. The committee opined that rest, five per cent of children were coming under this category.

Nye and Edelbrock (1980) and Richter (1989) who have classified the street children as comprising of two different categories, they are either 'runaways' or 'throwaways'. Runaways are the children who voluntarily leave parental home without permission. Throwaways are those who leave home because their parents have actually encouraged them to leave, have abandoned them, or have subjected them to abuse and neglect.

The increased number of street children has prompted various attempts to define it. Dated definitions such as children of and on the street have been criticized for failing to embrace the wider domain of a street child's life including their occupation of family homes, institutions and non government organizations (NGOs), as well as street spaces. Furthermore, as Glauser (1990) has argued, children on the street share much of the life of children of the street. Others have deemed the term 'street child' itself inappropriate because it is inextricably tied-up with negative perceptions of street children as criminals, prostitutes and drug addicts. However, as Shanahan (1998, 2003) asserts, the term 'street child' is not necessarily insulting for the children themselves (Payne, 2004). Another criticism of Shanahan is to be taken into consideration that street children means street children including all children and youth for whom the street is the major player in their lives and which acknowledges the fact that even if a child lives with a parent, guardian, relative or friend and works on the street all day '...he does not bring that sleeping place to the street; he brings the street back to the sleeping place' (Shanahan, 2003:7).

### **Street Children in the Global Context**

The vulnerability of children indicates particularly a worldwide dismayed situation and is alarming the common mass to rethink on our existing provisions or its implementations. UNICEF has recently estimated that worldwide there were 80 million children without families who were living on the streets. Twenty million of them are in Asia, 10 million in Africa and the Middle East, and 40 million in Latin America (Aptekar, 1991: 326). There are approximately 150 million street children in the world according to the estimation of United Nation (UN) source.

They are on the street as they are chased by their family violence, death of their parents, drug and alcohol abuse, war, family breakdown, socio-economic collapse, natural disaster etc., which ultimately forced them to choose professions like begging, hawking, rag picking etc.

Countries like Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Germany, Ghana, Haiti, India, Kenya, Lithuania, Mali, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Pakistan, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Sri-Lanka, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe are the most affected countries in the world facing the problem of street children.

In 2003, UNICEF estimated that there were at least 100 million street children in the world, but it is not based on any actual studies or surveys.

### **Street Children in India**

In 1994, UNICEF estimated that there were 11 million street children in India (United Nations Children's Fund 2010). This number is said to be a drastic under-estimation.

The character of street children in India varies across cities and regions. A majority of these children are boys. It is also important to note that girl street children are often not found in visible spaces and hence hard to trace. Age wise 40 per cent of the street children are between 11-15 years while another 33 per cent are between 6-10 years age group. A study found that majority (89.8 %) of the children live on the street with their parents/family. Almost 50 per cent of

street children are self-employed as rag-pickers, hawkers, and shoeshine boys, while others work in shops and establishments. Their work hours range between 10-13 hours a day ([www.childlineindia.org.in](http://www.childlineindia.org.in) accessed on 23.11.2014).

In the 2007 MWCD report on child abuse found 65.9 per cent of the street children lived with their families. Out of these children, 51.84 per cent slept on the side-walks, 17.48 per cent slept in shelters and 30.67 per cent slept in other locations such as under flyovers and bridges, railway platforms, bus stops, parks, market places, etc. and 66.8 per cent of children reported being physically abused by family members and others. The Indian Embassy estimated 314,700 street children in cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Kanpur, Bangalore and Hyderabad and around 100,000 street children in Delhi([www.childlineindia.org.in](http://www.childlineindia.org.in) accessed on 23.11.14.).

Recently a rapid assessment survey (RAS) of street involved children in 16 cities of India (2013) was done by Don Bosco National Forum for the Young at Risk (YaR), New Delhi. The survey report of that rapid assessment shows that a total of 1,29,896 street involved children with boys 90,122 and 39,774 girls in 16 cities (see Table 1.1).

Among the 16 Indian cities Delhi (69976) accounts for more than 50 per cent of the total street involved children. Mumbai (16059), Kolkata (8287) and Bangalore (7523) together account for a quarter of the total street involved children (RAS 2013:22).

