

Chapter 1

Prostitution in Calcutta:

Historical
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Chapter I

Prostitution in Calcutta: Historical Background

A glimpse of real picture of old Calcutta has been beautifully captured in the literary work of the poet, Satyendranath Dutta:

*Ei Kolikata-- Kalika khetro, kahini ihar shobar sruto,
Bishnu chakra ghurechhe hethay, Mahesher padodhule e puto
Hindur Kali achhen hethay, Musalmaner Moula ali,
Chari kone saidhu peer charijon mushkil asan cherag jwali'
Shokol Dharma milechhe hethay samonyoyer mandra sure,
Swagata sadhak bhakto brindo maroter baikunthopure]*

This Kolkata--- the playground of divine *Kali*, its story is heard by all,
Lord *Bishnu's chakra* turned here,
It's holy with the dust of Siva's footfall.
Kali of the Hindus dwells here, so does *Moula Ali* of Muslims
On all four corners are Islam's saints with lamps of love and peace.
All faiths mingle here, in deep-rooted solidarity,
I welcome all saints and devotees here to this worldly Paradise.¹

As other pre-colonial socio-economic formations underwent dramatic transformations, dramatic changes also occurred in the profession of prostitution in the nineteenth century Bengal soon after the establishment of British domination in Bengal. A large number and variety of women hailing from different strata of the population flocked to the profession of prostitution during that colonial century. A new type of clientele who were products of the colonial order emerged in the scenario of Bengal during this period. The colonial administrators had attempted to control and closely observe the profession of prostitution. The *Bhadralok* community who constituted the successive generation of old Bengali families who were highly influenced by newly introduced English education, also attempted to reassess them. Prostitution crossed the boundaries of the rural areas where it remain present in obscurity during the pre-colonial period in Bengal and suddenly came into focus achieving huge publicity in Calcutta. A large number of Bengali chapbooks and farces were being published during this period by cheap printing press, which emerged as a dominant business in Calcutta and its suburbs during nineteenth century Bengal. The "morbid curiosity and prurient voyeurism" around the life-style of prostitutes started being exposed in these books. The phenomenon of prostitution had been subjected to the responses of colonial administration and the reaction of the indigenous socio-cultural formations in Bengal during nineteenth century. This indicated the development of a 'pathological society' gradually occurring in a territory where the colonial administration was established and led to the introduction of new commercial relations in economy and also made an

¹ Meghnad Gupta, *Rater Kolkata (Calcutta by Night)*, Pratik, Kolkata, 1991(1923 1st Publication), p.9.

effort to introduce a 'new ethical norms in social relations'. In the course of this dramatic transformation which was gradually occurring in socio-economic scenario of nineteenth century Bengal, enormous problems were also raised. One such difficult situation which was faced by the British administrator and the Bengali *bhadralok* was the rapid growth of prostitution in varied forms and 'polymorphic stages of development' which occurred in Bengal throughout the eighteenth – nineteenth century.²

Though the antiquity of profession of prostitution in India is beyond doubt the context of colonialism entails important shifts. Hence before one can make a sense of prostitution in the twentieth century, the ramifications of the nineteenth century colonial as well as reformist discourse provide important leads to the later day developments in the profession. This chapter shall focus on the position of prostitutes/ prostitution in the context of changing reality of nineteenth century Calcutta as gleaned from the Bengali literature. In this regard their role in the popular culture has also been explored which helps us to rediscover their voices. The role of *bhadralok* and British administrators centering on the profession of prostitutes as well as various legislative measures in relation to prostitutes undertaken by the colonial regime shall also be examined.

1.1. Veshya: The Capitalist Product of British Colonialism:

When the term of the profession of prostitution is purely taken into 'market economy' it has always been deprived of its rousing emotional 'sexual overtones'. And here this profession has been

² Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.1-2; *Bhadralok* (literally "well-mannered person") is a Bengali term used to denote the new class of 'gentlefolk' who arose during colonial times (approximately 1757 to 1947) in Bengal. It is still used to indicate members of the middle class. *Bhadralok* is an elitist social class that emerged under the impact of colonial rule. In pre-modern times, the word *Bhadra*, a Sanskrit term, denoted many values including property, particularly homestead property. It was also used for behaviourally refined people. From early nineteenth century, a *bhadralok* class began to emerge as a social category and became practically an institution in the mid-nineteenth century. In its institutional sense, the term was first used by Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay (1787-1848) in his works. Native clericals and petty officials serving the British colonial state, the nouveau riches, new zamindars and entrepreneurs were made the themes of satirical works like *Kalikata Kamalalaya* (1823), *Naba Babu Bilas* (1825), *Naba Bibi Bilas* (1831), etc. Bhavani Charan ridiculed them as *bhadraloks*. The *nabya-bhadralok*, according to him, amassed wealth after coming in contact with the Europeans, and being influenced by them, they became indifferent about religion and culture of their ancestors. By the mid-nineteenth century, the *bhadralok* seemed to have received social recognition. From that time onward, the administrative and the landed middle classes of the nineteenth century came to be known in general as *bhadraloks*, whose hallmarks were education and wealth. Until the second decade of the twentieth century, the *bhadralok* class was socially identified with Hindu elite groups, because most zamindars and educated elite were Hindus. Members of the Muslim elite were called *Ashrafs*. However, vast changes took place in the Bengali social structure during the Crown's period (1858-1947) and in the process, all educated and respectable people, irrespective of religions, were recognised as *bhadraloks*. As a social category, *bhadralok* does not exist now. People are at present apt to be socially classified according to their profession, societal and political affiliations, and individual achievements. For *bhadralok* see, See S. N. Mukherjee, "Bhadralok in Bengali Language", in *Calcutta: Essays in Urban History*, Calcutta, Subarnarekha, 1993, p72; Tithi Bhattacharya, "A World of Learning: The Material Culture of Education and Class in Nineteenth –Century Bengal", in Crispin Bates Ed, *Beyond Representation, Colonial and Postcolonial Constructions of Indian identity*, OUP, 2006, pp 177- 209; Sanat Kumar Gupta, Ed, *Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay: Ras Rachanasamagra*, Calcutta, Nabapatra Prakashan, 1987, pp. i- ix

reduced to that status where a person's body is hired out or through physical labour or selling skills he/she earns money like a wage earner. But the great difference lies here that the most sacred and sensuous parts of female body is shared – 'The reproductive system and its physical components – which remain a major, if not basic constituent of the man women relations, emotional and otherwise'. The social concept of 'moral value' is closely attached to the 'reproductive system' of a woman, where the fertility of a woman is considered as sacred which means nothing but the 'monopoly of husband' within the patriarchal social structure. The body of the wife is sold to her husband 'into slavery once for all'. It turns them into a different shape; they start acting like a 'breeding machine' with only motto of producing sons. But in the case of prostitutes, her body is hired out with 'no obligation to reproduce'.³

"What the prostitutes produces in the course of her labour of replicating every night (and day) the same act of stimulated love-making is a purchasable commodity for her male client in which she can never claim any share. The traditional artisans or the industrial worker, sells his skills – and distorts his product in the process to meet the commercial needs of the market, and stands 'related to the product of his labour as to an alien object'. The prostitutes' alienation, both from his work and the end product, is more pervasive. Forced to distort what could have been her spontaneous sexual responses into commercial skills to feed the market, she can not even perceive her labour's product which remain elusive and intangible to her". The commercial sex worker or the prostitutes of modern time is the typical product of capitalist society. But the class to which they belong is quite different from her antecedents or earlier prostitutes. Although prostitutes have always been subjected to the exploitation within the patriarchal structure but the position of modern prostitutes finds their differences in many major respects from the position of the ancient Greek *hetaera*, or of courtesan in Buddhist India or the old Hindu temple dancers or the concubines in Mughal or Hindu Royal house-holds. Courtesans and temple dancers of the past were most of the time members of a state enterprise who were entrusted with the obligations for providing services to the public and in return to this they usually enjoyed certain privileges and protections from the states. Unlike these professionals, usually described as public woman- the concubines had to live under the captivity within feudal house-holds where their sole freedom to hire themselves out in the open market was encroached.⁴

Among prostitutes belonging to all these categories one purpose was common, that was providing men with sexual entertainment. Despite certain freedom enjoyed by the courtesans or the *hetaera*, their skills were cultivated with only motto of entertaining male. But it is very much significant that

³ Ibid. p.18

⁴ Ibid. p.18-19

their cultivation of skill did not only include sexual entertainment but they also needed to acquire proficiency in fine arts which constituted mainly music, dance, paintings. Thus, it is quite prominent that whether these earlier prostitutes performed for public, for financial need or for security they remained as concubines and played the private role or remained as mistress under royal patronage of patron; their sexual role was interestingly attached to the wider cultural world and social festivals. And this space enjoyed by the courtesans, temple dancers and concubines is the main factor which marks the main difference between modern prostitutes of capitalist period and prostitutes of ancient period. The specialized skills and division of labour are generally intensified in the capitalist society where a prostitute has also been confined to a narrow space. The prostitute has always been condemned in the society and considered as 'specialist in sexual entertainment'. She has been reduced to a mere concept of female body and deprived and denied of her all emotions and intellects. A prostitute has become a mere object just to fulfill other's need which included physical as well as psychological. She plays a great role in giving pleasure to the alienated worker who comes to her as a client and tries to fill up their vacancies in life with which they usually come. A prostitute is most alienated section in the capitalist society. It is just as if 'the alienated of one section of the exploited feeds upon the alienation of another'.⁵

Kautilya's Arthashastra (who was the chief advisor of Chandragupta Maurya- the great emperor of the Mauryan dynasty) constitute an important source of the history of the prostitution during the pre-capitalist society. It mainly portrays the picture of the 4th century B.C. This 'treatise on governance' not only provide us with the information about the dealing of prostitutes with their clients but also it mentions about various measures taken to inflict punishments on customers (e.g. fine) by whom prostitutes were cheated or ill treated. During this period, prostitution was never considered as a crime or sin. It was considered just like any other trade. Prostitutes had to pay taxes which constituted an important source of revenue to the state. The amount of tax paid by them was her two day's earnings. Prostitutes were expected to accept and follow all rules and regulation formulated under the state administration which also gave them protection from any harmful actions against them.⁶

It is very much significant that the position of prostitutes was placed at a standard level in medieval society. A high status and privileges were enjoyed by them during this period. Contemporary medieval literature – poems, their lyrics gives a colourful picture of prostitutes during this period. Their life-style, popular social perception about them (prostitutes) have been portrayed in these

⁵ Ibid. p.19-20.

⁶ Ibid. p.20.

poems in a colourful manner. Few lines in Sanskrit written by an unknown poet are being mentioned here which are found in an 'anthology' compiled in Bengali during 13th century:

*Basah Sookshmam bapushibhujayoh Kanchanee Changadesreer,
Malagarvah Surabhimasrinairgandha tailaih Shikhandah.
Karnottangse nabashashikalanirmalam talapatram
Beshah kesham na harati mono, Bangabarananam.*

[a time over the body, both arms beautified with gold ornaments, flower garlands inside the smooth tresses rendered fragrant by perfumed oil, ear-ornaments clear like a new digit of the moon whose mind would not be stolen by such a dress worn by the courtesan of Bengal]

Even during the 17th century prostitutes continued to enjoy a privileged position in social and cultural avenues of Bengal. Even they were usually would have been a major part of 'royal expedition' in Bengal. In this regard a Bengali poem is very much informative which gives a descriptive picture of those people who have accompanied prince on this journey:

*Alim, Pandit aar jyotish, ganak,
Nana jantra, Raj-beshya, Gahon, Nartak.*

[learned muslims, Sanskrit pandits, astrologers and astronomers; Musicals instruments, courtesans, singers and dancers]

A 'Bengali poetical narrative' composed in 18th century just before the establishment of colonial administration in its full-fledged form gives the description of the toilet of a prostitute:

*Haste korinilo beshya subarner chiruni,
Mastaker kesh chiri ganthilo bainee.
Gandha pushpa taila beshya porilo Mathatey,
Subarner jad beshya porilo khompatey.*

[The prostitute took up the golden comb, brushed through her hair and plaited her tresses. The prostitute applied perfumed oil made from flowers on her head. The prostitute then bound her hair into a coiffure with a golden lace.]

