

Functioning part of
society



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Crimes and criminals activities are deeply linked to socio-psychological problems of people. Thus, offenders who have committed different types of crimes need to be treated differently by the criminal justice system. Indeed, the fundamental objective of the system is to prevent repetition of crime and prisons are intended to serve two major objectives. They act as correctional institutions where offenders of serious and non serious crimes are given the opportunities to reform and repent. The second objective is of providing the necessary protection to the common man from criminals. But unfortunately, the statistics show that the prison sentences have not been able to prevent repetition of crimes. They have also not been to promote encouraging environment for improved post prison behavior to become acceptable part of mainstream society. It is estimated that ‘ two-thirds of prisoners were rearrested for a new offense within three years of leaving prison. In Colorado, 63. 7 percent of inmates released from the Department of Corrections in Fiscal Year 2002 were rearrested within 3 years’ (Colorado Commission, 2008, p11). The punishments are broadly conceptualized as a means to make the criminal realize his or her acts of misdemeanor and provide him with a chance to reform so they are not caught into the vicious cycle of criminal activities. But as the data show, the authorities and punishment has failed to prevent the recurrence of acts of crimes or effectively reform the criminals. Another very serious paradigm of contemporary prison environment is that of perpetuated violence and hidden dynamics of segregated crimes within the walls of prison. Michel Santos (2004) in his biographical book, ‘ About Prison’ has asserted that American prisons’ cultural paradigms greatly foster an environment of racism and violence. It has major consequences for civil society because the prisons

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inmates come from diverse background and may have been serving sentence for crimes ranging from petty offences to serious cases of murders. The exposure to the vastly different culture of prison must be quite distressing for first time offenders of petty crimes. Indeed, the repercussion of the same could be seriously damaging to the psyche of common man. In the contemporary times, the prison sentences, punishment and criminal justice system have all come under serious controversy for failing to make a significant impact on the increasing rate of crimes within the society. The case of Abu Ghraib has further jolted the sensibility of the public and exposed the vulnerability of offenders within prisons. In fact, the very concept of punishment endorses the idea of revenge in the disguise of social justice for persons against whom the crime is committed! Thus, one is forced to accept the grim situation that punishment and prison sentences continue to support the vicious cycle of crime. Prison, prison sentences and punishment have failed as deterrent measures for recurring crimes. It thus, necessitates serious reform within the system so that appropriate environment could be created for offenders where they would be motivated towards self reform. Reference Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice. (2008). Annual Report. Retrieved from: Santos, M. G. (2004). About Prison. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson