

LIFESTYLE OF PROSTITUTES : SOCIALWORK PERSPECTIVE

(A PSYCHO-SOCIAL STUDY OF PROSTITUTES IN SURAT CITY, 1997-99)

AN ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

Exploitation of any kind becomes a matter of concern for any civilized society. Prostitution is one of the crudest form of exploitation. Unfortunately, its universal nature, its wide magnitude, its hidden character and its socio-religious masking make its prevention and control difficult. Most social, economic, political and religious systems have accepted prostitution as an unavoidable evil and have more or less opted to ignore it.

Whether sale of sex is seen as a victimless offence, as a victim consented offence or as any other normal occupation, may depend on the value structure of a given society. Objectification of human body is never appreciated in any civilized society, - however liberal its value structure may be. Calling prostitution 'sex work' may attribute mental satisfaction to those in the profession; it may also help in shifting the burden of guilt from those engaged in work to those enjoying the work; but that does not alter the fact that a live human body is made available as an object of pleasure to someone - not for 'pleasure' in return but for 'money' as 'price'. Money which fills a hungry stomach. Who should be blamed ? The one who sells sex ? The one who buys sex ? The one who forcibly makes someone sell sex or the society at large which can let its citizens starve but can not tolerate exchange of body against bread ?

Should sex work be seen as any other normal, socially recognized mode of earning? Whether exploitation of sexworkers should really be differentiated from exploitation of rest of the 'have nots' of the society ?

Several opinions exist as far as adult prostitution is concerned. Unaffected by these intellectual debates, thousands of girls and women keep pouring in the sex industry year after year. To understand different dimensions of this complex institution of prostitution thoroughly, one must go close to it and interact with the actual persons who form this 'sub (or contra?) culture'. The present study is one such attempt.

Prostitution : Concept and Definitions :

The concept of prostitution keeps changing from time to time and place to place. Prostitution is seen as an offshoot of the institution of marriage. Until recently, the term prostitution referred usually only to prostitution among women to meet the masculine needs.

Traditionally, prostitution is generally synonymous with “elements of **hire, promiscuity and emotional indifference**” (Davis, 1937). The Encyclopaedia of social sciences defines prostitution “as the practice of **habitual** or intermittent **sexual union** more or less **promiscuous**, for **mercenary** inducement”. “Promiscuity”, “Emotional indifference” and “payment of consideration” are the three important elements covered by this definition. Elliot and Merrill (1961)

describe prostitution as “an **illicit** sex union on a **promiscuous** and **mercenary** basis with accompanying **emotional indifference**”.

“What is involved in prostitution is **heterosexual interaction** which fulfils a basic human need, which is recognized as a normal and legitimate act within the institution of marriage. Therefore, when prostitution is discouraged by the society, it is not the sexual act per se which is disapproved, but the **context** in which it takes place and the **motivation** behind the act.”(Oomen, 1979)

Arthur Shadwell, writer and lecturer on sociological and industrial subjects, has defined prostitution in the 18th volume of Encyclopaedia Britannica as the “word which may best be defined as **promiscuous unchastity** for **gain**”. According to him, prostitution has always been distinguished in law and custom from concubinage which is an inferior state of marriage and other irregular sexual relations in which the motive is passion.

Criticizing Shadwell’s definition Varma (1979) points out that this definition sounds defective because it fails to cover the developments of modern times like “call girls” and also because he failed to recognize that a prostitute is also a short-term concubine.

Joardar B. (1989) modifying his own earlier definition; defines prostitution as “the practice of **habitual** intermittent **sexual relation** more or less **promiscuous** for money or for other **mercenary** consideration **without emotional attachment**”.

The last three words have been substituted for 'emotional indifference' as, according to Joardar, complete emotional indifference is quite impossible. The realization was out of his field experience that in some cases prostitutes fell in love with a particular client.

Unlike most traditional definitions, one given by Ryle Scott (n.d.) is wide enough to cover both types of sexual relations, heterosexual as well as homosexual. Thus, "A prostitute is an individual - **male or female** - who for some kind of **gain**, monetary or otherwise or for some form of personal satisfaction and as a part-time or wholetime profession, engages in **normal** or **abnormal sexual** intercourse with various persons who may be of the **same** or **opposite sex**."

Havelock Ellis (1913) has defined a prostitute as "a person who makes it a profession to gratify the lust of various persons of the opposite or the same sex". Perhaps the shortest definition of prostitution is given by Wardlaw writing (1842). Accordingly, "prostitution is the illicit intercourse of sexes". It is obvious that this definition emphasizes **morality** rather than gain. Guyot (n.d.) defines a prostitute as "any person for whom sexual relations are subordinated to gain". Thus, this definition emphasizes **gain** rather than morality.

The Dutch criminologist W.A. Bonger (1916) advocated that "the act of prostitution is intrinsically equal to that of a man or woman who contracts a marriage for economical reasons". In other words, he puts any marriage with **economic motive** at par with prostitution.

M. Maurice Vallard (1918) said that prostitution is “the partial or complete specialization of certain woman in the satisfaction of the masculine sexual instinct”. As is obvious, this definition refers only to **female** prostitution. In France, the law of April 24, 1946, Article I, defines a prostitute as “Any woman who habitually consents to have sexual relations with undefined number of man for payment”.

The legal definition of prostitution as per the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in women and Girls Act 1956 was “The act of a **female** who offers her body for promiscuous sexual intercourse for hire, whether in money or in kind, and whether offered immediately or otherwise”. It is clear that this definition, too, covered only female prostitution. However, this Act was amended as “Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act” 1986 and as “Immoral Traffic Prevention Act” in 1987. According to the new legal definition, “Prostitution means the sexual **exploitation** or **abuse** of **persons** for **commercial** purposes”.

Thus, in India, now, prostitution is no longer confined to female offering her body for hire, but includes sexual exploitation or abuse of a male or a child for commercial purpose (Midha, 1989).

It would be interesting to note how the sexworkers themselves like to define their work. At the National Sex Workers’ Conference at Calcutta, Jo Bindman (1997) said, ‘We propose the following definition of sex work:’ “Negotiation and performance of **sexual services** for **remuneration** -

- (i) with or without intervention by a third party,
- (ii) where those services are advertised or generally recognised as available from a specific location,
- (iii) where the price of services reflects the pressures of **supply and demand**".

In this definition, 'negotiation' implies the rejection of specific clients or acts on an individual basis. Indiscriminate acceptance by the worker of all proposed transactions is not presumed- such acceptance would indicate the presence of coercion. The linkage of price with demand and supply implies that prostitution is like any other economic activity.

Prostitution in India :

As evidenced in some passages of Rigveda, prostitution in India existed in vedic era. The authorities on erotics prescribed sixty four arts in which a high class 'Ganika' must be trained. Apart from beauty and pleasing personality, such courtesans had to master the arts of composing poetry and riddles, archery, spying, etc. which called for high level of intellectual abilities. The rules and restrictions by which freedom of normal house wives was restricted did not apply to them. A 'Ganika', expert in all these arts, had a right to have a seat of honour among men in the Royal court and fetched praise and honour from the kings and the learned.

The Middle Age literature gave evidence of this fact. 'Vasantsena', the heroine of the 'Mrichha Katikam' written by the Great writer Shudraka and 'Amrapali' - the accomplished courtesan from 'Vaishali' in Buddhist legends are

famous characters of whom hardly any Indian would be unaware. The 'Kamasutra' of Vatsyayana written around 250-300 A.D. and the 'Arthashastra' compiled by Kautilya in Chandragupta Empire around 325 B.C. are the most important sources of information about courtesans and prostitutes in ancient India (Bedi, 1992). The duties of 'Ganikadhyaksha' - the superintendent of prostitutes, as mentioned in 'Arthashastra' were to supervise the palace of courtesans, inspection of brothels and collection of two days earnings from each prostitute per month as tax to the government.

Sikka (1984) notes that "the institution of Devdasis - the temple girls as existed since ancient times - declined in North India as a result of the destruction of major Hindu temples in North India and the Muslim invaders in medieval India but it continued to flourish in Southern India".

In the Mughal period, prostitution was a recognised institution. The famous work of Abul-Fazl - 'Aine-Akbari' describes that in order to control the nuisance of prostitution, "Akbar ordered for the segregation of prostitutes in an area as was called 'Shaitanpura' or the devils' Quarters and appointed some officers to regulate the profession of prostitution by putting restrictions on their movements." These officers noted down the names of persons who visited the prostitutes or took them to their houses with permission.