Such descriptive picture of the life-style of the prostitutes in the praising manner continued to be the favourite theme of the literature produced during the phase from medieval period to the early 18th century. From this it becomes quite clear that prostitutes during this period continued to enjoy privileges and high status in the society. It was possible due to the presence of 'certain social value' and 'state patronage'. These prostitutes were very much proficient in singing and dancing which earned immense respect for them in the society. Their skill in this classical music was needed to be cultivated to fulfill the demand of the client who mainly came from feudal aristocratic background and were highly fascinated by classical songs and dances. These prostitutes were given the equal

⁷ Ibid. p.20-21

respect in the society and the other professional experts would have enjoyed.⁸ In this regards 'Vatsyana' in his famous '*Kamasutra*' has given the description of the position of prostitutes:

*A courtesan of a pleasant disposition, beautiful, and otherwise attractive, who has mastered the arts...has the right to a seat of honour among men. She will be honoured by the king and praised by the learned, and all will seek her favours and treat her with consideration.*⁹

From above mentioned all these accounts it should not be assumed that prostitutes in Bengal during medieval period enjoyed a complete independent life and they constituted a powerful community of women as today the term 'emancipation', 'empowerment' are used to define women's freedom and power. In this medieval Bengal also they were being operated within the parameters of the patriarchal structure of the society and state, which regulated them through defining and determining their role as the role of other trade, profession were defined and determined by the state. Like other profession, the profession of prostitution acquired official recognition. They also served people fulfilling their needs. Though their function were related to the matter of sexuality where the sexual need of the male was to be fulfilled by them. But besides this physical as well as sexual function, they were assigned the other task of cultivating skills and acquiring proficiency in classical art by the ruling power. Their free/liberal access to the socio-cultural avenues of the contemporary society brought them into the consideration as part of wider society. It is evident from the *Kautilya's* account, in the administration of Mauryan dynasty the prostitutes were elevated to the position of acting as an 'agent to spy on enemies!' With the establishment of British colonialism and introduction of capitalism in Indian economy the profession of prostitution was radically transformed. A new breed of prostitutes who are known in today's world as 'commercial sex workers' were the product of the British colonialism. With the introduction of new moral and legal norms, these prostitutes as well as their colleagues - the dancing girls and courtesans, who were the products of pre-colonial and pre-capitalist period, were totally segregated and secluded in the society and were reduced to the status of the ostracized community. They were also relegated to the underworld as criminals.¹⁰

1.2. Prostitute and Her Bengali Clientele:

The growth of Calcutta, cities and other mofussil towns in 19th century Bengal and the rising demands, changing tastes of the new generation of the clientele who remained the typical product of the British colonial order led to the rapid growth of brothels in Calcutta, other urban areas and

⁸ Ibid. p.21-22

⁹ A.L.Basham: *The Wonder that was India*, Fontana Books, 1971, p.185

¹⁰ Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.22

mofussil towns since the early phase of 19th century. The important 44 streets of 1806 located in the central area were surveyed and its report showed that the ownership of 655 houses out of total number of 7688 houses were off/had gone to the prostitutes in colloquial Bengali who are/were termed as beshya. In Moonshy Suderuddy's Lane at *Machooa Bazar* in north Calcutta, there was a prostitute called Moynah Tackooraney who owned 14 straw huts, one upper roomed house and a mosque. It is also known that a brothel in 235 and 236 *Bow Bazar Street*, owned by a member of Dwarkanath Tagore's family. It had 43 rooms for prostitutes and its rental value was Rs. 140.¹¹ The profession of prostitution was not extremely morally stigmatized during the early years of 19th century as well as it also proved itself as a 'Commercially profitable' profession. All these factors motivated some aristocratic Bengali families to rent out their residential house to the prostitutes.¹² *Kartikeya Chandra*, has mentioned that - in those days the practice was not to take wives along while traveling on business outside one's hometown or village. So it was necessary for the *babus* to keep a mistress near their workplace. This way a number of brothels cropped up in the city.¹³

During the early 19th century the profession of prostitution had undergone dramatic changes. Prostitutes' dealing with their clients, religious and linguistic ground constituted important parameters on the basis of which the stratification of the practitioners of this trade was determined in this profession. Demand of the market constituted the most important determinants which shaped the nature of prostitution during the 19th century Bengal. Therefore, the clientele should firstly be examined, as under the patronage of them, the profession of prostitution flourished in the 19th century Bengal. In the red-light areas these clients were known as – *babu, khodder, nagar etc.* The term '*babu*' acquired immense popularity in 19th century Bengal. The respectable dignified personalities (e.g. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay etc) on one hand and on the other hand their sons who already spoiled and 'dissipating their wealth on drinking, whoring and other amusements'- belonged to this '*Babu*' class of the contemporary society. This latter section of *babus* were the real patron under whose patronage the profession of prostitution flourished during the 19th century in Calcutta. The life-style of prostitutes belonged to the '*Sonagaji*' red-light area situated in the northern part of the city was highly influenced by the 'sexual behavioural norms and demands and their cultural taste' of this section of *babus*.¹⁴

¹¹ S. N. Mukherjee, *Calcutta: Myth and History*, Subarnarekha, 1977, p.101.

¹² Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.72

¹³ Dewan Kartikeya Chandra Roy, *Atmajiban Charit*, Pragmya Prakashan, Calcutta, 1990. p.33.

¹⁴ Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.73

There is a legend behind the naming of 'Sonagaji'. It is allegedly named after Muslim *peer* (seer) called *Sona Ullah Gaji*. 'Gaji' has become 'gachhi'. This mosque of Sona Gaji is almost three hundred years old; and his tomb is still there on the entrance to this area. This particular brothel area is really ancient; it is contemporary to the inception of Calcutta city. H. Anderson, in his writing dated 1830 has described the presence of thousands of 'Magdalenes' or prostitutes along the roads adjacent to *Chitpore Main Road*. It is also mentioned that during this period only high class courtesans used to inhabit the areas like Chitpore, Beadon Street, Grey Street and Sonagachhi. None of these women used to walk the street looking for clients; their middlemen or touts used to do the job of catching the customers. Most of these women were actually mistresses of the rich and influential *Zamindars* of those days. Each of them had a fixed '*Babu*'.¹⁵

Bengali literary sources are quite informative about the changing notion of '*babu*' phenomenon.. It provides us with enormous information about the changing cultural tastes and habits of *babus* shaped by socio-economic changes, their adventurous life of extra marital affairs and it also describes that how all these factors shaped the profession of prostitution during the 19th century. The life style of and behavioural norms of first generation of *babus* is vividly documented in the famous 'satirical piece' (in Bengali) of the 19th century composed by *Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay* who was famous poet and journalist of 19th century Bengal (1787 – 1848). This literary composition – *Naba-babu-bilash* (1825), *Dooti-bilash* (1825) and *Naba-bibi-bilash* (1822) gives us a vivid description of the procedure of the recruitment of a prostitute into the profession and their training in various arts to entertain customers. 'From adultery to whore –mongering' were the first requirement for a *babu* to become the customer of a prostitute. In *Naba-babu-bilash* '*babus*' today – who asserts themselves as a long experienced person and over indulged in harmful and immoral pleasure, gives advice to the '*babu*' in the following manner¹⁶:

¹⁵ Debrani Kar, *Kolkatar Nagarnati*, Mitra and Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1995. p.55; This class of Bengali parvenu sprang up in Calcutta from the first decade of the 19th century. They made money through diverse transaction with the British traders and administrators in a hierarchically defined system – ranging from operations of the banians and dewans (who acted as direct agents of the colonial commercial and administrative system respectively) at the top, to those of their subordinate, hanger-on, flunkys and parasites (known as Mosaheb) at the bottom. These upstrot fortune –seekers, along with the absence Zamindars' the new rentiers created by the Permanent Settlement) formed a distinct urban group of pleasure-hunters with new social habits, who were in search of entertainment to fill up their leisure time. It was these people who constituted the first generation of patrons of the prostitutes of early 19th century Calcutta. Contemporary Bengali forces and bell letters abound in the portrayal of these people, as well as the prostitutes with whom they consorted. They sometimes appear as touts and toadies, sometimes as fops and dandies – but always revolving around ubiquitous Bengali '*babu*' of the 19th century. This archetypal period – piece was usually the pampered son of a rich dewan or baman or zamindar who, having inherited his father's wealth, dissipated it on drinking, whoring and other amusements in the company of sycophants (the mosahebs) including lecherous Brahmin priest. Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.73-74

¹⁶ Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.74-75

He who achieves success in the four 'p's will be a half-babu. The 'p's are – pasha (game of dice), paira (pigeon-fights – a sport popular among Calcutta's rich gentry in those days), para-dar (liaison with another man's wife), and poshak (dress). He who achieves success in both the four 'p's and four 'kh's will become a complete babu. The four 'kh's are khushi (pleasure), khanki (whore), khana (lavish meals), and Khairat (charity – euphemism used to persuade the 'babu' to spend all his wealth on his hangers – on!).¹⁷

The *Naba-bibi-bilash* of Bhabanicharan Chattopadhyay turns herself into a prostitute. It gives a vivid description of the various stages of life through which a prostitute moves up in her life during the early years of 19th century Bengal. It offers invaluable glimpses into the procedure of the recruitment of prostitute into her profession, their training in various arts with a motto of entertaining customer and it also shows that how a prostitute moved up various social stages and with the growing age they are reduced to the position of maid –servant and finally into the condition of a beggar. The heroine of this satire is characterized as the life of a 'hemp addict' person living in the village who is extremely neglected. Taking the chance of her helplessness a '*napitini*' (woman hair dresser) pretends to be sympathized with her condition and she is tempted by the colourful stories of the happy life in Calcutta said by *napitini* and being lured by all these she finally run away from her house. Then she is introduced to a '*babu*' and finally being deserted by him 'she drifts into the house of an old prostitute' in Calcutta. Here she gets trained in singing and dancing under the guidance of various '*ustad*'. And after the completion of the training she is advised by the old prostitute on how a male customer should be attracted and how to secure favour of the rich male customer.¹⁸ For a prostitute the cultivation of the 'chh's is essentially required- "*Chhalana* (tries and artifices), *Chhenali* (conquetry), *Chhelemi* (pretending to be younger than her actual age), *Chhapan* (hiding the other customers from the main patron – the '*babu*' who keeps her as a mistress), *Chhemo* (deceiving the '*babu*' with false stories if he comes to know about her association with other customers), and *Chhenchrami* (collecting money from the sundry customers – other than the patron '*babu*' – before entertaining them)".¹⁹

The *Naba-bibi-bilash* of Bhabanicharan offers invaluable glimpses into the fact that how a woman's emotions, passion, body and mind get transformed into mere commodities in the process of commercialization of transactions in the profession of prostitution where the prime objective is to make profits through it to sellers as well as buyers. It is the modern version of *Kamasutra* where the heroine – 'feudal courtesan' has been transformed into commercialized prostitute of 19th century

¹⁷ Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, *Rasarachana Samagra*, Nabapatra Prakashan, Calcutta, 1987. p.45 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.74-75)

¹⁸ Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.75

¹⁹ Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, *Rasarachana Samagra*, Nabapatra Prakashan, Calcutta, 1987. p.202 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.75)

Calcutta. In this context also, the cultivation of various skills is essential for a prostitute to attract and entertain their client – '*babu*'. These skills were extremely required for a prostitute to make material gain as much as possible (cash, jewellery, house). The '*babus*' under whom they were not permanent, they were neither certain nor reliable. Therefore, a prostitute's prime objective was to extract wealth as much as possible from rich *babus* so that their future could get secured. In a part of *Naba-bibi-bilash* the young prostitute is advised by old prostitute that she must not indulge the real concept of love in her profession and suggest some other idea which would be more practical and suitable for the fulfillment of her demand.²⁰ A contemporary Hindu proverb is quoted by her in this regard:

Kasbi kiski joru?

Ar bherua keska sala?

It's translated by her as – "How can a whore become the wife of anyone? How come her brothers become an in-law?" She then continuously advise her: "Therefore, my daughter, our love is only with those from whom we can get more money. Even that should not be pure love; it must be false. You should practice love in such a way that you do not get swayed by any lover; but try to bring the '*babu*' under your thumb...."²¹

'This warning against getting involved in any emotional entanglement – and, particularly, in the institution of marriage – suggests the prevalence among the prostitutes: the hope among some to tie up with a '*babu*' patron in a permanent attachment, preferably in the shape of marriage, or as a mistress (the latter was a more common phenomenon in 19th century Bengal), which could provide them with security – financial and sometimes, emotional. This was probably countered by the desire, among others, to carve out an autonomous space for them in the form of asset earned from their customers in the course of their professional career – money, jewellery and house – without depending on any lasting attachment to a particular patron. The madam in *Naba-bibi-bilash* – being a veteran in experiencing the changing fortunes and tastes of the '*babu*' patrons – evidently opted by for the latter course.'²²

Mid –nineteenth century Calcutta had witnessed a tremendous expansion of prostitution both 'numerically and spatially'. In 1853, Calcutta, with a population of about 400,000 people was supporting 12,419 prostitutes. More than a decade later, 1867, their number went up to more than

²⁰ Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.75-76

²¹ Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, *Rasarachana Samagra*, Nabapatra Prakashan, Calcutta, 1987. p.202 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.75-76)

²² Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.76-77

30,000 (with total population of the city remain more or less same). The famous satirist of 19th century Bengal – Kaliprasanna Sinha (1840-70) during 1862, in his writing, gave the description of rich Bengali '*babus*' of Calcutta of his time. In his writing their living style, attitudes have been vividly described – "Because of these great men, the city of Calcutta has become the city of whores. There is not a single locality where you won't find at least ten houses of whores. Every year, instead of coming down, the number of whore in the city is going up." The rapid growth of the prostitution and prostitutes numerically and spatially in Calcutta led to the great transformation in their 'composition'. The prostitutes during late 18th and early 19th century hailed from a class of displaced women like widows and daughters of Kulin Brahmin families and neglected wives from middle class homes, who were often seduced and abandoned by their lovers, and were then left to drift into some 'red-light' area. The brothels in the red-light areas of 1850-60 era was mainly dominated by these displaced women. The official records, contemporary newspapers and the version of social reformers have constantly stressed on some factors which remained responsible to drive a large number of women from upper and middle caste into the profession of prostitution during 19th century Bengal. These factors mainly constituted: '*kulin* norms that operated against unmarried girls from those families; rigours of leading the austere life-style that was required of Hindu windows; ill treatment by husbands and/ or in-laws seduction by paramours.'²³

The domination of the Hindu female belonged to upper caste into the profession of prostitution gradually came into an end. A great transformation occurred in the 'composition' of the prostitution

²³ Ibid. p.77-79; But these factors had existed in Bengal during pre-colonial period since 'several hundreds of years'. But during that period the tendency of escaping from suppression and entering into brothels was totally absent among the women. Sumanta Banerjee has posed few question in this regard – 'what could have made the next generation – these Kulin wives and daughters and upper caste Hindu wives – react to the same conditions in a different way in a colonial setting?' Could it have been because of a 'certain commercialization of social relations' in Bengal in the 18-19th Century period? He observed – "In the past, social ties like marriages, in the traditional feudal Bengali society, were also dictated and controlled by the utilitarian interest of the dominating upper class men. The system of dowry (money and assets demanded by the bridegroom), the privileges enjoyed by the Kulin Brahmins through their right to polygamy (sanctioned by so-called religious precepts), the custom among the *Srotriya Brahmins* to the highest bidders among the bridegrooms (since the parents among this community were obliged to pay bride price for the marriage of their sons) – all these reflected the norms of a feudal society where the woman was treated as so much property to be exchanged between one male and another. Such an exchange, however, had to be justified by the guardians of medieval Hindu Bengali society by involving the precepts of Manu, who ordained that a woman should always be under her father's, as wife under her husband's and as a mother under her son's. The arrival of the British bourgeoisie in Bengal meant the introduction of new commercial and administrative relations, accompanied by the prevalent values of the 19th century capitalist system (the most clinical – and cynical – analysis of which, so far, had been provided by Karl Marx). In this newly introduced system of values, the woman was no longer the private property of a single man, but a commodity who was free to sell herself in the market to all men. The development of prostitution as an industry in 19th century Bengal offered avenues of escape for daughters and wives of Kulin Brahmin families – who, for almost 700 years, had suffered deprivation and humiliation locked up within cell of Kulin obligations. The collapse of traditional social norms under the impact of colonial economic changes also led to the loosening of the tight hold of *kulinism*. It is not surprising, therefore, that government official records, contemporary newspaper reports and literature repeatedly mention the tendency of wives and daughters from Kulin families (along with young Hindu windows – the other deprived section of Bengali women) to gravitate towards prostitution in 19th century Bengal. A mid-19th century official report estimates that of the 12,000 odd prostitutes in Calcutta. More than 10,000 were Hindu windows and daughters of Kulin Brahmins." – Ibid. p.79-81

during/since the 2nd half of the 19th century. The 'hereditary Prostitutes' (as termed in British administrative records) who were also termed as '*dobol khanki*' (described in Bengali slang) constituted the new generation of prostitutes who were the descendants of the first generation of prostitutes dominated this profession during the early period of this new generation of prostitutes. This class of prostitutes emerged 'with a different set of values and tastes'. Another class of prostitutes gradually emerged in the context of 19th century Bengal. They were considered as the second category prostitutes. This class of prostitutes mainly hailed from poor background and flocked to Calcutta and other mofussil town in search of food and work. They often worked as a maid-servants or labourers in growing industries in these areas. Their meager earnings in/from these avenues were mostly made up with the/through practicing the profession of prostitution in the evening.²⁴

Under the 'Contagious Disease Act.' – CDA from 1868 onwards, prostitutes were directed to get registered/ for registration. This system of registration of prostitutes maintained the list of prostitutes on the basis of their nationality and religion. But leads in 'quantitative terms' were not fully reliable as, a large number of prostitutes avoided registration and the harassment caused by this and continued to be into their profession. So, in 'quantitative terms', they did not represent the real picture of religion, race or nationality of the prostitutes of Calcutta during the last quarter of 19th century. The composition of the prostitutes during this period also acquired an international character in Calcutta. '...in 1872, out of the 6,871 registered prostitutes, the number of Hindus was 5,804, that of Muslims 930, and the rest consisted of English, Irish, Russian, Austrian, Poles, Hungarians, Italians, French and Spaniards.' The nature of the composition of prostitutes was

²⁴ Ibid. p.81-82; An official document of later half of 1860's had given a detail classification of prostitutes of Calcutta into 'seven categories'. "The first category – small in number consisted of "Hindoo Women of high caste who live a retired life, and who are kept or supported by rich Natives, residing between Chitpore Road, Cornwallis Street, Baghbazar North and Manicktollah Street. The second category comprised 'Hindoo Women of good caste, who being possessed of small means, live by themselves, receiving a limited number of visitors of their own, or of a superior caste.' The third group was formed by 'Hindoo women lived under a bareewallah(house-owner), either male or female, who make advances to them to board and lodging. These women receive Hindu Visitors only without distinction of caste'. These latter two groups had no special locality, and lived everywhere in the Native town'... The fourth category consisted of 'dancing women, Hindoo or kind of Chummary... receiving visitors without distinction of creed or caste; living mainly on Chitpore Road and adjacent streets and by lanes. The fifth, sixth and seventh classes comprised respectively 'Mussulman public prostitutes; low caste Hindoos and low Christians prostitutes; and European prostitutes.' That they were numerous in number, and, therefore, difficult to control, is evident from the indignation and irritation reserved for them by the official while writing the report: 'They are the moral plague of our principle thoroughfares, where they exhibit their persons with a bare-facedness unsurpassed in any other part of the world...They are also swarming in the neighbourhood of the European and Native grog-shops more especially in the latter...'". An official report of the early 1870's described that a large number of low caste Hindoos and low Christians prostitutes begun to flock to the Calcutta and other neighbouring districts and stated that this class of prostitutes were chiefly of low-caste – the woman of the *tantee* (weaver), *mallee* (gardener), *jogee* (weaving caste from east Bengal), *kumar* (potter), *kamaar* (blacksmith), *chamar* (tanner), *sonar baniya* (dealer in gold), *tellee* (oil presser), *jalia* (fishing folk), *koiburtto* (cultivator), *moira* (sweet meat maker), *badiah* (gypsy), *goalah* (milk man), *napit* (hair dresser), and...Ibid.p.82-83

almost same even after one decade. ... 'Out of the 7000 – odd registered prostitutes in the city, 5834 were Hindus, 1049 Muslims, and 117 Europeans and others.'²⁵

By the end of 19th century a large number of brothels emerged in various localities which chosen by the prostitutes themselves. In this regard two important factors mainly regulated their choices – their respective class and community interest and nearness to their particular client. The 'Travelogue' of Durgacharan Roy – a Bengali author constitutes an important source of prostitution in the context of 19th century Calcutta. It provides us with the vivid description of various well-demarcated localities dominantly inhabited by prostitutes in Calcutta, their clientele and their different mode of operation. 'It is a guided tour for the benefits of the gods of the Hindu pantheon who, the author dreams, have suddenly landed in India to watch how the mortals are faring in the 19th century Calcutta!' In the evening time when the gods travel along the main road of Chitpore, the picture in this place gave a major shock to the creators and the rulers of the Universe:

On both sides of the road, on the balconies of two storied mansions, prostitutes sitting and chewing pans and smoking the hubble-bubble...

According to British official reports of later half of 1860's these women were the 'Hindoo women of high caste...kept or supported by rich Natives' Durgacharan Roy also describes that how the poor clerks were looked down upon and badly treated by prostitutes. These clerks had to walk along the Chitpore main road on the way returning home from the office. One day these clerks opposed against these prostitutes and faced a tremendous aggressive repercussion from them. One prostitute spat pan juice from the balcony with her other associates burst out upon him like anything:

Look at the cheek of the bloke! He is a mere clerk, and yet affords to indulge in anger!...We may be prostitutes, but we can keep lots of clerks like you. Here are you- after having spent the whole day as a pen-pusher, what are you bringing home? We earned from eight to ten rupees every hour sitting in our homes. We can earn in one generation what you and your descendants can never hope to gain in three generations.

Then the author describes the other areas which were mainly inhabited by the prostitutes of second category. *Harkata lane* behind the *Bowbazar main road* was such area which still exists with its same characteristics. He describes:--

The whores ...get up in the evening, dress up in whatever little attire they have, and run along the road creating a stir. At that hour, they try to pull at the sleeves of anyone crossing their way – whether a gentleman or a vulgar fellow.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid. p.83

²⁶ Ibid. p.83-84

There were other areas in the nineteenth century Calcutta, which were largely inhabited by the prostitutes of lower category. Durgacharan gives the description of the dark alleys behind the by-lanes in Sinduriapatti –

A mere branch of Chitpore road but where dirt – cheap prostitutes live who charge two or four paise. In the evening, they collect in groups on the streets and whenever any male crosses the road, they shout: come, man! Come, man! May be these were the women who threatened the morals of the British official who described them as moral plague of our principle thoroughfares.²⁷

One British official report gives a detail picture of the real condition of the domestic life of prostitutes. Their domestic lifestyle was recorded by a British official during his visit to two brothels of 19th Century Calcutta:

The first was a lower – roomed house which I inspected some months ago...In that house there were no less than 44 women huddled together. The second instance was that of a narrow blind lane, 240 long and 10 feet broad, which I had occasion to visit...containing 33 houses and five huts. There are at present not less than 250 prostitutes residing in that lane.²⁸

From the above analysis of *Durgacharan Roy's* 'travelogue' it can be assumed that during the 19th century Calcutta, the brothels of the earlier times in the traditional Sonagachi continued to be present/remained present. But there was also a development of the new red-light areas in other areas of the city (e.g. *Harkata lane* located in Central Calcutta) by the end of the 19th century. According to the British official report of 1874 soldiers and sailors formed the new clientele of prostitutes residing in *Bowbazar* and *Fenwick Bazar* located at central Calcutta and south Calcutta respectively. A large number of brothels developed in *Watgunge* area near the Port, which was located in further south. The prime reason behind this growth was to fulfill the 'needs of the sailors'. By the year of 1881 prostitutes' areas were expanded and brothels sprang up in the area of *Colootollah* and *Taltollah* and Bhowanipore in Central and South Calcutta respectively.²⁹

The prostitutes also had spread out over the area of Fort-william and its surroundings. But here the composition of prostitutes included foreign women along with the Indian women. According to a complaint lodged by a British official : ... "Fort William and its immediate surroundings are visited by European and Eurasian women for purpose of prostitution, who, by the locality in which they ply their calling, are exempt from police interference." In these areas the British soldiers formed the main clientele of the prostitutes. "The Fort premises being under military administrative control fell out of the purview of the authority of the Calcutta Police. The local British military authorities

²⁷ Ibid. p.84.

²⁸ Ibid. p.84-85

²⁹ Ibid. p.85

apparently turned a blind eye to the proclivities of the soldiers, whose satisfaction of sexual needs through commercial transformations with prostitutes had been traditionally recognized in the military strategy of the colonial rulers. But this, after, became a bone of contention between the British Army top brass posted in India, and their counterparts in the British civilian administration in the country, as well as in London." This tension/contention between the colonial military and civil authorities centering around on the issue of formed an important part of the administrative policy on prostitution carried out under the colonial regime during the 19th century Bengal.³⁰

By the last quarter of the 19th Century brothels sprang up around the industries growing 'with astonishing rapidity on both banks of the Hoogly'. The factory workers and *babu* working as clerks in those factories formed the clientele of prostitutes in these areas. There was also another class of prostitutes who were not the permanent residents of red-light areas of Calcutta. They used to come to Calcutta on daily basis from Howrah which was located 'across the river Hoogly'. According to a British Official Report: "... scores of women were seen daily crossing the river in boats who plied their trade in town [i.e. Calcutta] and betook themselves to Howrah in the day time, where the police could not reach them..." These kind of flying prostitutes were the forerunner of 'call girls' of today. Another British Official document of the contemporary period described their kind of prostitutes in the following manner: "There is another class of prostitutes in Calcutta, the existence of which is scarcely known by a great number of persons, and who, morally speaking, are more dangerous and more pernicious than public prostitutes. I mean those women, who under the most respectable appearances visit the private residences of gentlemen, or who secretly resort to "empty houses". These class of women generally escape the action of the general laws regulating prostitution on account of the secret protection thrown over them by the persons acquainted with them..." These kind of flying prostitutes hailed from different strata of the society: - ranging from... 'married women, widows or young persons who are led astray by the love of dress', to these poor day – labourers in military station in India, who sold their bodies to the soldiers for a pittance and were described in official parlance as 'clandestine prostitutes'.³¹

Thus the profession of prostitution had undergone a dramatic transformation during the 19th century Bengal. Its rise, growth, compositions and characters – all were mainly determined by the need and demand of the people who flocked to the Calcutta in search of their employment in the newly established factories developed due to the rising industrialization in Calcutta. Prostitute's clientele now range from the poor labourers, Bengali *babus* to the British soldiers. The diverse nature of the

³⁰ Ibid. p.85-86

³¹ Ibid. p.86-87

clientele constituted the main factor to influence the stratification of the class structure of prostitutes in Calcutta. Prostitutes spread out over the various red-light areas, Fort-William and neighbouring areas and other places in response to fulfill these varieties of social-sexual requirements of various clients ranging from '*babus*' to the 'British Tommies'. The requirement of socio-sexual need of the various clientele during the 19th century Calcutta led to the development of severe red-light areas in this town. *Sonagachi*, was one of the most prominent among these red-light areas, which in the north spanned a wide belt from *Chitpore Road* in the west to *Sobha Bazar* in the east. It was mainly developed in response to the need and demand of the middle and upper class Bengali clients and 'the most dilapidated and miserable hut of the filthiest *bustee* for the poorer customer'. Two or three-storeyed houses in the division of the town between *Chitpore Road* from the west running through *Cornwallis Street* and moving further east towards north *Bowbazar* and south *Manicktollah*, belonged to the richer class of Bengali prostitutes, some among whom were kept as mistresses by well to do plans, or who were selective in their choices of customers. Further down, in Central Calcutta, *Bowbazar* and *Fenwick Bazar* were inhabited by prostitutes who served sailors and soldiers. South of *Fenwick Bazar* (in Kerr's Lane and the neighbourhood) lived the European prostitutes.... Further south, in the dock area, were brothels, resorted to by sailors.³²

An interesting fact of prostitution during 19th century Bengal was that Hindu prostitutes enjoyed majority in number over the Muslim prostitutes. Although the Muslim population occupied half or more than half of the total population of the 19th century Bengal, the British official records point out the reasons behind it in the following manner:

... widow marriage is common among Mahomedans but almost unknown among Hindus; destitute Mahomedans girls can frequently obtain a livelihood as unpaid maid-servants in the house of wealthy Mahomedans gentlemen, where they doubtless lead a life of concubinage.³³

From the above analysis one question has been raised by Sumanta Banerjee – 'How was the Muslim client treated by the Hindu prostitute in the red-light areas of 19th century Bengal?' In

³² Ibid. p.87-88; According to another official report: --"The prostitutes [in her zones] are generally Hindus, owing to the prejudice against re-marriage, strictness of Hindu social law, Kulinism, etc." It is quite evident from the official report from Chittagong that Muslim prostitutes usually had a tendency of hiding their religious identity: -- "Many Mahomedans prostitutes assumed the name of Hindus for two reasons: first to enable them to get Hindu girls (for recruitment), and induce Hindus (males) to frequent them, which would not be the case if they professed to be Mahomedans, while it does not destroy the chance of nika marriage with one of her own race; second, Hindus are more popular and are credited with having more attractive manners. This accounts for the preponderance of Hindu prostitutes even in Mahomedan districts." But the picture of prostitutes belong to the Muslim religion in Coochbehar of north Bengal was slightly different: -- "The Mahomedan (prostitute) is generally a convert from the Kooch tribe, calling herself a Hindu or a Raj Bungshee, and who has adopted Hindu manners. The poor of these classes frequently sell their children to prostitutes who rear and live by them." Then it explains the reason behind the small number of Muslim prostitutes in this area:-- "The number of Mahomedan women is small, as re-marriage is easy among the sect." Ibid. 88-89.

³³ Ibid. p.88.

connection with this an autobiography of a descendant of a Muslim Zamindar family of 19th century Bengal is quite informative which reflects the psychological state of a Hindu prostitute where a non-stop conflicts is taking place between the moral bondage of her religious adherence according to the dictation of which, the association with the Muslim is polluting, on one hand and forced to indulge an indiscriminatory attitude towards the acceptance of clients as the prime requirement in the sex trade on the other hand. The *Goniur Raja*, who is the author of this autobiography, gives the description of his visit to a Hindu prostitute in *Dhaka* (east Bengal) in 1896. This prostitute was also *Khemtawali*, means who acquired proficiency in *Khemta Dance*. The *Khemtawali* named *Sarala* said to him:

...although you are introduced to me [by your friend] as a Hindu, right from the start I could make out that you are a Muslim. She continued: We Hindu women do not entertain Muslim men. We get abused in our society [if we do it]. The *Goniur Raja* asked her: Do women of your type also have 'society' [meaning societal norms and code of behaviour]?...

Sarala then made a witty and angry reply:

Of course! Although I have registered my name as a prostitute, all our Hindustani [practices and customs of Hindus] is still maintained by us'. Then she illustrated the picture of their Hinduani: 'In this quarter of ours where you are now, you won't find any women who are not a Hindu. In other [red-light] areas you will find women who are Muslims, or belong to other religious communities. But in this quarter, as well as in the neighbourhood of the *Kotwali* [the local police station] and in '*Sankharipatti*' [the colony of the shell workers], there are no women from any other religious community but Hindus. They and us follow the same societal norms.³⁴

From official record it is quite evident that during the 19th century Bengal, in certain areas there was tendency among Muslims prostitutes to adopt Hindu name in order to hide their religious identity. But here one question arise that when half and sometimes more than half of the total population of Bengal was Muslim then why Hindus were dominant in the clientele of prostitutes of 19th century red-light areas in Bengal or Muslim prostitutes were indirectly compelled 'to adopt Hindu names to pretend to be Hindus?' Sumanta Banerjee gives his assumption to it: "Is it because the Hindu clientele came from among the new parvenu that cropped up in Bengal during the 18th – 19th century period, who made money and occupied lucrative positions in the commercial and administrative hierarchies – thanks to the patronage of the British colonial rulers?" According to one historian of

³⁴ Ibid. p.89-90; * Sumanta Banerjee was born in 1936. He got his education in Calcutta and started his career as a professor of English and later he became a journalist with the *Statesman* and moved to Delhi. Because of his active involvement in Naxalite movement, he was jailed. After getting released from prison, he worked as a freelance journalist for long. Banerjee's significant works include two of his influential writings on the Naxalite revolution; they are *The Simmering Revolution: The Naxalite Uprising* and *The Thema Book of Naxalite poetry*. His other significant works are *Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (1989), *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (1998), *Unish Shataker Kolkatar Annya Samaskriti o Sahitya*, (1999, In Bengali). Apart from these, in last forty years, his numerous writings have appeared in many Bengali newspaper and journals. One of the major thrust of his research is on the popular culture and religion of Bengal.