Table 1.1  
City wise distribution of street involved children in India, 2013

CITY	Boys below 8 yrs	Girls below 8 yrs	Boys 9-11	Girls 9-11	Boys 12-15	Girls 12-15	Boys 16-17	Girls 16-17	Boys With Disability	Girls With Disability	Total
Bangalore	1313	964	1198	581	1432	565	1076	317	58	19	7523
Baroda	523	257	465	226	329	177	321	110	13	7	2428
Chandigarh	414	221	476	254	428	237	238	51	3	1	2323
Chennai	448	236	412	189	382	177	369	135	16	10	2374
Delhi	8444	5373	18047	5940	13284	5713	9481	3408	141	145	69976
Dimapur	713	291	493	112	398	66	268	97	17	0	2455
Goa	285	184	222	136	165	111	122	58	4	0	1287
Guwahati	934	711	628	355	1427	1064	333	76	6	0	5534
Hyderabad	391	154	374	86	373	61	274	52	15	17	1797
Imphal	122	85	130	87	206	58	145	9	8	1	851
Kolkata	1689	793	1609	622	1638	477	1180	254	24	1	8287
Mumbai	2539	1444	2865	1422	3048	1403	2314	974	39	11	16059
Salem	1064	800	811	559	761	409	798	531	12	7	5752
Shillong	237	64	191	66	152	43	77	23	17	2	872
Trivandrum	38	37	8	8	10	2	31	5	0	1	140
Vijayawada	336	220	309	137	516	190	419	78	26	7	2238
Total	19490	11834	28238	10780	24549	10753	17446	6178	399	229	129896

Source: Rapid Assessment Survey of Street Involved Children in 16 cities of India (2013) *Don Bosco National Forum for the Young at Risk (YaR)*

The last official estimate on the numbers of street children across India was 11,000,000. It is estimated that across 50 main railway stations, at least 70,000 and perhaps up to 120000 (alone or unaccompanied by family) arrive onto the platforms every year (Harper and Iyer, 2013: 1).

Jaimala Hitesh says that there are 18,000,000 street children in India, which presumably includes those who live and work on railway platforms. In 2006, UNICEF estimated that there were 11,000,000 such children in India (Harper and Iyer, 2013: 10-11).

### **Street Children in West Bengal**

No comprehensive survey report is available on West Bengal with reference to street children. No proper enumeration of street children has been done neither at the government level nor by any other agencies. Only one official survey was available which was conducted by Lareto Day School (LDS), Sealdha in 1999. It was an initiation of Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) to estimate the number of non school going children in the age group of 3-14 years. It initiated a survey of the street and slum settlements in all the wards (from 1 to 141) of the city. The report reveals that there were 1,44,945 children aged 3-14 not in school (Calcutta's Deprived Urban Children, 1999) (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Age wise distribution of Non school going children in Calcutta Municipal Corporation, 1999

Results at a glance

Of 1,82,726 Families	Children : Total No.	Children: Not in School	Percentage not in school
3-4 years	70,465	50,781	72%
5-9 years	1,72,011	44,646	25%
10-14 years	1,72,014	49,518	28.8%
	4,14,490	1,44,945	

(Source: Calcutta's Deprived Urban Children 1999: 6)

The majority of them do not go to school because they keep them engaged to earn money to support their family/ parents. From all considerations, they live in a vulnerable situation (see Table 1. 3).

Table 1.3

Reason for why children are not in school under 141 wards in Calcutta Municipal Corporation, 1999

Reason	3-4 Years old		5-9 Years old		10-14 Years Old		Total
	Girls	Boys	Gorls	Boys	Girls	Boys	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
1.School not there	4649	3814	2203	1975	2787	3762	19190
2. Language not suitable	1069	739	754	586	679	429	4256
3. Requirements of school eg. books etc. impossible to meet	5562	4709	4953	3724	3725	4213	26886
4. No food	3301	2800	2054	2073	918	883	12029
5. Cannot be regular	515	485	901	494	338	408	141

6. School irrelevant	298	311	477	369	237	247	1939
7. School Boring	3186	2827	1917	2905	2000	3120	15955
8. Community prejudice	189	132	151	65	324	217	1078
9. Social discrimination	115	123	86	57	118	78	577
10. School timing unsuitable	371	404	1689	876	1988	2297	7625
11. Has to look after siblings	668	276	828	108	959	417	3256
12. Has look after house	26	35	1906	535	4486	2840	9828
13. Has to earn money	81	94	2481	3342	5294	8217	19509
14. Has to beg	115	99	336	456	219	291	1576
15. Gender discrimination	124	51	209	80	265	35	764
16. Prefers to play	4351	3971	1807	2233	404	899	13665

(Calcutta's Deprived Urban Children 1999: 13)

### **Studies of Street Children: A Brief Review**

There are some studies on street children in India. They help us in understanding this problem and in locating solution from multiple angles. In the following section an attempt has been made to briefly review the main findings of some of the studies for a better comprehension of the problem under consideration.