Later Mughal rulers permitted and even invited 'Kanchans' - the superior category of prostitutes in state celebrations or on the marriages in the families of

nobles to sing and dance i.e. for 'Mujra'. But Aurangzeb strictly prohibited prostitution, singing and dancing and even 'Kanchans' were ordered either to be married or to leave the empire (Bedi, 1992).

The paradoxical treatment to prostitutes - acceptance, tolerance and honour on one hand and disgust and despise on the other, has continued from the time of 'Smriti' writers till today. Ghosh (1996) notes that "Prostitution though in many contexts honoured and respected, was much disapproved by the Smriti writers whose works contain passages of warning against the evils of prostitutes. 'Matsya Purana', on the other hand, considered the 'veshya' as a good omen and in parts of South India the 'Mangal sutram' of the new bride was made by the prostitute ! Similarly, in North Eastern India even now, while making the holy image of Goddess Durga a handful of earth from the threshold of a prostitute's house has to be used" (Sinha & Basu n.d.).

Approaches to Prostitution :

The strategies to curtail the evil effects of prostitution are based on the views or approaches subscribed by the respective society or nation.

Ghosh (1996) summarizes the three different approaches all over the world as :

- (1) Prohibition
- (2) Regulation and
- (3) Abolition

Prohibition :

These countries ban prostitution and pimping. Their police and departments of Justice play a vital role - closing down brothels, fining and imprisonment of those who practice prostitution or who profit from such activities. The inequalities apparent in this kind of police activity are appalling - the clients themselves are not affected.

Regulation :

These countries permit prostitution and the existence of brothels, etc. The State considers prostitution a 'Public Service' and a "necessary evil" and facilitates conditions for its existence and growth in different forms. These governments, in agreement with reality, establish rules to control the system and to protect law and order. Files, police cards, medical check-up reports are maintained for the prostitutes who are registered and licensed. However, registration, police cards, medical examination are not applicable in cases of the clients.

Abolition :

These countries advocate only the abolition of the regulation of prostitution and its exploitation but not the abolition of prostitution itself, since this is legal.

The aim of the abolition system is (i) to eliminate administrative and police regulation; (ii) to forbid obvious prostitution such as soliciting and (iii) to prohibit pimping and the establishment of organised prostitution.

Jo Bindman (1997) from Anti Slavery International, while presenting a paper on “Redefining Prostitution as sex work on International Agenda” at the first National Conference of sex workers at Calcutta explained and commented on Abolitionist approach thus:- “The Abolitionist approach declares that the institution of prostitution itself constitutes a violation of human rights, akin to the institution of slavery (in fact the term ‘Abolitionist’ was originally used to describe campaigners against the transatlantic slave trade). As such, no person, even an adult, is believed to be able to give genuine consent to engaging in prostitution. Prostitution only persists through the efforts of procurers or pimps, the ‘third parties’, who induce a woman into prostitution, openly or by means of deceit and coercion, to extort her earnings from her. The Abolitionist approach requires governments to abolish prostitution through the penalisation of this ‘third party’, which profits from the transaction between prostitute and client. The prostitute cannot be punished, as she is the victim of a process she does not control. Without the ‘third party’, it is believed that the institution of prostitution will wither away”.

The United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949), which largely reflects the Abolitionist position, has been widely criticised and poorly ratified.

There is no evidence that the Convention or other international and local sanctions have been effective either in eliminating the flow of women and men into the sex industry, or in curtailing abuses within it. Meanwhile, in the years since 1949, prostitutes themselves and others have been redefining the problem, asserting that the abuses are neither inherent nor unique to prostitution, but are the outcome of the stigmatisation of the prostitute.

Das and Chopra (1990) classify the main divergent views with regard to prostitution as:

- (1) The Moralistic view
 - (2) The Realistic view
 - (3) The Liberal view.
1. The moralistic view says that prostitution degrades and denies a person's self-respect and dignity and reduces him/her to a marketable commodity. Therefore it cannot be justified or accepted on any account.
 2. As per the realistic view the system is deep rooted and has been in existence far too long to be eradicated even though it is not respectable. Those engaged in the profession may be tolerated but segregated from the society and confined to Red Light areas.
 3. The liberal view advocates that it is a profession like any other and should be given legal sanction so that the prostitute can lead a life of dignity.

India has subscribed to the Abolitionist approach as is evident from its present legal policy.

The sexworkers world over have started organizing themselves to promote the Liberal view.

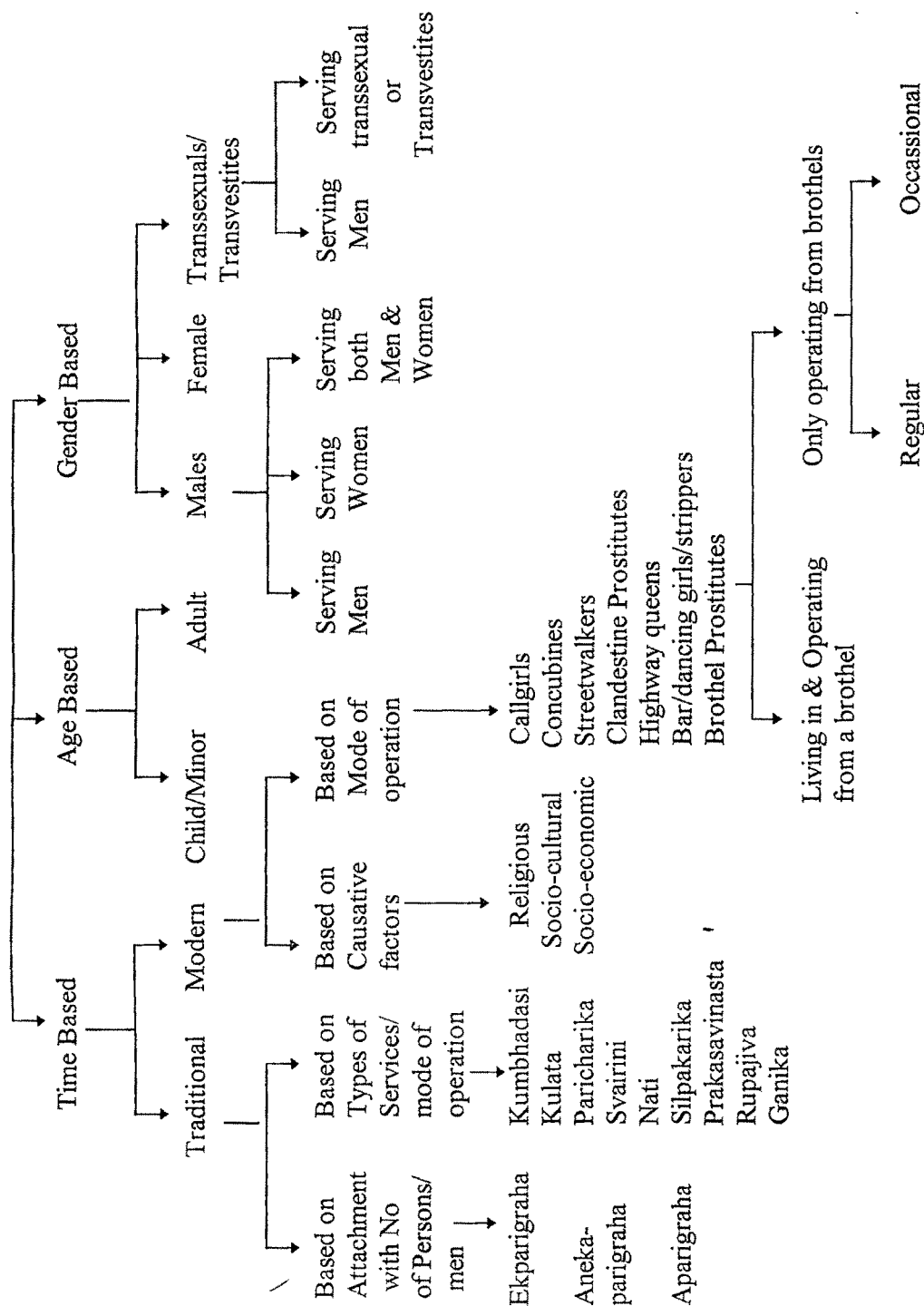
The very first appeal made to the delegates of the 12th world AIDS conference at Geneva in June 1998 by the Asia/Pacific sex worker's Network was "to recognize that sex work is an occupation".

The Indian sex workers' demands expressed at the Calcutta National Conference in 1997 echoed the same feeling. Out of their four-fold demands, the three that reflected their commitment to the Liberal views were :-

- (1) PITA should be done away with,
- (2) Status of 'worker' to be accorded to sex workers, and
- (3) Right to self regulation i.e. Professional freedom - (Islam, 1998).

It is felt that until loopholes in all these systems/approaches are completely removed, no single approach can be successful in preventing the abuse in toto, and history of mankind proves that doing so is next to impossible. The ideal solution would be to accept the approach keeping pace with time and trying to ensure honest attempts to minimise abuse of innocent ones.

Classification of Prostitutes in India



Review High Lights - 1

An Overview of Themes covered by Literature

on Prostitution in India

<u>Historical</u>	<u>Sociological</u>	<u>Economic</u>	<u>Psychological</u>	<u>Legal</u>	<u>Political</u>	<u>Medical/Health</u>
*Concept, *Classification, *Duties and rights, *Lifestyle, state patronage, *Prostitution & State - administration. (eg Vatsyayana's Kamsutra, Chanakya's Arthashastra, Abul Fazl's 'Aaine Akabari', Manucci's work and also Agarwal, Ghosh, Bedi's Work).	*Prostitution & Trafficking as a social problem, *Social deviation, Magnitude *Socio-cultural & religious factors. (eg. Punekar, Bedi, Mukerjee's work).	*Poverty, Unemployment, *Economic dependence, *Migration, flesh trade as an occupation and forces of demand & supply - *Woman headed households (eg Mensendiek, Bhattacharya's work).	*Psycho Pathology - personality disorders, values, *Personality patterns, self esteem, *Attitude towards self, client and profession (eg. Kapur, Joardar, Vakharia's work)	*Legal approaches, jurisprudential perspectives - *Decriminalization of prostitution *Enforcement of laws, Role of state, protective homes - *Directives of Supreme Court based on PIL. (eg Mukerjee, Varma's work, Supreme Court judgements).	*Organizing through NGO/ self support, *Negotiating with local, national political authority - *Evolving as a new pressure group (eg. Bindman & others).	*VD/STD/AIDS related high ris behaviour groups *Lifestyle & sexual behavior studies *Reproductive health & safer sex practice promotion (eg Bhattacharya & Rao's and D'cunna's work).

Review High Lights - 2 :

Broad Trends of Available Literature on Prostitution in Modern Era :

Pre Independence Period - *Focus on Legal Aspects*

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1860 | * | Indian Penal Code |
| 1907 | * | Bengal, Assam & Other State Laws |
| 1934 | * | Bombay Dev Dasi Prohibition Act. |
| 1950s | - | <i>Focus as a larger social - moral issue at global level.</i> |
| | | * International Convention against illicit trafficking. |
| 1950 | | * National level conference, formation of committee on social and moral hygiene. |
| 1960s and early 1970s | - | <i>focus on socio-economic issues.</i> |
| | | * Prostitutes as a community. |
| | | * Flesh trade as an occupation and prostitutes as an occupational group. |
| Late 1970s & 1980s | - | <i>Focus on psycho-social aspects.</i> |
| | | * Prostitute as a person, her emotions, rights etc. |
| | | * Major amendments in Indian law on prostitution. |
| 1990s | - | <i>Focus on AIDS Prevention + Human Right issues.</i> |
| | | * Health issues - STD / AIDS, Reproductive health. |
| | | * Child prostitutes * Children of prostitutes. |
| | | * NGO efforts for participatory development. |
| | | * Judicial activism, public interest litigation. |

METHODOLOGY

Socialwork profession is primarily concerned with the vulnerable sections of the society. Women in prostitution occupy the bottom rung of the social ladder.

Their vulnerability as women is intensified many folds by the fact that they have accepted sex work as their occupation. Their social, economic and cultural handicap force them to accept flesh trade. The social stigma attached with the trade compels them to continue with the same and by the time their old age throws them out of it, the health hazards peculiar to their occupation hardly saves their little 'leftover' existence. Yet the intellectuals, the promoters of 'social justice' and Human Rights Activists seem to have skipped this section of the society until recently. The recent Supreme Court judgement (Vishaljit vs. Union of India) and other judgements have compelled the state governments to shirk their inertia, plan out rehabilitation programme for the sexworkers and to ensure them human rights. In absence of any recent systematic data in Gujarat, it is difficult for policy makers to plan any meaningful, feasible action programme. The present study aims at bridging this information gap. It is hoped that the study will throw light on the problems and needs of the sex workers of the oldest red-light area of Gujarat state.

Its findings are hoped to be useful for policy makers, social activists, social scientists including psychologists, sociologists, social work professionals and historians. Since the respondents constitute a category of 'women in special

circumstances', the study hopes to contribute a great deal in the field of women's studies as well.

Commercial sexworkers are identified as high risk behaviour group for HIV and AIDS and hence the Health Department of local self government and state government may also find the information on the lifestyle of sex workers relevant in planning AIDS/STD prevention programme. It being a sociolegal issue, the police and judiciary also may find the data useful. More than any one else, the sex workers themselves may find the report useful in fighting for their rights. Infact, an earlier report by the researcher has been used by the lawyer representing the sex workers in the Gujarat High Court to their favour.

Objectives of the Study :

The broad objective of the study is to identify scope of social work intervention for the betterment of sex workers - especially the poor ones.

Following are the specific objectives of the present study :-

1. To study the socio-economic background of respondents before coming to flesh trade.
2. To explore the present living conditions, health facilities and civic amenities availed by the respondents.
3. To study the conditions of their children's stay including the arrangement for their education and medical facilities.

4. To find out the prevailing pattern of operating of respondents in flesh trade.
5. To study their attitude towards customers, brothel keepers and law implementing machinery i.e. Police and Judiciary.
6. To probe into their sex typology, self esteem, value profile and purpose in life.
7. To study their occupational adjustment and stress level.
8. To probe into their religiosity level.
9. To explore the coping strategies adopted by sex workers to manage crisis situations.
10. To study the aspirations, plans and rehabilitation potential of respondents.
11. To study the association between their age and income, period of service as sex workers and motivation/desire to leave sex work and their occupational adjustment and mode of entry.

Research Design :

The nature of study is exploratory descriptive. Primarily Social Survey method has been used to study the lifestyle of women sex workers in the Red-light Area of Surat.

To supplement the quantitative data, and to ensure coverage of certain subtle, subjective reactions of respondents to their environment, some methods of qualitative research --- mainly in depth interviews, life histories, case study and non-participant observation were also used.

Universe and Sample :

All the brothel based women sex workers living and operating in the red-light area of Chaklabazar, Surat in the year 1997 constituted the universe under study. It being a census, door to door survey, no sampling method was applied.

In Surat, the sexworkers keep moving from one place to another and hence their number fluctuated from time to time. The latest official list prepared in 1997 by the local police showed that in all there were 112 sexworkers housed in 36 brothels. The media however, claimed a much bigger number.

The researcher could interview 107 sexworkers during her period of data collection.

Hypotheses :

The hypotheses underlying the present study are as follows :

1. Poorer the socio-economic conditions of women, higher their vulnerability for entry into flesh trade.
2. Younger the age of sexworker, higher her income.
3. Longer the duration in flesh trade, lower the motivation to accept alternative occupation.
4. Higher the family dependency on sexworker, higher her self esteem.
5. Lower the willingness to enter flesh trade, lower the occupational adjustment.

Theoretical and Operational Definitions :

1. *Prostitute :*

‘Prostitute is a person who sells body for monetary gains’.

For the purpose of present study, the term prostitute refers to ‘female commercial sexworker operating through brothels of Surat Red-light Area’. In the following chapters she is also referred to as ‘sexworker’ or ‘respondent’.

2. *Procurers :*

‘Procurers are the persons who supply new girls to the sex industry’.

3. *Pimps :*

‘Pimps are the agents who bring customers’ for sex workers. Operationally, both pimps and procurers are called “Dalals”.

4. *Brothel Keeper :*

‘A brothel keeper is a lady who owns and administers the brothel house and supervises girls operating as sex workers’. In practice they are called ‘Gharawali’ ‘Mousi’ or ‘Mummy’.

5. *Customer :*

He is a person who visits prostitutes and buys their services in exchange of money. Locally, they are called ‘Gharaks’.

6. *Lifestyle :*

For the purpose of this study, the term lifestyle refers to the patterns of thinking and behaviour dependent on social, economic, psychological life experience of respondents and their overall living conditions.

Tools of Data Collection :

A semistructured Interview schedule was the main tool of data collection.

Researcher's earlier experience of conducting research in the same area helped her to build a tool that was mainly structured in nature. However, some questions were kept open ended to enable the respondents to express themselves freely. Space was kept in the interview schedule to record any additional information supplied by the respondent or to note down important observations by the researcher both in respect of individual respondent and/or about the market practices in general. After going through relevant literature, selected scales of measurements were adopted keeping in mind the peculiar needs of the field and the research population. These include H.M. Bell's Occupational Adjustment Inventory (Bells, 1934). Attitude toward occupation, Attitude toward police, Attitude towards self and others, Religious Attitude (Shaw, Wright, 1967). The Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) Projective test of individual and social values (Pareek & Rao). Measures of occupational attitudes and occupational characteristics (Robinson, 1976).

These scales were tested for clarity and relevance with the help of expert judges from the fields of socialwork, languages and social sciences. Other details of the scales are described at appropriate places in the following chapters.

Mostly interviews were conducted in the 'Girasthi' room i.e., space for personal use of brothel keepers. This was possible in case of big brothel houses. Some single room brothels were so small in size that interviewing a respondent there became impossible. It not only hindered privacy but also affected their business adversely. In such cases, space offered by a local community leader in the basement of a building was used. Police's suggestion to use space in police station or a nearby police chowky was humbly refused as the researcher wanted to collect data in an informal way, in respondents' natural and normal surroundings.

Over and above personal interviews some techniques of qualitative research were also used e.g. interviewing key informants like a private medical practitioner who was being consulted by many of the respondents, an Aanganwadi worker working in that area, a shopkeeper of a provision store etc.

Police records were also used as a secondary source of data.

Limitations :

Utmost care was taken to collect in-depth, detailed data from as many respondents as possible. However, circumstances beyond researcher's control paused following difficulties :-

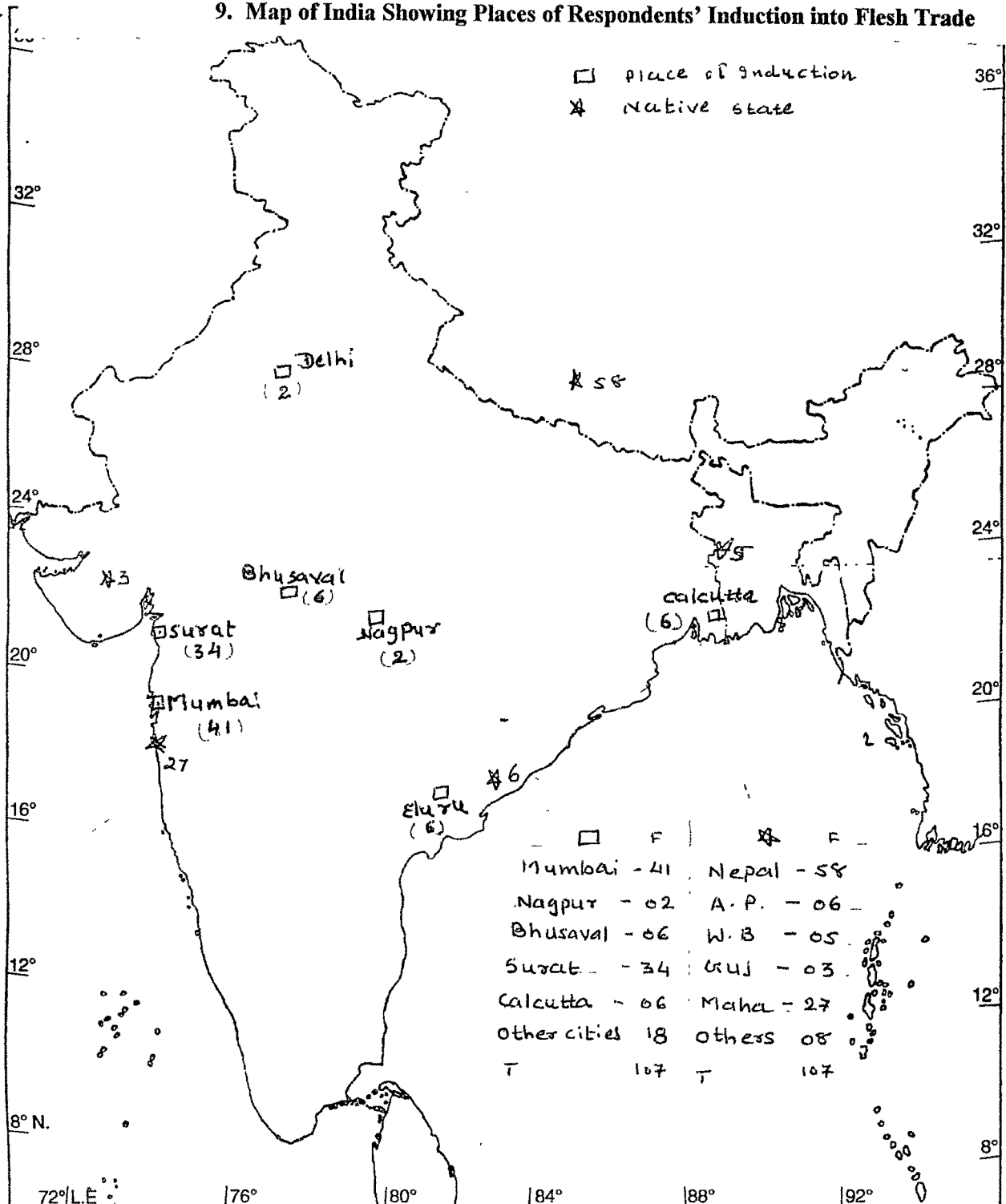
1. Initially, the researcher tried to follow the list of respondents as per the police record, but because of the floating nature of the population both intercity and within the city, She had to modify her list and plan the data collection schedule afresh.
2. Some respondents were left out because they were not present during the period of data collection.
3. Though a lady constable familiar with most of the brothel keepers in the area accompanied the researcher, the possibility of some sex workers not being allowed to be interviewed by the brothel keeper can not be ruled out. Most of the brothel keepers and sex workers co-operated well; few did express their reluctance to respond.
4. Sometimes, when a respondent was being interviewed, others gathered around her and hindered privacy. In some cases, the brothel keepers hung around while her 'girl' was being interviewed, possibly out of fear that she may be put into legal trouble. In such cases, researcher had to be tactful in interviewing the respondents. This has been narrated in detail under 'experiences during data collection'.



Business Setup After Late Nineties ... When Police Becomes Active

(Source : Shrirang Studio ಸಿರಿಕಥೆ)

9. Map of India Showing Places of Respondents' Induction into Flesh Trade



CASE STUDY

Meena Gawali was a fairly good looking woman in her early thirties. She was medium built, and had wheat brown complexion. Unlike other girls around, she did not wear heavy make up. She was dressed in a simple but costly Punjabi suit which gave her a sophisticated look.

She was introduced to the researcher by one of the senior and leading brothel keepers of Chaklabazar (named Leelabai). Meena had recently moved out of Leela's brothel and had rented a neighbouring property to run a brothel independently, but she continued to dine at Leela's kitchen. Researcher met Meena in Leela's kitchen.

Researcher introduced herself, explained the purpose of her visit and also told Meena that the police inspector had specially recommended her name to the researcher, because Meena was an educated and an enlightened girl and perhaps the most capable person to orient the researcher about the market trends. This soon removed Meena's initial suspicion and reluctance. She, however, requested the researcher to go to her own brothel, so that she could talk comfortably with the researcher and at the same time can keep an 'eye' on the girls working under her.

Meena's brothel house consisted of four small rooms out of which one was reserved for personal use. It was originally a garage, now converted in to a house with walls created in an unplanned way to divide the space in to several small

cubicles just large enough to accommodate one cot. The room for personal use had a stove etc. in one corner and a 'chowkdy' (open bathing place) with a water tap and water outlet in another. Except the door in the main entrance, all rooms' openings had no doors but had curtains to maintain privacy.

Researcher was asked whether she would like to have tea or 'Thanda' i.e. cold drink, Meena insisted that Researcher must accept something as she was her guest.

She then began to reply to researcher's question. According to her, she was married but she preferred to be known by her maiden name. She was a Hindu Marathi girl from 'Gawali' caste. Her age was 32 years and she had studied upto 12th standard. She could speak Hindi and English over and above her mothertongue i.e. Marathi. She hailed from 'Mahad' taluka of Akola District of Maharashtra.

Her parental family consisted of herself, her father, mother and a son aged nine years. She had a brother who was married and stayed separately. He did not share economic responsibility of their family, her parents earlier worked as agricultural labourers and used to earn Rs.10 per day each. Now, because of old age, they were dependent on her. They owned a small house but had no other property.

Her's was a love marriage. When she was 17 years old, she was attracted to a Rajasthani man who was running a grocery shop in her neighbourhood.

During her two years of married life she had one son. She did not know much about her husband's education but only knew that he was literate. He earned about Rs.100 per day. She never visited her in-laws. Her parents first objected to her decision but after her son's birth accepted her. After two years of happy married life, her husband went to his hometown in Rajasthan. Despite Meena's requests, he did not allow her to accompany him.

To Meena's utter shock and surprise, when he came back, he was accompanied by a woman - his 'wife' ! He then told Meena that he was already married and that she can continue to stay with him as his kept, but expressed his inability to cut off relations with his legal wife.

Meena turned down his offer and went back to her parents. Her brother was not ready to keep her and bear her son's expense. He, infact, was not maintaining their elderly parents properly and soon moved out of the house with his wife.

Now, the responsibility of maintaining her child and her aged parents fell on Meena. For sometime, she tried to look for some respectable work in her own town but failed to get any. Some acquaintance got her a job in a famous biscuit factory as a daily wage earner at Bombay. Even when she worked overtime, her earnings were not enough to maintain four souls.

One elderly woman in her neighbourhood asked her if she was interested in a job where she could make more money. She took Meena to another lady and

after some time left the place. It was only then that Meena realised that she was sold to a brothel keeper in Rs.2000/-. When she requested the lady to release her, she was told in a clear and firm way that though she would not be physically forced to entertain a customer, she could not leave the premises until she paid them back Rs.2000/- which were paid by the brothel keeper while buying her. At the same time, she was constantly being 'counselled' and advised to accept fleshtrade as a way of life. She was 'brainwashed' by saying that this was the only way she could take revenge on the menfolk. She was also told that as a single woman she is not 'safe' out side, men were bound to exploit her sexually. Instead, why not exploit them and make them pay for it ? By this way she can earn a lot more and make her son's fortune. If she still did not like it, she could always pay back her 'price' of Rs.2000/- and go free.

Over and above the Mousi's brainwashing, other girls in the same brothel would now and then narrate the pathetic story of some girls who tried to escape from the brothel and who were either gangraped or were rejected by their own family members and ultimately forced to come back to the sex market.

Meena ultimately gave in and accepted to entertain a customer. Initially she felt guilty for what she was doing but the flow of easy money soon overshadowed her guilt. She could now send a handsome amount to her parents and son. She decided to accept sextrade as a way of life. Over and above the brothel based work, she frequently went out with customers to nearby places. This was how she

happened to visit Surat. Smart and ambitious as she was, she could assess the market trends and learnt that a girl of her calibre could earn a lot more in Surat. By this time she had already paid back her 'price' amount to the Mousi and hence she moved to Surat. She contacted the seniormost 'Mousi' in the red-light area of Surat, and started working through her. She earned a lot of money. In between, she tried her luck in the 'Rajkot' red-light area in the Saurashtra region, but she could not adjust there. According to her, customers in Rajkot paid well but were very rough in their behaviour and hence she again came back to Surat.

Out of her savings, she decided to buy the rights of running a brothel next to 'Bhuri bai's den. She now had several girls working under her. She had also bought a plot in a housing society across the river Tapi and planned to bring her parents and son to there after the house is ready.

According to Meena, now she had stopped entertaining customers and earned only through her 'girls'. However another brothel-keeper in the same area shared with the Researcher that Meena still worked as a sexworker. She only accepted customers who could afford her high rates and got more business through hotels for a 'fullday/night' contracts.

Meena had no health complaints. She read newspapers and magazines and also attended AIDS awareness programmes organised by the PSM department of Medical College. She was fully aware of the health risks involved in this business and infact helped the doctors to spread AIDS awareness among other sexworkers

in the area. According to her, most sexworkers in Surat now insisted that the customers use condom.

Meena, now had fully reconciled with her fate and did not express any desire to leave this business until her son grew up and supported her.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study shows that adolescent or young girls - both married and unmarried from low socio-economic class and with low level of education are vulnerable to prostitution. Some were victimised by traffickers by giving false promises of job / marriage, and by deceit were compelled to join flesh trade. Others were drawn to prostitution under the influence of village friends who were already in flesh trade. It is also seen that although women and girls from all over the country and even from outside India are recruited in the sex markets, there are definite identifiable zones which are major sources of supply for the sex markets. e.g. Akola in Maharashtra, Eluru in Andhra, Gorakhpur and Nepal. Similarly, the major spots receiving fresh supply of sex workers also are identifiable.

As far as the age group of sex workers is concerned, majority of them are adults. However, incidence of child prostitution was not totally absent. About one fifth of the sex workers entered flesh trade when they were minors. Since minor sex workers attract more customers, their vulnerability to STD / AIDS also is higher. Their frequency of exposure to sexual acts and number of sex partners (customers) is more as compared to older sex workers. In other words, the risk behaviour is especially higher among minor or child prostitutes. Their immaturity and lack of experience increase the chances of economic exploitation by brothel keepers as the bargaining / negotiating skills of minor sex workers are too poor.

On the other hand, it was noted that the only elderly retired prostitutes found by the researcher were the brothel keeper. Barring few middle aged sex workers - turned - 'ayas' one could hardly see an elderly ex-prostitute. Thus, either their longevity is very short or they are driven out of brothels in old age. What happens to the elderly ex-prostitutes, thus, is a matter of investigation.

The work environment and working conditions are poor. Since the brothels are situated in the midst of the city in a thickly populated area, the scope of expanding the brothel houses is poor. They, infact, had to squizz in smaller buildings as parts of the buildings had been demolished for road alignment by Municipal Corporation. Inadequate space and poor sanitation further increase the risk to their health. Their access to medical services, however seems to have improved owing to the special attention and resources diverted for AIDS awareness /prevention programme - by the government.

It must, however, be noted that this positive change is restricted to the health related issues only. Neither the government nor the society seems to be bothered about addressing to their other needs and problems. Their marginalization due to economic inequalities and social injustice both before and after coming to flesh trade continues. Other government departments e.g. social defence, Home, Social Justice and Empowerment do not seem to have exerted sufficiently to even initiate efforts towards prevention and control of prostitution as a commercialized vice and to rescue, rehabilitate and reintegrate sex workers in

to the mainstream of society. Nor can one notice any whole hearted effort being made to ensure opportunities of healthy growth and development of their children.

The office of the District Social Defence Officer is located at a walking distance from the Surat red-light area. There is a full fledged 'State home for women' established under the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act which is supposed to provide shelter and vocational training to women rescued from brothel houses. The Surat Municipal Corporation, The UCD - Urban Community Development project office and the Police station are located at a stone throwing distance from the chakla bazaar red-light area. All these agencies are vested with adequate authority and resources to intervene and help women in sex work. None of these can deny its direct or indirect responsibility to deal with the problems of prostitutes and prostitution. Until the sex workers become empowered enough to assert their own rights, it is the duty of these government departments to take the lead in developing need based, area specific outreach programmes. So also, the local NGOs need to expand their roles as organized watchgroups to question the administration for its lack of commitment and inefficiency. They can play a vital role in nabbing the trafficker - police - politician nexus.

✓ It is equally necessary that actions by police, per se, need not be seen as police harassment. So long as the police is complying its lawful duties, without any indecent behaviour violating sex workers' dignity, so long as the main target of police is **traffickers** and not sex workers, so long as it does so honestly (without

adopting corrupt means) and so long as it is not acting as an agent of a third party having vested interest (e.g. builders, politicians) police deserves co-operation not only from the local citizens but also from sex workers and judiciary. The vicious net work of traffickers needs to be broken somewhere. Since prostitution per se is not a crime and law takes a softer view towards sex workers, the traffickers and brothel keepers tend to use them as camouflage whenever a legal action is initiated.

Many respondents in the present study shared that they knew about the existence of Surat sex market and hence were encouraged to leave home and take up sex work in Surat red-light area. Others were brought to the Surat or Bombay red-light area and were forced to join flesh trade. In both cases of forced or self decided acceptance of sex work, the existence of ready markets have facilitated women's entry in to flesh trade. In other words, had there been no organized sex markets, many of them would not have left home and would have chosen to earn through other occupation.