Bengali culture, the Muslims were absent among the 'nouveaux riches' of 18th century Calcutta due to the following factors: "The majority of the Muslims were agriculturist, there were few who were in service. Muslims did not want to leave the economic security of land for the city where life was full of financial uncertainties. Those who were engaged in service and administrative work [during the previous Moghul regime] turned to agriculture after the loss of [Moghul] ruling power...While the Hindus advanced towards their improvement through seeking opportunities in services by collaborating with the British government and receiving English education, the Muslims lost similar opportunities by turning away from the British government and English education and suffered decline..."³⁵

The preponderance of Hindu clientele over Muslims clientele of prostitutes in 19th century Bengal thus had a tremendous influence on the prostitutes. In order to please these Hindu clientele, these prostitutes adhered to the 'socio-religious norms of behaviour' of the Hindus. Through maintaining "Hinduani" Hindu prostitutes sought to preserve the Hindu culture from where one day they had fallen and forced into prostitution. They came to be considered as the ostracized community by the society. Large number of these prostitutes hailed from upper caste Brahmin, many of them were widows. Therefore, they had a tendency to reassert and restore 'their solidarity with the Hindu society' through practising various customs of Hindu religion – Saraswati Puja (worshipping the goddess of learning) and Kartik Puja (the commander of the Army of the gods) were two main religious festivals in the 19th century red-light areas of Calcutta. Newcomers were formally initiated into the profession, and given new names on the occasion of the Saraswati Puja (worshipping ceremony). But prostitutes' own way of showing their adherence to the Hindu religion could not win the favour of Bengali *bhadralok* society. Rather the observances of Hindu rituals by them were highly criticized by the Bengali *bhadralok* section. In this regard a contemporary Bengali journal observed: "People worship Kartika to obtain sons, and Saraswati to become learned. For prostitutes, any entertainment of either of these objectives is totally unauthorized. Yet, they celebrate the Saraswati and Kartika pujas with a lot of pomp!" But behind the observance of these Hindu rituals they had their own logic. They believed that such practices would make their children (sons or daughters) able to learn and get educated and free themselves from the suppressive condition of red-light area. Then if possible their mother would get rescued by these children from the life of suppression in red-light area.³⁶

Centering on the issue of education of Heera Bulbul's son, tremendous opposition was raised by Bengali *bhadralok* class against this. Heera Bulbul was a prostitute and *baiji* during the 19th century

³⁵ Ibid. p.90-91

³⁶ Ibid. p.91

Calcutta. She was determined to educate her son in the prestigious Hindu College of Calcutta. His admission to the college in 1853 evoked tremendous opposition from the Bengali *bhadralok* families whose sons were studying at the college. They decided to withdraw their wards from the college, protesting against the admission of a *beshya-nandan* (son of a prostitute) into a college that was established from funds contributed by 'Hindu gentlemen'. These members of the city's Bengali *bhadralok* society soon started a new college called the Hindu Metropolitan College. After facing these vigorous opposition from the students and their guardians, the Hindu college authorities expelled Heera Bulbul's son. After two decades of the statement of British government – Children of the professional prostitute class are to be admitted to public girls' school under the control of the State up to the age of puberty on equal terms with all others, raised a vigorous opposition from the Bengali *bhadralok* section of the society. Their hostile attitude was also partly 'shared by the British bureaucrats posted in India.'³⁷

Following reports of 'Native repulsion against the mixture of prostitutes' children with respectable children,' a British official stated: "They [daughters of prostitutes] begin at a very early age those bodily exercises which are designed to fit them for their lewd profession, Their earliest home lesson and unclean songs; all that they hear and see around them is unalloyed immorality. He continued: Their earliest training unfits them to be school associates of innocent children from Nirtuous homes. After a year his other seniors govt. officials of India also agreed in his opinion and observed: It is already difficult enough to get natives to patronize girls school at all with out throwing open such schools to a class of children that might contaminate innocent little children', and objected to 'the introduction of infant harlots at the bottom of schools...'"³⁸

The 'composition of clientele' of the prostitutes in the brothel areas of Calcutta, Dhaka and other towns had undergone a dramatic transformation during the latter half of the 19th century. The

³⁷ Ibid. p.91-92

³⁸ Ibid. p.92; One thing must be mentioned here that all girl child grown up in the brothels were not always daughters of prostitutes. Oftenly these small girls were sold off by their poor parents to the owner of the bothels . And later on these girls became prostitutes. The 2nd half of the 19th century had witnessed tremendous famine in Bengal. Its 'increase in the number and intensity' were six famines between 1851 and 1875 and twenty-four between 1876 and 1900 (as against seven in the first half of the century).' The process of selling off these girl child was always carried out on 'stamped paper' through proper 'legal transaction'. This paper was used as an instrument to threaten the girl and warn her that any attempt on her side to escape would bring 'dire punishment' to her. A contemporary official document observed: --"...every female child who is unmarried or abandoned finds a ready home with the *bazar* women.[i.e. prostitutes]. Once in their power, a girl finds it very difficult t escape' if she runs away, a criminal charge of stealing ornaments is brought against her at the *thannah*..." The condition of boys was something different during these famines. According to an official report of contemporary period:-- "An exchange being made of a cultivator's girl for a prostitute's boy, on the ground that neither was of any use to its natural parents." This exchange was quite significant as a peasant required a boy than his girl, who could assist him in his 'agriculture work' as well as who could also become a great shelter for him in his old age. Thus his girl proved to be an invaluable asset to him. On the other hand a girl proved to be more valuable to a prostitute than her son; as she could be able to carry out her profession and also look after her old age. - Ibid. p.93

prostitutes and their clientele had come across with the emergence of a new generation who possessed a distinct approach towards their 'life-style, manners and demands' in sharp contrast to their predecessors' approach in this regard. The changing nature of demand and 'expectations' of the prostitutes had a tremendous impact on the 'character of the supply' of the sex market. Two literary compositions of 19th century - Bhabanisharan Bandyopadhyay's '*Naba Babu Bilash*', '*Dutibilash*' and '*Naba Bibi bilash*' and three decades later another Bengali literary composition – '*Alaler Gharer Dulal*' (the spoilt child of a rich home) – (1858) written by Pyarichand Mitra portray a detail picture of the '*babu*' community of contemporary Bengal. These two literary compositions were written in the different two phases of 19th century. The comparison between these two literary work reflects the changing nature of the value and tastes of the Bengali *babus*. The Hero of the '*Alaler Gharer Dulal*', '*Motilal*', has the same habits as the hero of Bhabanicharan's *Naba-Babu-Bilash*. But Pyarichand adds new characters to his entourage, who had emerged in Calcutta during the intervening period – teachers of English, lawyers and the different categories of touts involved in legal proceedings and the Anglicized sycophants.' Bhabanicharan's farces present the closing decades of the feudal era when the Bengali *babus* also were deteriorating in their moral ground but still this early generation of *babus* cultivated some interest in the classical music of the northern India and adopted Mughal culture in their life-style, taste etc. But the new generation of '*babus*' portrayed in Pyarichand's farce was quite impulsive in this regard. They did not have much time for patronizing '*nautch*' performances or they retained no interest in cultural training of the prostitutes which found to be essential in Bhabanicharan's period. This new generation of '*babus*' of later half of the 19th century were 'primarily interested in immediate profits through a fast transaction – whether in commerce, administration, or in their relations with prostitutes.'³⁹

The farce '*Aponar Mukh Apuni Dekho*' (look at your own face) written by Bholanath Mukhopadhyay in 1863 present a detail picture of the changing nature of prostitutes during this transitional phase. '*Rammoni*' is one of the character who is an 'elderly prostitute'. She hailed from '*Baiti community*' – (it was lower caste whose main occupation was manufacturing lime from shells). The author observed –

...after her husband's death, *Rammoni* used to work as a maid servant for a [monthly] salary of two rupees and ten annas...after a few days of work, *Rammoni* found favour in a *babu's* eyes ...as a result, first her maid servant's occupation came to an end, she was put up in a two storied house in an alley, the '*babu*' began to visit her everyday, he was also joined by one or two Brahmin and Kayastha friends and *Mosahebs* (many Brahmins went touch water in a lower caste home...but at *Rammoni Baiti's* home they went on guzzling mutton and *luch* – their cake of flour fried in *ghee*). Earlier *Rammoni* used to be called "Rani Thakurani". But once she reached the two storied house, she became '*Rammoni*'.

³⁹ Ibid. p.93-94

Then when the '*babu*' gave her some ornaments, she assumed the name '*Rammoni bibi*'...within a short time, *Rammoni* managed to build a house of her own, acquired several sets of ornaments, put together a splendid wardrobe, and came to be regarded as one among the top demi-mondaines...⁴⁰

'Here is a thumb-nail sketch of a self-made woman and of her rapid rise to the pinnacle of success in her profession. She is not the archetypical prostitute of the past – the innocent victim of the seduction or desertion, or forced to join it by a procuress. *Rammoni*'s entry is voluntary, and the steps are chosen by herself in the ladder of professional success.' *Channabilashi* is one character who has been brought up by *Rammoni*. *Channabilasi* was the daughter of her servant who belonged to '*Bagdi Community*' which was a lower caste community of cultivators. *Channabilashi* got the entire training under *Rammoni*'s guidance and succeeded in reaching higher in her profession. She won the favour of *babu* of Calcutta who was one of the richest *babus* of Calcutta during the late 19th century. This *babu* was also known for his lavish extravagant life-style which has been vividly described in the *Bholanath*'s farce. This provide us with the changing nature of the new generation of the clientele of prostitutes who stood up as the real patron of them during the last half of the 19th century. The '*babu*' of the 19th century formed two categories – one was the last generation of the descendants of the *banians and dewans* of the 18th century. This generation of *babu* was extremely spoiled character and led a lavish life at the cost of inherited wealth from their grandfather. But '*babus*' of this generation were not fascinated by '*nautch*' performance and maintenance of *baijis* as their mistress with lavish grandeur (which were highly indulged by their grandfather/ predecessors). This generation of '*babus*' were more inclined 'to orgies of drinking, gluttony and promiscuous whore mongering'. The second category of *babus* was a 'rising generation of a retinue class in the tertiary sector of the commercial, administrative and judicial systems – clerks, lawyers and a host of professionals like teachers, doctors, engineers etc.'⁴¹

Bholanath Mukhopadhyay has given a vivid description of these two types of *babus* in his farce. One *babu* is extremely inclined to *Channabilashi* but he possesses enormous wealth and therefore, quite capable enough to maintain the entire group of prostitutes staying at the brothels run by *Rammoni*. One day this '*babu*' arranged a Christmas party in his 'ancestral garden house' located on the outskirts of Calcutta. In this party he brings all these prostitutes and his friends. *Baijis*, other dancers and musicians were also hired as a source of entertainment in this lavish party. But soon the songs, dances of *baijis* were stopped due to the chaos created by all drunk '*babus*' in the party.