ReshmiAgrawal (2003) in her study explores the scope of street children's rehabilitation and integration into the mainstream society. She has identified multiple causes behind 'why are they on the streets'. She thinks that more than anything else street children are a product of urban apathy and indifference. It is closely associated with inefficient urban planning and implementation. The author notes that poverty of parents, failures of educational system and natural calamities are a few compelling factors to push the children to street. She observes that there are numerous legislative measures to protect children's rights

in India while the authorities are lacking in its' proper execution. The author assumes that even if the laws are implemented with the best of intentions, they touch only a part of the problem. The street children may have the deviance in terms of social pathology but they treasure their self respect and their own value system. Here the author takes an attempt to compare the intelligence level of street children with that of normal school going children. It shows that the children who are attending normal schools and having a normal family life are more intelligent than the street children. Out of these the street children engaged as rag-pickers have low intelligence than those who are involved in other activities such as boot polishing, may be because the former are usually from a relatively lower socio-economic level.

RajatsubhraMukhopadhyaya (1995) in his paper 'A portrayal of homeless people in Calcutta' quotes the views of the street dwellers which can be used in formulating any government policy. He quotes homeless person who said 'who bothers for us and our children? If our children become educated, how the city people will get cheap labour and maid servants? Taking advantage of our ignorance, illiteracy, helplessness and powerlessness the city people will mercilessly cheat and exploit us. We don't have any other alternatives but to be exploited by others. So our future is totally dark and there is not a bit of hope to see the light of a 'new life'. But we don't want that our children should suffer in the same way as we have. We all like to see them as happy, healthy and good citizens. But will our system of economy and society allow it?'

A.Ghosh (1992) offers a nice profile of Kolkata city and the street children's perception of the city. He writes 'To him (street child) this city is neither a city of

joy nor a dying one but a place which has given him means of his survival but nothing else'. The author of this book has made a good attempt to understand the concept of street children from diverse perspectives.

Nandana Reddy (1992) in her study offers some new interpretations of street children. She gives definition and a typology of street children and discussed about the magnitude and extent of the problem they faced in Bangalore. Her study attempts to locate the genesis of the problem and the struggle of the street children for survival. She made an assessment of the existing essential services which are available to the street children and the concern of the state government/ municipal bodies/ non government organization (NGOs) in respect to street children. The study gives some valuable recommendations for the benefit of the street children in general.

Rita Panicker and Kalpana Desai's (1993) study is an attempt to address the problem of street children and in particular helps in formulating relevant programmes for the street girls. The study provides family profile and socio-economic characteristics of the street girls and identifies their perceived needs in the domain of nutrition, education, protection, vocational training and placement. The extent of assistance and services extended to the street girls from local agencies have also been taken care of quite elaborately in this study.

A. Selva Kumar in the article entitled 'Street Children in Tamilnadu' (2009) examines the plight of street children, especially the children who need care and protection, their problems and offers some solutions for their rehabilitation. The study mainly focused on the street children in the state of Tamil Nadu and particularly on those who are staying in the urban pockets, work under poor,

exploited and swindled for their vulnerability. He claims that street children are working in the streets as beggars, rag pickers, hawkers, shop assistants, cooks, waiters, head loaders, shoe-shiners and vendors. The author classified the street children into four types, namely, the male street child, the female street child, the street child who lives with his or her family and street child who lives without his or her family. The male street children are found mostly engaged in rag picking, metal and scrap collection, hotel cleaning. A section of them works as hawkers and construction labourers. The female street children on the other hand are engaged in household activities, baby sitting, washing cloths and utensils, procuring water and fire woods for their homes. They also work hard like the male street children. The author also identifies the causes of their vulnerability. He brings forth the magnitude of police harassment on them. The author highlights the deplorable and miserable conditions of street children, in terms of food, education and lack of proper rehabilitation policy on the part of the government.