The present legal policy of abolitionism, thus, is ideal on paper but seems operationally inadequate and unrealistic to combat the problem of forced prostitution. Since the present law does not recognize prostitution in its organized and commercial form, regulation of working and living conditions does not become possible. Sex workers are compelled to live in inhuman conditions.

Sex workers, thus, are denied their dues from all the three - **the society** of which they are members, **the traffickers and brothel keepers** who earn through them and **the state** of which they are citizens. It is obvious that the traffickers, with their vested interest, can hardly be expected to work for the betterment of sex workers.

The other two components - the state and the society can definitely do a lot more through their active and well co-ordinated intervention.

Different government departments can atleast keep each other informed and seek each other's support to ensure justice to those who deserve it. e.g. if Police announces closure of sex market, officials from social defence or social justice and empowerment department, if properly informed, can atleast remind the sex workers of the existing survival alternatives offered by the state and encourage them to make optimum use of the same. Sitting and negotiating with the sex worker's representatives would help in removing the obstacles which cause underutilisation or nonutilization of help offered by the state. Agencies like 'Mahila Aarthik Vikas Nigam Ltd.' can float special schemes to suit the rehabilitation needs of displaced sex workers. Local NGOs can remove the insecurities and inhibitions of displaced/retired sex workers to accept alternative occupation through counselling.

What is needed is a firm commitment and human approach towards this less fortunate section of our society.

In the end researcher has also suggested an action plan with a special focus on preventing and controlling incidence of forced and child prostitution.

Suggestions :

Social Work Approach :

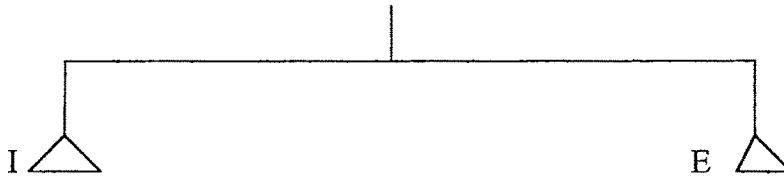
Before presenting suggestions and recommendations, the researcher feels necessary to briefly explain the general approach adopted by her while making the suggestions.

She has drawn from Max Silverstein's (Tudu, 1982) approach of professional social work that explains the crux of social work as "neither appeasing the inner psychology, nor trying to change the outer reality (completely) but preparing the inner psychology (of an individual) to meet the outer reality wherever it is possible; or if it is not possible, then to create an environment that softens the blow of reality to an acceptable form for the needy - - - through both psychological as well as educational treatment."

Needless to say, it blends, to an extent, the functional and psycho social approaches. Graphically, it can be explained thus :

Socialwork Approach - Fig. 1

- A. Normal - Average Healthy Person :
Equilibrium between Individual (I) and Environment (E)



- B. Abnormality occurs when equilibrium gets disturbed :
Resulting in to emergence of Problem (P).

- i) Environmental factors (E) and/or ii) Individual factors (I)
Pose a problem Pose a problem



- C. Goal of social work intervention (SI) and Role of professional care givers :
Enable one to reach / restore equilibrium.

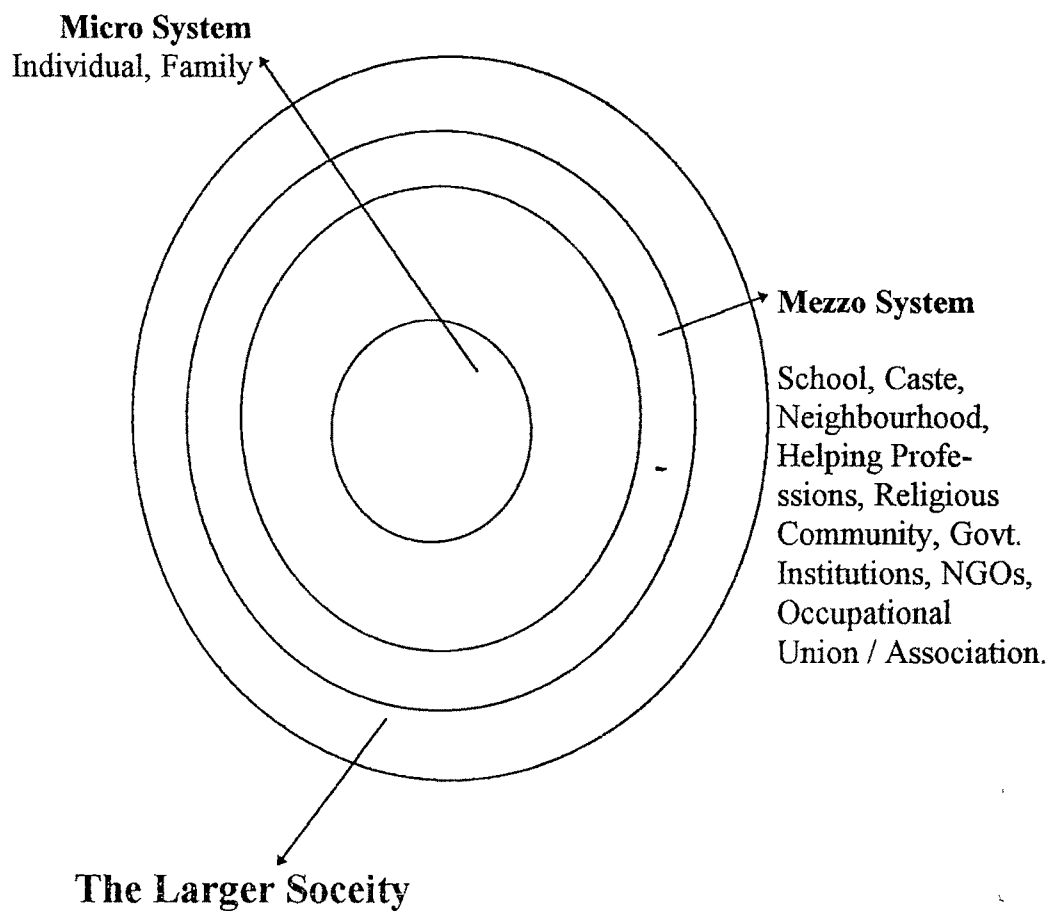
- i) Equip Individual and/or ii) Manage Environment



Secondly, researcher's suggestions are directed at three operational levels as suggested by Mullen (1972) viz.

- 1) Macro system i.e. the large scale complex social system,
- 2) Micro system wherein the units of attention are individuals, families or small groups and
- 3) Mezzo system i.e. the in between of the social work intervention terminals viz. agencies and institutions.

Socialwork Approach - Fig. 2



Suggestions for Social work Intervention :

According to G. Caplan (1964) rehabilitation should start with diagnosis and one should not wait to start rehabilitation until the problem has ended - it should be integrated with the process of diagnosis and therapy.

The researcher, therefore, has presented her suggestions for social work profession's contribution to the psycho social rehabilitation of prostitutes right from the phase of prevention. The suggestions and recommendations thus are divided in to three phases.

- 1) Prevention State : Before women and girls enter the sex market.
- 2) Curative Phase : While they are in the sex trade.
- 3) Rehabilitation Stage: While they are prepared/forced to leave flesh trade.

For the purpose of clarity and practical application suggestion at each phase are presented at three operational levels - macro, mezzo and micro.

The researcher suggests following measures to curb and combat the ill effects of prostitution.

1) Preventive Measures :

Illiteracy, ignorance, poverty, social maladjustment and lure for easy money are the prime factors that cause and perpetuate prostitution.

Macro Level Preventive Measures :

- * Structural changes in social institutions e.g. marriage, family, inheritance to remove gender based discrimination both in personal and civil matters through legislative actions need to be brought about.
- * It requires influencing policy decisions especially directed at empowering women on all fronts - social, economic and political.
- * Loopholes in personal laws which perpetuate women's victimization must be sealed.
- * Special efforts to check migration of women due to economic compulsions must be made. If need be, special relief schemes (as in case of drought affected areas) may be floated with a special focus to ensure women's employment.

Mezzo Level Preventive Measures :

As noted earlier, there are specific geographic zones from where women and girls are procured or lured for prostitution in large numbers. Area specific approach to prevent induction of girls in to flesh trade is needed.