⁴⁰ Bholanath Mukhopadhyay, *Aapnar Mukh Aaponi Dekho*, In Basu, Kanchan (ed.) *Dushprapya Sahitya Sangraha*, Vol II, Reflect Publication, Calcutta, 2001 (First Publication 1991). p.91 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.94-95))

⁴¹ Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.95-96

The dances turns into an unstrained indulgence in their lustfulness and the party thus come to the end. Next morning the men and women are found in 'odd corners of the garden'.⁴² *Rammoni* advises *Channabilashi* not to get swept away by any allurements (fun and game) and says: "We do not have any lasting relations with the '*babus*', they are from the outside; they are here today, but may disappear tomorrow. But they have cash.... Now is the time to fleece them; you will never get this opportunity again. As long as the '*babus*' fancy us, however learned they may be, they submit to one word uttered by a whore- the word is aan[bring]. My darling! This word aan has to be cultivated in such a manner that once you utter it, no '*babus*' can resist it... He will have to bring it to you, even if he has to steal or sell his wife's ornaments..." *Rammoni* advises *Channabilashi* to extract money and wealth from '*babu*' as much as possible, to secure her future life. She says: "Many among the whores, even though they managed to acquire a lot of expensive ornaments, could not live wisely; some among them did not pay attention to the need for earning enough when they could. Some are now maid-servants, others are working in granaries, wallowing in dust and earning somehow a handful of rice."⁴³

'*Rammoni*'s words hark back to the advice given some forty years ago by the old madam to her apprentice in *Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay*'s '*naba-bibi-bilash*'. *Rammoni*, however, is more explicit in her explanation of the motives of both the prostitutes and their patrons. Unlike her predecessor, she does not feel the need for disabusing *Channabilashi*'s mind of expectation of love – since such emotional attachments were assumed to have no place in what had, by now, become a full fledged commercial deal.' New skills were cultivated among prostitutes of the later period of 19th century. *Bholanath Mukhopadhyay* mentions about eight qualities which a prostitute must acquire quoting a popular saying prevalent in Bengal during contemporary period: ***Thaat, thamak, chatak, chaal, mithya, maan, kanna, jaal***. "In addition to the old devices of coquetry and deception (now termed as *thaat*, *mithya*, *maan* and *kanna*), the new skills necessary to cultivate are thamak (flaunting an affected gait), chatak (dazzling the customers with gaudy glamour), chaal (putting on air and big talk) and gaal (use of abusive language)." The real motto of using all these skills was to make the product attractive to the clientele so that its commercial transaction could be fulfilled properly. Outward glamour was, therefore, quite stressed upon. Though the maan(acting as if her pride has been hurt) and kanna (weeping) two skills were also used as an instrument to appeal 'to the emotions of the customer, the main direction, evidently, is towards attracting the new '*babu*'s' taste for tawdriness and catering to his limited desire for a veneer of 'fine feeling' to cover his actual

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Bholanath Mukhopadhyay, *Aapnar Mukh Aaponi Dekho*, In Basu, Kanchan (ed.) *Dushprapya Sahitya Sangraha*, Vol II, Reflect Publication, Calcutta, 2001 (First Publication 1991). p.109-110 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.96)

act of consumption'. '*Gaal*' (use of abusive language) - ... 'such abuses were sometimes in the form of light-hearted raillery – direct enough to hit the target, but soft enough to retain the '*babus*' as their customers.'⁴⁴

Any attempt on prostitute's side to follow 'manners' of *bhadralok* society always received a scornful expression from prostitutes' community in the following manner: "Khankir abar jateyr bichar' (what cheek!! Even the whore is fussy about caste); 'Ranri belir biyer shakh, unaye rasher kato thamok' (The whore wants to marry; how she flaunts her overflowing love!)." The people from respectable society always indulge a negative approach against prostitutes which were oftenly expressed in the popular literature of the 19th century Bengal. They were oftenly accused of extracting wealth from the *babus* and at the same time respectable persons were not paid their dues on time. A popular saying was – "*Beshyar duarey tanka tanka, gurur belaye nabadanka*' (Heaps of money at the doors of the prostitutes, and nothing for the guru)". The famous folk-poet Dashu Roy (1805 - 57) in one panchali song composed by him observed: "*Satider anno jote na, beshyader jaroa gahona*' (Chaste wives do not get rice to eat, while whores wear ornaments studded with jewels)."⁴⁵ The feeling of an uncautious frightened person walking in a street in the red-light areas of Calcutta has been expressed in the song of an unknown 'poetaster' of 19th century Bengal:

Kolikatar beshyader leela oti chamotkar,
Maya bojhey sadhya kar?

Jetey Nather Baganey bhoy lagey money,
Chailey porey toder paney, haat dhorey taney,

Jorabaganey geley, mishta katha boley,
Agey bhulaye shesh – kaletay daye panshi galey,

Abar Sonagaachi thakey jara, koshayer maton byabhar,
Dekhey Shuney lagey bhoy, parey ba ki hoy.

(Amazing are the games that of the Calcutta whores play. Who can make out their wiles?...One is scared of going to *Nather Bagan*, where if you even cast a fleeting glance at them, they will pull you by your hands ...If you go to *Jorabagan*, they will first charm you with sweet talk, and then sling the noose around your neck...And those who live in *Sonagachi* behave like butchers. Watching and listening to them, one gets frightened, not knowing what will happen next.)⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.97

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.98-99

⁴⁶ Ramakant Chakraborty, *Adi Rasatmak Bangla Gaan*, (1750 – 1900) in Sudhir Chakraborty, (ed.) 'Jounata O Samaskruti' Pustak Bipani, Kolkata, 2002. p.130-131 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.98-99)

The murder of prostitute was very common incidents in the context of 19th century Bengal. Bengali newspaper and chapbooks which accrued immense popularity during contemporary Bengal constitutes an important segment of sources on this account. From these sources it becomes quite clear that in most cases prostitutes were murdered by their male customers. If the purpose was not stealing then it was revenge by abandoned lover – the male customer. 'Jealousy' of the male customer remained the prime factor behind most of the cases of murder of prostitutes. In this regard some extract portion of a Bengali journal is quite significant:

There is no end to the variety of evils that are committed in brothels! A man maintained a prostitute as his kept in a brothel in *Shaymbazar* in Calcutta, while it is rumoured that two other men also visited her, and when the man who kept her learnt about this, last Sunday he told her that he was going out of town and took leave of her; meanwhile, the prostitute invited her two madhoopas [literally, a pair of two black-bees feeding on honey – meaning her two lovers], sat in a circle with them and began to be merry on wine and meat, when at that moment the man who kept her entered the room with a sword, and made sacrifice of all the three...⁴⁷

The working class people of Bengal during the 19th century indulged a very unsympathetic attitude towards prostitutes. Although larger section of these prostitutes drove into this profession due to the dire poverty and 'Social exploitation' which also stood up as major factor in the case of the other poor labouring class. But these labouring classes were not ready to accept prostitutes and their profession. Although the prostitute earned money selling her skills in the market like another working people; but other working people's perception was, when they work labouriously, the prostitutes earn money in the easiest manner – providing entertainment with her body. On the moral ground the 'prostitute's labour' was stigmatized in the society which further pushed them into the inferior category in the hierarchical order of the working classes in 19th century Bengal. They have been segregated in the society. But here it is quite interesting that when the poor prostitute

⁴⁷ Sumanta, Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000.p.100; A chapbook of contemporary Bengal gives description of the murder of a prostitute resided in 'Sonagaji'(Sonagachhi) located in northern Calcutta in 1875. In this chapbook this murder of prostitute has been elaborated in a typical sensational manner. It gives the description of the victim *Golap* – she was 16 to 18 years old, fair with beautiful eyes and of medium height (*Bachhor atharo sholo boyesh tahar, Shubrabarna Sulochana madhyam akar*). Then its another verse gives an account of the arrest of the murderer by Deputy Commissioner of Police of Calcutta, Lambert. The murderer is named *Kali Rakshit* – who is 30 years old with dark complexion and slim body. The murderer does not show any regrets of repentation on his deeds and with a cheerfull mood he 'departs' with Lamberts. (*Lamberter Shongey rangey korichhey Poyan*). The author of this chapbook composed another account following this incidents called – '*Sonagajir Khunir Phansir Hukum*' (The Sonagaji Killer sentenced to death by hanging). It is a writing describing a details of 'trial proceedings' which informs us that Golap was hit twenty four times and out of which ten wounds were extremely severe and according to the doctor's statement – the murder was an intentional act. But listening to his 'death sentence' the murderer without showing any feeling of 'remorse' saw it with utter contempt and with joyous expression he cried out repeatedly – 'Excellent! Excellent!' (*'Suniya kayedi jeno prakashia shlesh, kohilen bar bar besh besh besh'*). It is quite significant here that not a single of these 'two narratives' has posed the murderer as villain, rather, he is arrested with playful mood (*rangey*). And at the end he has been depicted almost as hero – he looked down upon the declaration of his death sentence considering it worthless. One fact is very much clear here that the murderer here has been partly admired for his act by the poetaster. It reflects the pre-conceived notions about prostitutes in the contemporary patriarchal society in which a prostitute has always been depicted as villainess who should always be punished – even death, if necessary. Ibid. p.102-103

was denied the recognition as a 'co-sufferer' by other people of working class, the rich prostitute was also refused to acquire the respectable and prestigious position which were enjoyed by woman belong to upper – class of *bhadralok* society.⁴⁸ From all these information and analysis it can be concluded that whatever economic condition these prostitutes belonged to, they have always been considered as the ostracized community in the society.

1.3. Prostitutes : Their Songs, Sayings and Expressions

Poverty and male exploitation which included *kulin* polygamy, deprivation of widows, 'seduction by philanderers' etc. constituted important factors which drove the first generation of prostitutes and their successors into this profession in large numbers during the early time of colonial era. But soon an important role began to be played by a number of newly emerging socio-economic developments in the field of commercial relations.⁴⁹ During the period under study a large number of prostitutes in the red light areas of Calcutta hailed from the toiling, cultivating and artisan communities of the depressed class. Famine remained the major factor which drove them into this profession. They left their villages and moved to Calcutta or other towns in search of livelihood before settling down in brothels. Thus 'having been used to tough living and self reliance for survival needs, these women in their new profession were quick to introduce unsqueamish norms in their dealings with their male customers. In driving a hard bargain with them, they carried out the transaction in terms which were quite often sexually explicit and down to earth, unlike the language of their submissive sisters who came from the sheltered upper caste of *kulin* or middle class homes.'⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.103

⁴⁹ Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitute in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.105

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.105-106; The English word polygamy, which is used to describe *kulin* system, does not give clear idea to the readers unacquainted with this *kulin* system. "... after the reign of the Pala kings of Bengal, who were patrons of Buddhism, a revival of Hinduism followed during the reign of Sena kings from the 12th century onwards. There was need for reorganizing the social structure of Hinduism based on the caste system, and some rigid rules were formulated to maintain the purity of the higher castes, particularly the brahmins." This system, if it deserves such a term of 'system', led to hypergamy where bridegroom must be from a higher caste or subcaste resulting in surplus of unmarried girls. As sastras ordained that the daughters must be married off before puberty and pronounced curses on defaulters, one man married a large number of brides, who were never supported economically by the husband. marriage itself became a gainful occupation. Among the *kulin* brahmins, even septuagenarians and octogenarians, with two or three dozens of wives, were considered good matches by the helpless parents of *kulin* brahmin girls. A kind of marriage fees, ranging from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 500/- was usually charged by the *kulin* brahmins for marrying a *kulin* girl. Even teenagers were married to dying octogenarian husbands. The old man's gain, before his death, was a few rupees. The *Kulins* marry solely for money and with no intention to fulfill any of the duties which marriage involves. The women, who are thus nominally married without the hope of ever enjoying the happiness which marriage is calculated to confer particularly on them, either pine away for want of objects on which to place the affections which spontaneously arise in the heart, or are betrayed by the violence of their passions and their defective education into immorality. Cited from Dr. K. Jamanadas, *Kulin System of Bengal was Meant for Supremacy of Brahmins*. Please refer: www.ambedkar.org/brahmanism/Kulin_System

Certain factors enabled prostitutes of Bengal to be expressive. Of them cheap printing presses in Calcutta and mofussil towns are regarded as the most significant one. They led to the rapid publication of chapbooks in which sometimes sensational events happening in the red light areas were publicized, besides the songs of the prostitutes, their autobiographies, their letters and interviews. Bengali public theatre, which began to dominate Bengali culture in 1870s, was another factor to be reckoned with that provided an opportunity to prostitutes to express and project themselves. During this time, for the first time prostitutes began to be recruited as actresses. Since during this time women belonging to 'respectable' middle class families were not permitted to go out in public, so performance on stage was beyond imagination. Till that time female roles were performed by male actors.⁵¹