B.Vanita's article on 'Street Children: Facts and Issues' (2009) provides valuable insights on street children of Coimbatore city. She argues that the major consequences of the process of urbanization and industrialization are the growing population of urban poor in the cities. Rural people migrate to cities and ultimately settle down in slums, shanties, etc. The author claims that a more serious and vulnerable group of the urban poor that is growing rapidly in the big cities is that of street children and working children, with a home or without a home. She observes that the problem of street children is a global one and exists in both developed as well as developing countries, with a difference in its size and magnitude. The author is in view that although efforts are being made through

urban planning and urban community development to supply the basic services and amenities of life to slum dwellers in order to improve their quality of life, the challenges are of a big magnitude in size that often eludes the planners. The author identifies three categories of street children. They are children on the street, children of the street and abandoned children. She assessed the status of street children in terms of their physical condition, concern for family, society, education, number of working hours/ days, daily food intake etc. The street children live in an unhealthy condition and many of them suffer from cold and cough, finds difficult to breathe, skin diseases, underweight, stomach pain, swollen eyes but tidy and decently dressed. They do not want to go to school and mostly illiterate. They work for six to twelve hours in a day.

KathakaliMitra and Sibnath Deb's paper 'Stories of Street Children: Findings from a Field Study' (2004) provides a survey of forty street children. The study identifies the factors like family discord, domestic abuse, abandonment, eviction and poverty that pushed the children to the street. The authors expressed their anxiety over improper implementation of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 which Indian parliament approved to protect children's rights. They think that more infrastructure facilities along with proper planning and management are required for doing justice to neglected Juveniles.

The authors explain that life on the street exposes children to different exploitative and life threatening situations. Some are fortunate enough to come in contact with welfare agencies but majority are still in expectation that their living condition might improve. Ultimately the story remains the same. The authors claim that if these children are retained in schools where they receive

meals and health care facilities, they may not have drifted into this vulnerable life situation. The authors claim that some of welfare organizations depute their volunteers in the railway platforms to identify wandering/ street children who are in need of services and place them in their residential institutions. They also tell that among the NGOs who work for the welfare of disadvantaged children, few of them still suffer from some limitations like of proper planning in designing intervention programmes, lack of coordination among the staff and between NGOs and improper utilization of resources.

Asha J Rane in her paper on 'Hamara Club: A Project for Street Children' (2000) offers an alternative model of rehabilitation of street children which is designed by Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai. The author argues that the main reason which prompts children to run away from their homes is not mere poverty but also unhappy home conditions, parental neglect and cruel treatment by step parents. She claims that professional social work intervention strategies are necessary to address their needs. Institutions of social work education play a very significant role in addressing the needs of street children in many ways through their field action projects, research, training of functionaries and forum for street children.

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in responding to the problem of street children, has adopted a field action project, called Hamara club for street children. The overall goal of the project is targeted to develop and empower the children on the streets. The major trust of the project is to provide professional social work interventions to this specific target group, who is deprived of basic needs of shelter, health, education and loving care. The author describes

Humaraclub as basically a community-based model with a special emphasis on the 'contact programme'. Through an outreach programme and street presence, the social workers contact children living and working on the streets. They gain an insight into their problems and specific needs and motivate them to use the various services for their welfare and development provided in the contact centres established not too far from the place of their stay/ work. Self-referrals are encouraged and a child-to child approach is promoted. The main emphasis of the contact programme is on creating awareness among street children about their life and work situation, enabling them to have access to basic services of health, education, vocational training and recreation. As these children live in groups working with the group is more effective than working in one-to-one situation. Children and youth (ex-beneficiaries) are involved in planning and implementation the ongoing activities of the contact centres. Their own involvement in the decision-making for their own lives is crucial for the success of such an endeavour. In that sense, it is an effective strategy to protect their right of participation. This article gives a new direction for the rehabilitation of street children and it also highlights the influence of the professional social work institution in the same context.

Richard Slater's paper 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Implications for Street Children' (2000) focuses on the rights of the children, especially the street children. It provides a comprehensive framework addressing rights relating to children's needs for care, protection and development and participation. The convention on the rights is a binding international instrument requiring an active standard to which governments should aspire. Its significance is that it represents a beacon which highlights fundamental rights of children. The article examines

this point in terms of the following: rights based approach, the potential impact of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the question of law enforcement and the particular needs of the street children. In the rights based approach, the author suggests that the children should be in a position to formulate for them what their needs and interests are, rather than to leave them to others to decide. He claims that rights based approach is progressive and represents a welcome step toward a dependency model of childhood. There are potential problems when it comes to address a subset of needs associated with street living children who are distinct from those living within well established social and political structures.