- * Net work of existing social / government institutions should create awareness among women and girls. Since most of the women in prostitution are illiterate, schools may not prove to be an ideal agency to catch the target groups. Fortunately, caste and religious institutions have a strong net work in Indian society. Mahila mandals or Bhajan mandalis are also informal but organized

groups. Over and above their traditional functions, these agencies or groups and institutions can be prepared to assume newer roles as community watch groups to prevent women's victimization by traffickers.

- * In addition to existing community groups, special agencies / schemes can be created to identify and train peer educators by the government especially in the prostitution prone zones, thus creating a special task force.

- * Such newly created / existing community groups can work with a two pronged approach of :

- i) Spreading awareness to caution the young women, girls and their parents against their probable victimization by procurers.

- ii) Acting as watch groups to counter and confront the procurers and traffickers.

(Researcher remembers having read how village youths prevented girl's victimization by a professional procurers' gang in South Gujarat through vigilant actions).

- * Existing net work of government e.g. police functionaries can be activated at both ends - prostitute procurement zones and receiving zones to identify the professional procurers and traffickers, to trace their movements and to maintain and update their records for effective legal actions against them.

* Awareness through mass-media regarding the risks involved in engaging in to prostitution can prevent girls' voluntary entry in to flesh trade. Since the procuring points are mostly in remote villages on hilly areas, convincing the local folk artist groups to specially design and perform programmes carrying social messages to prevent prostitution may help. Folk media (e.g. folk songs, drama etc.) can prove to be an effective means to reachout to illiterate population in remote villages. Documentary films on the pathetic conditions in red-light area can go a long way in breaking their illusion of city life.

Micro Level Preventive Measures :

These include efforts targeted at individual or family level. Girl children of poor families in rural areas and hilly areas of north-east and some districts of Maharashtra deserve a special attention. Eldest girl child or destituted girl child seem to be more prone to prostitution.

* Promoting education among girls by ensuring enrolment of every girl in school and facilitating her school attendance at least till she completes primary education is a must.

* For older women/girls, functional literacy programmes should be evolved along with some vocational training which enables a woman to earn enough for their survival needs at village level.

- * In poverty stricken areas, direct incentives to parents of girl child should be given so as to motivate them to educate them and to accept the responsibility of maintaining a girl child.
- * Short stay / shelter homes for socially maladjusted or victimised women should be there to prevent their further victimization through procurers or traffickers.
- * Sufficient work opportunities should be created for young and needy women, within the vicinity of their own talukas.
- * In prostitution prone zones, the village panchayats can constitute vigilance committees to ensure safety of young girls.
- * Young girls should be given sex education with special focus on birth control measures, on provisions for medical termination of pregnancy and on safer sex practices so as to prevent HIV infection and unwanted pregnancy. Many a times, young unmarried girls getting pregnant and later deceived by their fiancée find shelter in sex market. Sex education can help in preventing such incidence.
- * Some mechanism should be developed involving joint efforts by government agencies (e.g. local police or village panchayats) and community groups (e.g. caste panchayats, yuvak mandals) in high risk procurement zones to monitor and trace the movement of young girls. Net working of such agencies can help each other in providing correct information. e.g. many girls are assured good

jobs in cities and are then sold off in sex market. Instead of relying on oral commitments of traffickers they may be asked to give exact details of the employer who offers a job, the scrutinising agency can, through their net work, verify the whereabouts and credibility of the employers and the terms and conditions on which jobs are offered. It can also keep a follow up record of the migrating girl. Parents and guardians of young girls should be convinced to send out their daughters/wards for jobs only through such authorised scrutinising - cum - monitoring agency channel. Such machinery can be designed on the pattern of scrutinising and placement agencies for adoption of children - both in country and inter country. The net work of government probation officers also can be used for this purpose.

2) Curative Measures :

Curative suggestions focus on the women and girls who have already landed up in flesh trade in a red-light area and aim at ensuring them survival, justice and freedom against exploitation by traffickers and police.

Macro Level Curative Measures :

* At policy level, a major change is required. Having subscribed to the abolitionist approach rigidly, it is presumed that third party intervention is absent - i.e. we close our eyes to reality. The presence of traffickers and brothel keepers

may not be possible legally, but operationally, they are the real vested interests who perpetuate flesh trade. To maximise profit, they hardly spend for improving the living and work conditions or health care of sex workers. Since law does not recognise their existence, law can not compel them to maintain minimum standards of health and hygiene. To alter this situation, researcher feels that a realistic and workable formula combining abolitionist approach with regulatory approach is needed.

While the central law can continue to attack on traffickers the local laws or rules must insist for minimum standards of working and living conditions and regular health check up. This will atleast improve their pathetically unhygienic work environment.

* Stricter steps against procurers and traffickers are needed. The local police officers should be made personally responsible for their negligence and failure to control trafficking in human beings.

* Reasons for low conviction rate of traffickers must be investigated and analyzed. Appropriate steps to increase efficiency of police, to seal the loopholes in legal procedure and to sensitize judiciary towards misuse of its pro-sex workers approach by traffickers are needed.

* The sex workers are deprived of many civic rights and social security benefits because of rigidity of government agencies. Such government welfare

schemes can surely improve the conditions of sex workers; if the administrators are sensitized towards the needs of this section of society, and are authorised to be flexible in considering their needs. e.g. giving short term loans to sex workers in times of crisis can be considered by banks to prevent exploitation by money lenders.

- * Except the illegal migrants from other countries voting rights, ration card facilities should be extended to the sex workers who are steadily living at one place for a long time.

- * Making of welfare programmes for the children of prostitutes must be expedited at Gujarat state level.

Mezzo Level Curative Measures :

- * Mobilize existing government and community resource / support systems e.g. health services, legal aid etc.

- * The local district social defence office can extend the benefits to the eligible sex workers / retired sex workers e.g. old age pension scheme or widow pension scheme. If need be, the sex workers can be exempted from fulfilling certain formalities availing benefits under these schemes as a special case.

- * Fostering self help groups among sex workers through local community organizers (e.g. under the U.C.D. programme) can help in promoting the interest of

the sex workers. Through participatory approach their dependence on the state on one hand and traffickers on the other hand can gradually be reduced.

* If the judiciary endorses sex workers' right to earn through sex work, and the red-light area is likely to continue for coming few decades, it is suggested that a special post be created in cities where organized sex markets exist by the department of social defence. The person so appointed should be a professionally trained social worker, preferably a woman. She can initiate small savings schemes, consumer co-operatives with the support of local bank, can do liaison with the local corporation, police authorities and district courts, can take up individual counselling for the needy. (Please see the action plan suggested by the researcher).

* Local NGOs, University and Government agencies like 'Mahila Aarthik Vikas Nigam' or 'Shramik Vidyapith' can float adult education program, vocational guidance and training or functional literacy programme for the benefit of sex workers who are willing to go for the same.

* Some strategies should be worked out to educate customers for HIV/AIDS prevention and for adopting safer sex techniques.

* The Municipal Corporation should ensure that prostitutes' children's enrolment in primary schools is done. The corporator of the zone in which the red-light area is situated should personally take interest in facilitating such

enrolment. Older children can be admitted in to the nearest government run 'Ashramshalas' or residential school.

* Day care centre for small children of sex workers be initiated, preferably in a nearby area. If this is not possible in near future, the fosterhome attached with the state home for women can offer such services. A needy, retired sex worker, having an aptitude to work with children can be employed as a care taker.

Micro Level Curative Measure :

1. Each woman sex worker's minimum survival needs must be ensured and human rights must be protected.
2. Whole hearted efforts to rescue child prostitutes / forced prostitutes must be made. Every possible means should be adopted to identify new entrant in sex market. She should be interviewed thoroughly in a place away from a brothel where she feels safe and secure to talk freely. If she expresses her unwillingness for sex work, she must be extended full security and safe custody.
3. Extensive counselling services should be made available to sex workers, where they can seek help, support and guidance in times of crisis like emotional breakdown, indebtedness, health problems or victimization by anti social elements

4. Counselling / group work techniques can also be used for increasing their awareness about their rights not only qua government but also against exploitation by brothel keepers and pimps. They need to be more assertive in fighting against exploitation.
5. Children living in brothels deserve a special attention. It is hightime that the state government keeps up its commitment to start programmes for the protection and development of children of prostitutes. It is necessary that government abandons its policy to initiate its efforts only when the eligible beneficiaries reach a sizeable number. Human life and not economic viability should be the focus in such matters. What is needed is the 'will' more than the 'resources'.