This provided a large number of women involved in this profession with the opportunity to come out and enter a cultural milieu which exposed them to the best in classical and modern literature; as the plays were mostly based on the writings of Sanskrit poets of ancient times or contemporary Bengali author like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay or Shakespeare. The mode of literary expression of those women acting on the stage was gradually shaped by the rehearsal and deliverance of dialogue during their stage performance of those plays. Some of them became writer. The wide diversity of outpourings by prostitutes in the different media of communication, the availability of which was present to them during that time was the outcome of extensive influence of socio economic cultural field. The socio-economic influences included influx of women into this profession from the rigid, traditional and poor background, the occurrence of the great transformation in the life style of the new generation of prostitutes. And cultural influence included the flourishing of the printing press and newspapers as well as the establishment of theatre.⁵²

Songs and Sayings of Prostitute:

To understand prostitutes it is essential to explore their voices living in their cultural manifestations. Their cultural expressions have been reflected in the idioms used with a distinctive character in their songs and sayings. Therefore, presently we can attempt to make out "the half forgotten coded messages and double entendre" living "in those cultural expressions of the red light areas". It is quite easier to explore their voices expressed in their letters and autobiographies as these were composed in Bengali language which emerged as the dominant language of literary compositions by

⁵¹ Ibid. p.106-107

⁵² Ibid. "Their voices expressed the whole gamut of their existential problems, ranging from the mundane dealings with their landladies (the mashis, or aunts, as they were known in the parlance of the red light areas) to their choice of lovers; from their subjective preferences to the objective compulsions of their profession that often prevented them from exercising these preferences and choices; from their individual priorities to their more general grievances". Ibid. p.107.

the closing decades of nineteenth century. The popularity of those idioms used in these literary compositions are still remaining; therefore, they are more understanding.⁵³

Prostitutes and their life styles have been frequently described in the nineteenth century Bengali songs and sayings. A distinct art of literature was created by prostitutes themselves known as *beshya sangeet* (*music of prostitutes*). In this literature the male clients have been ridiculed by them as laughing at themselves has also been recorded.⁵⁴ The songs and sayings have been cultivated and transmitted by them from one generation to another. Even today some of the old sayings can be heard with their changed form. Generally prostitutes hailing from the rural poor background were the composers, singers of these songs. Their direct expression pertaining to sensuous parts of human body and jokes relating to the bodily function constituted a major 'component of their traditional folk culture'. During the time of immigrating/ flocking to the red light areas of Calcutta and suburbs their traditional womanly dialects had been carried by them into the environment of their new profession. They started now to spin new songs and presented them with the same 'uninhabited and boisterous style'. These new songs manifest various experiences with diverse group of clients, their exchanges with land ladies and daily hazards of their professional life. The images of the material life have been reflected in the metaphors used in the *beshya sangeet*. The traditional images of flowers, rivers, moon etc. thus were replaced by those related to the above mentioned material condition. In keeping with the nature of their profession, the 'sexual attributes of the body', both male and female, have been emphasized and highlighted in their new cultural representations. "Double entendre with erotic suggestion or more explicit reference to the sexual act sometimes with a liberal sprinkling of four letter words –came to characterize the songs of the prostitutes".⁵⁵

'The mode of expression, the dialect and the idioms of their popular cultural forms' shows clearly 'a power and robust sense of humour'. These were not to be found in the literature composed by the 'educated' women belonging to *bhadralok* society.⁵⁶ It is noteworthy that during the period from late eighteenth to mid nineteenth century women belonging to Kulin Brahmin families also reached the red light areas in significant numbers. Most of them happened to be widows but also some of those who could not be married. During that time girls as children of many Brahmin families generally

⁵³Ibid. p.107-108

⁵⁴ Sumanta Banerjee, "Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal" in Kumkum Sangari, Sudehsh Vaid(ed.), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, p.142-143

⁵⁵ Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, p.5-7

⁵⁶ Sumanta Banerjee, "Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal" in Kumkum Sangari, Sudehsh Vaid (ed), *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989 – p.131

learnt the three 'R's. Therefore, it is not surprising if some prostitutes were found writing letters or attempting to write autobiographies.⁵⁷

Comparison between oral culture of prostitutes hailing from lower strata of the society and the literature produced by those belonging to middle class background exhibits a sharp difference among them. The difference does not lie in the style of representation alone but also in the ways of emotionally responding to the surrounding situations. The cultural manifestations contained in the oral culture emphasized 'the theme of a world turned upside down', though with 'laughter', 'inversion' and 'derision'. That provided with a 'mechanism' which was 'defensive' as well as 'subversive' to fight against the injurious forces of commercial domination. But in this regard the response of middle class prostitutes found great differences. They accepted the existing cultural form that had emerged in the literary discourse which was in chaste Bengali. This cultural framework was structured by the educated *bhadralok* community. The letters and writings of these middle class prostitutes exhibit their own style and their desire "to re-enter the respectable society from which they had been exiled, or 'fallen' has also been reflected. These prostitutes used the terminology 'fallen' or '*patita*' (in chaste Bengali) to describe themselves which is quite significant. In this regard without any sort of 'qualms' the bazar terminology *khanki*, *beshya*, *ranrh* etc. were frequently used by the poor prostitutes to describe themselves. The term '*patita*' or the Sanskrit term '*barangana*' were preferred to be used by the educated middle class prostitutes.⁵⁸ Prostitutes' customer had become one of the major constituent of their songs and sayings which as already mentioned above. These songs were about the 'rakes', 'false lovers', 'the seducers', 'gigolos', 'the old rogues and young macho men'. The idiom used in most of these songs is often "sexually explicit, with a liberal sprinkling of four letter words". The language used in these songs and sayings possesses a strength and 'robust' character⁵⁹ which already have been mentioned before.

As an example the following song can be taken into account; where a prostitute's response to her lover has been described on the imagery of kite flying – one of the popular game of contemporary Bengal:

Ketey diye Premer ghuri
Abar Keno lotkey dharo ?
Ek tanetey bojha geloe
Tomar sutor manja kharoe.

Why are you still hanging on after having snipped off the kite of love?

⁵⁷ Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p.7

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.8

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.108; "They were turned almost into characters in a merry strip tease, watched and dissected by the bargaining eyes of these women. It was their way of turning the tables on their male customers". Ibid.

One pull was enough to show that the glue had made your string sharp.

The term *sutor* denotes two layers of meaning here – the string with which the kite is raised up in the air and it also evokes phallic associations. At one level 'lover's libertinism' could be complained by the woman. This has been described by "rousing the love kite in her and then snapping it all by a sharp swing (like the kiteflier's, which cuts the string of his rival's kite, and brings it down)". From another angle, this can be assumed that her lover's 'inadequate performance' might have constituted the main reason which instigated her to laugh at her lover. "One pull of his string (one stroke?) was enough to prove that his *manja* (the glue used to sharpen the edge of the string) was *kharoe*" - this term denotes the meaning of 'brittle' or that which crumbles fast. A 'nimble witted twist' has been lent to the songs and sayings of the prostitutes by "such double entendre".⁶⁰

The prostitute's attitude towards policeman was the same during the nineteenth century as it is today. Policemen as customers were both feared and secretly derided by the prostitutes of Calcutta. The 'under privileged' which also included prostitutes of the city has remained always the main targets of police, over whom they could have exercised 'tremendous power'. An appeal was placed to the Police Commissioner of Calcutta by a Bengali newspaper of contemporary period requesting them to give the prostitutes of the city the treatment as 'subject of the government'. And it was found from them how the 'constables arrested them and handed them over to the police station inspectors who tortured them all through the night'. In this context, one popular saying is really appreciative which is prevalent even today among prostitutes:

Machh khabo to ilish.
Nang dhorbi to pulish.

If you want to eat fish, choose hilsa.
If you want to take a lover, choose a policeman.⁶¹

The insinuation is clear. A policeman tastes would be better since prostitutes can be protected by them and in turn he can be trapped by her in her net (like the hilsa) and fleeced to her advantage.⁶²

Some time the fact might be opposite. Some men could also be exploited by prostitutes or being used as 'studs' by them. The lines of an old song which were sung by a prostitute addressing to another are as follows:-

Sadhey ki hoinu, didi,
Chhokra nanger boshibhuto ?

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.108; See Meghnad Gupta, *Rater Kolkata*, Pratik, Kolkata, 1991 (1st Publication 1923), p.34; See Sumanta Bandyopadhyay, *Ashruto Kanthaswar*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 2002. p.110

⁶¹ Ibid. p.108-109

⁶² Ibid. p.109

Taka Paisa daye na botey,
Thapguli daye moneyr matoe.

It's not for nothing, my dear sister, that I'm loyal to my young lover.

Although he can't pay me, he's good in bed.⁶³

Religious ground also often constituted the major factor to determine the acceptance of customers.

In this context we have come across one song which has contained a distinct style – 'mock regretful style' which described the incident that a Hindu prostitute discovered that her 'customer was a Muslim only after he was about to make love to her':

Agey Jantam na, didi,
Shey jey Musalman Chhilo.
Paan Kheye, dhuti porey,
Thik Janoy Hindur Chheley.
Hatey niye sonar chhori,
Buk pocketey sonar ghari.
Jakhon niye dhuklam gharey,
Dekhlum tar kata chhilo.

I didn't know, dear sister, that he was a Muslim.

He was chewing Paan, dressed in a dhoti and looked.

Just like Hindu, with a golden stick in his hand, and a golden watch chain hanging from his breast pocket.

Only when I took him inside, did I discover that he was circumcised.⁶⁴

The sartorial habits of the customer has been described in the above song which reflect the thoughts of prostitutes of those days regarding stereotypes of Hindus and Muslims. The *dhoti* cloth used to be the Hindu customer's dress and *Chapkan* (loose upper garment) and *Pyajamas* remained to be the main dress code of richer section of Muslims as well as vest and *lungi* were the main dresses with which lower class of Muslims were associated.⁶⁵

The 'perpetual tensions' which remain always present between the prostitutes and their landladies (the brothel keepers) who are known as *bariulees* have been reflected in some of the songs. The *bariulees* frequently hike up the rent which forces prostitutes to move to some other place and find shelter over there. In the following song the prostitute complains against *bariulee* with which 'conventional romantic images of flowers, rivers, moon etc' have been replaced by 'more substantial images of material things of daily use: --

Amar bhalobasha abaar kothaye baasha bendhechey,
Piriteyr parota kheye mota hoyechey
Mashey mashey barchhey bhaara,
Bariuree dichhey taara,

⁶³ Ibid. See Sumanta Bandyopadhyay, *Ashruto Kanthaswar*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 2002. p.83

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.109-110; Also see Sumanta Bandyopadhyay, *Ashruto Kanthaswar*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 2002. p.111-112.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.110

Goylaparar moyla chhonra praney merechhey !

My love has taken me to set up home at another place.
It has fattened upon the paranthas of past affairs.
The room rent is going up every month.
The land lady is threatening to evict me.
But my soul is smitten by that dark lad from the milkman's colony.⁶⁶

According to Sumanata Banajee the use of metaphor *parota* – (Hindi *Parantha* means layered fried bread) to give description about her experiences of love can be considered as a 'marvellous bravura'. The experiences of various dealings with male customers was piled together one on the top of another just 'like the thin layers of fried bread in a *Parantha*' and become the reservoir of memories of the prostitutes which included both physical as well as emotional experiences. But the 'dark lad from the milkman's colony' has been chosen by her from her reservoir of memories. With this the Radha-Krishna legend has been reconstructed 'in her own localized version'. Her "lover is imagined as a contemporary replica of that dark prince of the cowherd-milkman community of the ancient myths – Krishna".⁶⁷

The room of the prostitute where they reside and practise their profession has its own value. The location of the room, its interior decoration and rent constitute the major requirements upon which 'luck in business depended'. The following song is quite frank and explicit in character where a prostitute is complaining about the room which is allotted her 'by the land lady of the brothel':-

*Bariulee, hisheb metao,
Kal Jaboe utey.
Emon baler ghar diyecho,
Nang Jotey na motey.
Ebar Jaboe Belegataye,
Nang Jotaboe mota shota,
Kuli majur shob boshaboe,
Baad deboe no motey.*

Send me my bills, landlady, and let me clear them.
I'm quitting your place tomorrow.
Fuck your room! No lover ever comes here.
This time, I'll go to Belegata and pick up lovers who are beefy and chunky!
I'll entertain every one – porters and labourers and refuse none.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid. Also see Sumanta Bandyopadhyay, *Ashruto Kanthaswar*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 2002. p.108.