It is obviously true that most of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Children are enshrined in the childhood and family welfare which ultimately conceptualized in the stable nuclear family in particular and joint family in general. In addition to that children can get care and protection from kin as well as non-kin members. So home may not be the only place for the children's socialization or learning. Much socialization may take place outside of the family. He claims that many interventions of street children's rehabilitation model operates through the rescue approach which ultimately creates a dependency model. This emerges the rehabilitation of street children within the institutional framework and such approach fails to challenge the social and political order.

The author classifies the street children into two categories: (a) who share with the family responsibility for wrong on the streets and (b) a smaller number who are truly abandoned. The second category is defined to include those with no contact and those with some contact with their families. Many street children

have made a conscious decision to abandon their families for different reasons that may vary from escaping abuse, work and others. In such circumstances the author observes that these children require a different form of protection within a different legal framework.

Behura and Mohanty (2005) in their book *Urbanization, Street Children and their Problems* identify street children phenomenon as one of the byproducts of the urbanization process in developing countries, especially in eastern India. The book deals with the motive of the street children behind coming over to urban centres, educational and occupational profile of their parents, their family size, category, shelter of the street children, educational and occupational pattern, expenditure and savings, occupational hazards, appropriation of earnings of these children by their parents, nourishment and addictive behaviors, health and hygiene, educational choice, future perspectives, attitudes of public towards the street children etc. Apart from all these, the book also speaks about the pre and post-independence legislations on these children, UN'S convention on rights of the child (UNCRC), national plan of action, state plan of action, welfare agencies working for betterment of these children. In this book the authors examine nicely how rural poor transforms into urban poor. They explain that street children are becoming individualistic in nature because of a number of entangled factors like large family size coupled with appalling poverty and lack of easy and quick approach to earn sufficiently for the whole family. Thus the point of vulnerability of the child begins. The identity of the street children is well described in this book keeping in mind its national and international connotation. The book covers a study of street children in Bhubaneswar city of Odisha.

Malcom Harper and Lalithalyer's (2013) book entitled *Rescuing Railway Children: Reuniting Families from India's Railway Platforms* is basically a study document of one reputed NGO named Sathi. The book offers many valuable insights on situation of railway children in India, the challenges they face on the platform and thereafter, the remedy adopted by the NGO Sathi in reuniting them with their families.

The policies, rules and regulations on child protection relevant for such children on railway platforms and the activities of agencies like National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), the district-level Child Welfare Committees(CWC), government Children's Homes are described elaborately. The gaps between resources available and the needs of the children are discussed at length.

The book gives a direction to how outreach workers have to develop and build rapport with potential stakeholders like the police and vendors and be on guard against others who may be interested in grabbing new arrivals ( such as child traffickers and the older children's platform gangs). It offers a picture of their grooming process at the open shelter before sending them back to their home. The authors show their enthusiasm about the success of the reintegration camps for these children in particular. They further explain that these processes helped thousands of children for their family reunifications.

### **The Theoretical Frame of Reference**

The phenomenon of street children is observable and sensible. It is neither an idea nor being constructed in any abstract term. It has no tangibility but it has the reality. This phenomenon has the externality and it is given. This phenomenon of

street children is not created by the individual itself. It is not created forcibly. This situation is also linked to other social facts like poverty, migration, displacement etc.

In case of the street children their primary needs are not met up by their families. They do not go to school. They do not go to playground to play. They are engaged in clandestine activities like fighting, gambling, snatching, stealing, bag-lifting etc. So certain circumstances compel them to adopt a deviant life style for their survival. The lack of orientation to institutionalized social life leads to disorder. It is true that without proper orientation, one cannot expect order and from which the street children exactly suffer.

We can also look into the question of anomie from the point of view of 'value'. Here one may be curious to know how street children have lost their moral values. They are addicted and delinquent. Street children are physically and sexually abused by adults discarding all the ethical values of the society.