3) Rehabilitative Measures :

The rehabilitative measures include steps facilitating sex workers reintegration in the main stream of the society. Rehabilitative measures focus on encouraging the women to leave sex work and accept a healthier means of earning their living. For those who are unable to work due to ageing, rehabilitation may mean providing for their basic survival needs and health care.

Macro Level Rehabilitative Measures :

- Incorporating the rehabilitation aspect in the law relating to immoral trafficking in human beings may be considered.

- As stated in the earlier paragraphs, combining regulationist approach with the present abolitionist approach may help in fixing up the responsibility of sex workers' rehabilitation on their employers or brothel keepers.
- Any rehabilitation programme for sex workers must also cover the rehabilitation of the retired/elderly prostitutes.

Mezzo Level Rehabilitative Measures :

- Local government / semi government or non-government organizations should evolve special extension / continuing education and vocational training programmes after carefully assessing their needs and interests.
- Functional knowledge about health awareness, legal awareness and money management should be provided to the sex workers, over and above functional literacy.
- NGOs engaged in working for the sex workers should frequently create opportunities to bring government functionaries, community / neighbourhood people and sex workers together on a common platform not only in seminars and workshops but also in programmes like celebration of festivals to remove alienation of the sex workers from the social mainstream. Promoting such planned intermingling can definitely initiate the process of de-stigmatization, which is necessary for any rehabilitation programme to yield success.

Micro Level Rehabilitative Measures :

1. It is very necessary to identify sex workers who are wanting / willing to leave sex trade and are ready to accept other work. Apart from older sex workers who are compelled to leave sex work due to old age, younger sex workers, too, should be encouraged to opt for other means of livelihood, through counselling.
2. Vocational training of their choice should be made easily available to them. Many sex workers in the red-light area already possess skills e.g. knitting, carpet weaving or other crafts. They should be encouraged to keep these skills alive. Short term training with stipend may also tempt them to undergo such training.
3. It is suggested that giving them some meaningful leisure time activity of productive nature having a ready market can be considered. e.g. doormat/broom/paper flower making even while awaiting customers can not only serve therapeutic purpose of overcoming their frustrations but also can supplement their income and help them regain their confidence in their ability to earn through other means. Initially, assuring market to such products may be needed.

- Sex workers who are literate and possess leadership qualities can be trained and employed as peer educators or community workers for spreading literacy, health and legal awareness. Gradually, such workers can be helped to withdraw from sex work and lead a normal life.

Researcher again emphasizes that operationally, an integrated approach encompassing all the three goals of prevention, cure and rehabilitation has to be adopted. One must remember that fighting against one of the oldest evil practices of the society is a herculean task. Choosing right persons having appropriate knowledge, skill and aptitude is, therefore, very essential. The efforts and will rather than numbers or statistics can help us measure the success. The task requires patience, perseverance and above all, faith in human beings' capacity to change.

Areas for Further Research :

There are many areas which have remained unexplored and many others requiring further in-depth probing, so as to understand prostitution as a social and economic phenomenon. The areas which are likely to have possibilities for social work intervention and which need to be explored further are as follows :

1. A follow up study of elderly (ex) prostitutes is needed to know their rehabilitation needs.

2. A study on adolescent children of prostitutes - especially focusing on how they perceive their socialization process and what are their attitudes towards their mother, and her work is needed.
3. A study of grown up / adult children of prostitutes and their social/economic profile can help in assessing the rehabilitation needs of the children of sex workers.
4. A qualitative study of sex workers who have freshly accepted sex work - especially focusing on how they are initiated in sex work and what impact it has on their emotional being is needed.
5. A study on the attitude of neighbourhood community towards sex workers can reveal facts which can facilitate social rehabilitation of sex workers.
6. Government machinery must keep a basic survey record of the sex workers operating in a specific area - this record may also include street walking sex workers, call girls as well as brothel based sex workers. Such record must be updated at short intervals, so as to assess the magnitude of prostitution accurately.

7. A city wise record of historical milestones of the major events occurring in this field must be maintained. This task can be assigned to an academic institution so as to observe major trends and noting the emerging patterns.
8. The immediate as well as long-term impact of police's attempts to close down the sex market and sex workers' and traffickers' reactions should be studied.
9. Case studies of sex workers who have attempted to leave sex work and tried to socially/economically settle down either by getting married or by accepting other mode of earning can help in assessing their rehabilitation needs.
10. Sex workers' attitude towards institutionalization of self & their children should be studied.

ACTION PLAN

A Pilot Project For Helping Women Sex Workers In Surat City

Objectives :

1. To rescue child prostitutes and victims of forced prostitution.
2. To promote healthier lifestyle among women sex workers.
3. To facilitate rehabilitation of sex workers and their children.

Rationale :

The pro-women, pro-poor approach of law makers and judiciary, the changing social values and the demands put forth by organized groups of sex workers to recognize sex work as a legitimate occupation have made prohibition on prostitution impossible in near future. In other words, prostitution and prostitutes are going to continue in one form or the other in coming decades. Under such circumstances, state intervention and help become essential for protecting the interest of the worst affected groups of prostitutes. Brothel based prostitutes are one of them. Hence, designing a special scheme / project with the above mentioned broad objectives becomes essential.

Duration :

Initially the project may be started on experimental basis for a period of two years. Depending on its success, it may be extended to other cities, covering even street walking prostitutes or call girls.

Funding :

The project should be fully funded by the state government.

Staff :

A project officer or a program officer may be appointed. The person should be a professionally trained social worker, preferably a woman. She should be designated in the rank of a probation officer. She should operate from a cell located in the vicinity of the red-light area.

The project officer can seek support from a multi disciplinary team consisting of a lawyer, a medical officer, local police officer, a social scientist and volunteers from local community.

Job Description and Modus Operandi :

* **In the first phase**, the programme officer may conduct a benchmark survey and try to collect and record data on the existing status of women in red-light area and build rapport with the sex workers, brothel keepers and other key persons in the red-light area. She may regularly visit and hold informal meeting

with sex workers individually or in groups, and also keep in touch with the government functionaries directly or indirectly concerned with their problem e.g. health/legal aid etc.

***In the second phase, her tasks may include the following :**

1. Identifying child/minor prostitutes and girls/women who are forced in to prostitution against their will, and facilitate their rescue, if need be, with the support of the police.
2. The programme officer may also keep an eye on the new entrants in the flesh market. Tapping informal sources like local autorickshaw drivers or shop keepers can also help her in identifying new entries. New entrants can be helped through counselling to consider accepting other dignified work for earning and may be guided to protection homes.
3. For those who are already into sex work, and do not willingly opt to leave it, the programme officer can help them organize in to small self help groups, who, with her support can assert and demand their rights by proper representation before appropriate authority. e.g. in case of abuse/exploitation by police, harassment by anti social elements or brothel keepers, they can avail legal aid or seek intervention from higher authorities.

4. Fostering small saving groups and small scale consumer co-operatives can reduce indebtedness of sex workers, and save them from the clutches of money lenders who charge high rate of interest.
5. The programme officer can also make certain existing welfare schemes - (like old age / widow pension scheme) - accessible to the needy and eligible sex workers.
6. Spreading health awareness and facilitating use of available health services can go a long way in improving health status of sex workers. Identifying and training peer educators from amongst the sex workers for HIV/AIDS prevention measures can be one of the tasks of the programme officer.
7. Organizing celebration of festivals or occasional pleasure trips to nearby places in small groups can give the sex workers some relief from their tedious daily routine and ensure better mental health. Inviting local leaders and neighbourhood people on special occasions like puja etc. can promote planned intermingling of sex workers with community which is very essential to minimise stigmatization and alienation of sex workers from the social mainstream.
8. One to one counselling in case of emotional breakdown, depression and providing crisis intervention services also can be taken up by programme officer.

9. Giving them meaningful and productive leisure time activities may gradually help them revive their interest in a healthier economic activity. Vocational training or even functional literacy programme can also be taken up. Those who show desire to undergo such programmes may also be given some material incentives to encourage others to do the same.
10. Starting a day care centre for sex workers' children during their business hours and ensuring enrolment of older children in schools can be co-ordinated by the programme officer.
11. Rehabilitation / institutionalization of aged and elderly needy (ex) prostitutes can be one of the tasks of the programme officer.
12. Networking and co-ordination of all the government and non-government resource agencies for the benefit of sex working community can be done by the project officer.

Evaluation :

Six monthly progress report of the work may be sent to the state advisory committee. At the end of two years the state advisory committee may assess the contribution of the programme in improving the status of sex workers and their children.