According to Emile Durkheim(1893) the people are expected to follow the accepted norms of the greater society. Norms are some kind of informal rules and a consensus about the way people are supposed to behave socially in society. It is therefore expected that children will stay with their family. A kind of anomic situation occurs when children are on the street or live without family. It violates the prevalent norms of the socialization of children in conventional terms in family setting and their upbringing in the family of orientation. A family's inability to provide the material needs and support to a child can create insecurity and affect the amount of control that the family could normally exert over the child. In such a situation s/he started looking for material support and security from

outside the home. Family environment providing street children may be analyzed with reference to a broken home, family tension, paternal rejection, paternal control and family economy. The young star does not feel secure and content in the tension filled family environment. Such a family could not provide conducive atmosphere to satisfy the basic needs of child rearing. The children in the family where the parents are constantly in conflict make them quite helpless and often compelled them to leave the family with great frustration and uncertainty.

From structural-functional point of view, family is considered as collective means to meet individual biological needs. Later social needs were also got accommodated with the biological needs which ultimately gives the family a unique functional entity. The failure of family to cater the need of the street children at home may be well perceived from the structural-functional perspectives. To put it in other words, the street children phenomenon is an obvious expression where their family failed to discharge their functional responsibilities and obligations.

The phenomenon of street children could be examined from Marxist point of view. The number of the street children grows with increasing exploitation of child labour. In unorganized sector, collection of empty bottles, newspapers, iron scraps and others by the street children are being sold to the middle men who exploit them mercilessly. Many industries are purchasing those items for recycling from these intermediaries by low price and making recycle products profitable one. So the recycling industries swell large profits with corresponding exploitation of proletariat (street children). On the other hand, the recycle industries, the owners of the means of production are reproducing bottles again by using those

scraps which are purchased at a low rate and selling those at an enough profitable margin. The street children phenomenon is well integrated into the phenomenon of social exploitation in the modern society.

Collection of empty package water bottles, iron scraps, begging and others are expression of street children in general but it is only a degraded instrument of livelihood in particular. It is external one and imposed on them. The product of these constant activities becomes an instrument of elite class. They become estranged from themselves, from the process as well as the product of their labour, from their groups and from the human community itself. The recycling industry who own the means of reproduction and distribution, and the street children who own nothing but their own labour. This is not to deny the existence of other classes, indeed, Marx repeatedly referred to the small capitalists, the petit bourgeoisie and the lumpen proletariat. Here the shopkeepers who are purchasing these empty bottles and other things from the street children all invariably belong to the category of petit bourgeoisie.

Merton's 'Strain Theory' (1957) could be an important theoretical input in addressing the problem of street children. Robert Merton and some of his associates studied the tension between socially accepted goals and the legitimate means available in achieving those goals. Merton posited that the greater society encourages its members to use acceptable means to achieve desired goals. These goals include comfort, leisure time, social status and wealth. However, not all members of society have equal access to achieve these goals. That creates strain for less successful members. Strain is manifested as desire to achieve these goals and one's inability to acquire the legitimate means to attain them. In theory,

those who do not have access to acceptable means may resort to illegitimate avenues to achieve their goals. In other words those without resources and access to resources may become delinquents or anti-socials to achieve comfort, leisure, status and wealth. According to Merton lack of opportunity and inequality are central causal factors for deviant behavior which we often encounter.

The street children phenomenon may be addressed from competition and conflict perspectives. Street children are found engaged in competition and conflict for getting access to limited resources like money, leisure, sexual partners and some others. It is seen that competition over scarce resources controls all social relationships. In addition to that, in the case of street children competing with all kinds of odds in life was a regular phenomenon. And where change occurs as a result of conflict between competing interests rather than through adaptation. Such a change is often abrupt and revolutionary rather than evolutionary (Amir Ali, 2012: 45-46).

The problem of street children could be examined from the perspective of social inequality. In one hand it is intimately associated with the socio-economic structure of the society. On the other the cultural framework in which the children of the poor, oppressed and deprived sections are reared and socialized. In the context of present study this structural element has a direct bearing to a great extent as the problem of street children is basically a manifestation of certain structural contradictions in the society.

It is believed that the economic system is the sole determinant of the problem of street children. Therefore in studying the phenomenon of street children the first theoretical approach could be to identify the relationship between street urchin

and poverty in the given structure of the society. The second aspect could be the institutional aspects in which a child feels frustrated in the family and prefers to opt for a life of 'street children'.

### **Objectives**

The present study aims to examine the following.

1. The socio- economic background of the street children
2. The factors that had been responsible to push them to street
3. The work and activities of the street children
4. The problems faced by the street children in their everyday life
5. Measures adopted for the rehabilitation of street children and their achievements and failures