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Ibid. p.111; Also see Sumanta Bandyopadhyay, *Ashruto Kanthaswar*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 2002. p.107.

Sort of romanticism has been reflected in some of songs 'with a bizarre images embedded in them'. A village prostitute's expression of grief on her lover's departure is being reflected in the following lines at a song.

*Tamak kheyge geley na, bandhu hey !
Kato dukkho money je balo,
Oi Je chander pashey tara hanshey,
Tentul Pata shukolo.
Mara gange kumir bhashey,
Shukaye sundir phul.*

Friend, you left without finishing the *hookhah* !
You can't imagine how sad I feel.
Look at the stars smiling around the moon.
But the tamarind leaves are drying up here.
The crocodile is floating on the dead river. The water lily is withering.⁶⁹

Is it an attempt of a lonely village woman to explore 'her own feelings in the dying rural landscape'? The image of a phrase which is very much familiar – that is the image of 'the crocodile in a dry river' has been used by her to give the description of the difficult situation of a prostitutes 'desperately looking for clients in a shrinking market.'⁷⁰

A song is also there which is as surprising as a smile on the face of a sick child. The lines of the song are:

*Abar ki basanta eloe?
Ashamoye phutlo kusum,
Saurabhey pran, Jadu amar,
Saurabhey pran akul holo.*

Has spring come again?
The flowers have blossomed at the wrong time.
I can smell the fragrance, my darling!
It's the fragrance that makes my soul restless⁷¹

None of these songs reflects any sense of sorrow, self-pity or guilt. These constituted important characteristic qualities of those prostitutes who had been fictionalized in Bengali romantic literature written by those authors who belonged to *bhadralok* class background during the next century. This kind of literature reflects a stereotyped character of prostitute, who has been portrayed either as a vamp awaiting 'to be reformed by a generous male', or 'a snivelling crypto *satī*' who is inclined to help her paramour to go back to his 'respectable wife' and to fulfil this purpose she is prepared 'to sacrifice everything.' Neither any 'false modesty' has been reflected in the life of the women

⁶⁹ Ibid. Also see Sumanta Bandyopadhyay, *Ashruto Kanthaswar*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 2002. p.113-114.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. p.112.

appeared in these songs. Nor any illusions about their profession or themselves have been encouraged by them. Their songs have mainly dealt with the surroundings with which they were closely acquainted, or 'as jibes at their customer outside' they used to find some 'relief in mockery' which made them able to pass every day life in their profession which was really miserable. The 'common characterisation of women' which includes dependency, softness, lack of self confidence and obedience in women character has been proved wrong by the "words and expressions used in the songs and sayings of the red light areas of nineteenth century Bengal".⁷²

'Like the acronyms used in international trade today they formed the glossary of terms necessary to distinguish preferences of both the suppliers and the buyers in trade negotiations and describe the various functions and categories of people involved in the trade. The slang of the red light world of nineteenth century Bengal was essentially a code language used for commercial transactions. In speaking this language, as also in the uninhibited use of explicitly sexual expressions, the prostitutes were merely talking shop, drawing upon the daily experiences of their own trade.'⁷³

Baijee Sangeet and Nautch Performances:

Chitpore Road and the adjacent streets and by lanes were the main areas where they lived in. The Muslim *baijis* were mainly considered to be the 'descendants of the Muslim dancers and musicians of Northern India' whose displacement from the Mughal courts occurred during the period of decline

⁷² Ibid. It will be observed that certain terms have been repeatedly used which sometimes denote humorous sense and sometimes 'pejorative sense' (*gaal*). "Words like *nang* (a customer who used to be treated as a lover and enjoyed special privileges); *holdey* – *bhatar* (a sarcastic term used to describe a favourite customer for whom the prostitute cooked rice in *ghee* which gave it a *holdey* or yellowish hue. It is a play on the two words – *bhat* or rice, and *bhatar* which meant 'a husband'; *khanki* (whore); *bandha khanki* (a prostitute who was a kept woman); *korey ranri* (a young widow, the term *ranri* being interchangeable, meaning both widow and prostitute, which suggests that influx of a large number of widows into the profession); *bariulee* (the madam, or landlady who ran the brothel); *boshano* (literally meaning making someone sit, but in the slang of the prostitutes implying entertaining the customer); *chhenali* (coquetry); *gormi* (syphilis) all these terms came to constitute the language of trade in the flesh market of nineteenth century Bengal." "Terms like *dabka* (a girl with a well endowed youthful body), *dhoska* (a woman with an aging and withered body), *dhumshi* (a fat woman with ungainly movements), *aantkuri* (a barren woman), *gatar khaki* (literally meaning a woman who eats up her body – in other words, allows her body to go waste by remaining idle) were common expressions in use among women. Most of these terms are still current in women's speech patterns in rural Bengal". One term was often used by prostitutes for those men who were considered as 'useless' by them – *Phalna tusku*. A well known Bengali historian and linguist Sukumar Sen has reached a conclusion in course of finding out the origins of the term. This suggests that 'popular slang' and 'female dialect' commonly used in nineteenth century Bengal have long history of its "innovative adaptations". He has said: "women in my childhood days would often refer to their demised husbands as '*phalna*'. It is an Arabic word that was adopted in Persian and there from, was transferred to Bengali. It means 'such and such' that is a person unnamed... In the parlance of women, the phrase '*phalna tusku*' means insignificant persons, persons not worthwhile to be mentioned by name. The part '*tusku*', also is of Arabic origin: '*fashakhkhus*' (meaning the same as in Arabic: '*penis, pudendum muliebre*'). Worthless husbands were also ridiculed by them, which is quite clear from the following saying: *Kapal amar bakto, Sakto dekhey bhatar nilam, Hagey sudhu rakto !* (Just my luck! I chose a husband who, I thought, would be strong. But now I find that he can only shit blood!). Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1998 (Reprint 2000). p.6-113.

⁷³ Ibid. p.113

and they started migrating towards the cities of Bengal. This migration rapidly occurred from the closing decades of eighteenth century. The tradition and culture maintained by *Nikki* who was a famous singer and other *baijis* of that period was preserved and continued by these descendants. The '*nautch*' performances of those earlier *baijis* remained quite popular during early phase of nineteenth century Bengal.⁷⁴



বেলনস্ অঙ্কিত নৃত্যরতা বাইজি

A Baijee performing dance

(Source: Devajit Bandyopadhyay (ed), *Beshyasangeet Baijisangeet*)

Actually, prostitution was never considered as a matter of 'disgrace' during the second half of the eighteenth century and 'in fact, it was a gratification obtainable for a trivial consideration'. During this period a *nautch* was considered to be a source to gratify Europeans and was regarded as a major source of entertainment. To entertain visitors to India 'at a *nautch*' by their friends became a part of custom. At the same time 'extravagant expenditure over the *nautch*' was regarded as a status symbol.⁷⁵

These *baijis* were not much educated but quite intelligent. Their continuous association with various kind of people, due to their professional and social life made them quite efficient in conversation and

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ B. Joardar, *Prostitution in Historical and Modern Perspectives*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1984, p 52

flexible. This provided them some awareness of outside world and self confidence. They were quite efficient to speak Urdu language and some even were able to speak 'smattering of English'.⁷⁶

It seems that Northern Indian musical skill was cultivated among the Muslim prostitutes of upper and middle class. 'The commerce of sex' was thus mingled with the artistic skills. The Bengali Hindu *baijis* also felt inclined to get trained into those skills. In this regard, Muslim *baijis* were usually appointed by Hindu women as a trainer of their daughters in classical music in the red-light areas. As an example, Binodini who became famous as an actress was apprenticed by her mother to a Muslim *baiji* when she was eight years old. She was introduced to an organizer of public entertainment by this Muslim *baiji*. Through that organizer later she was recruited into theatre. But while Binodini chose to explore her cultural talent in acting field and became famous as a Bengali stage actress, many prostitutes in the red-light areas of Calcutta who were her contemporaries chose to explore their cultural talents in musical field and became *baijis*.⁷⁷

The songs of the *baijis* never dealt with the hazards of professional life, which constituted an important aspect of the songs of the prostitutes, which has been quoted earlier. The songs of these *baijis* were composed in a traditional romantic style. An intense longing of the beloved for lover or the emotional shock caused by the ignorance of lover constituted the main contents of their songs. Some of these songs contained 'a beautiful turn of phrase or a typical homely metaphor' which were used by Bengali women of those period in their colloquial language in a peculiar way. As an example one song is being presented here :

*Sada pran keno chaye ?
Bhalobashar mukhey agun,
Shatru berey paye,
Bhalobeshey khub jenechhi,
Hatey hatey phal peyechhi,
Sarat kendey morechhi,
Tomar dhorey duti paye*

Why does my soul want it always?
Fie upon love! It's an enemy that binds my feet with shackles.
I've had enough of love.
I've suffered the consequences.
I've wept the whole night, holding on to your feet).⁷⁸

In another this song a domestic mood has been reflected. It gives the description of a woman's desire to adorn herself with a motto of seducing her lover:

⁷⁶ Ibid. p.56

⁷⁷ *Dangerous Outcast*, p.114

⁷⁸ Somnath Chakraborty, *Kolkatar Baiji Bilash*, Bookland Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1991. p.128 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.115)

*Didi lo ! Medipata nokhgulatey poriyē de na;
 Sonela alta guley, ranga galey makhiye dena.
 Keora - Khayer diye pane, pran-bodhu mojbey praney,
 Benitey Jhampta diye, lachpachani Shikhiye de na.*

Dear Sister – please anoint my nails with the *mehdi* leaf,
 mix the golden lac dye, and put it on my rosy cheeks.
 The screw pine flower and *catechu* in the betel leaf are sure to make my lover lose himself,
 please teach me how to flip around my plait of hair.⁷⁹

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*Gauhar Jan, the legendary performing
 artist at the turn of the century,
 singing in 1902. File photograph
 from HMV Calcutta*

Gauharjaan

(Source: Pran Nevile, *Nautch Girls of India: Dancers, Singers, Playmates*)

The *baijis* seems to be free from religious prejudices. Hindu *baijis* took lessons from Muslim musicians and Hindu 'guru' trained Muslim *baijis* in Kathak dances. *Gahar Jan* was a famous *baiji*, who was of Eurasian origin and born in Calcutta during the 1870s. It was believed that large numbers of Hindu devotees were very much fond of her songs:

*Hari boley dak rashona ei bela ray,
 Ar emon din pabey na rey.*

Take the name of *Hari* now;
 you will never get a better chance.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.124 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.115)

⁸⁰ Ibid. p.92 (Translated by Sumanta Bannerjee, cited in *Dangerous Outcast*, p.116)

"But the *baijis* were perhaps marginal to the red light area, which was primarily dominated by the exclusively professional, commercial sex- workers - the prostitutes who, in their songs, expressed their existential feelings in more direct and often abrasive, fashion. The life style of the *baijis* in the red light area constituted a twilight zone - with some among them maintained as mistresses by rich 'babus', and other occasionally entertaining customers. Their main source of livelihood was their expertise in singing and dancing in the classical north Indian mode. It was this expertise that earned them a certain recognition from the Bengali gentry which allowed them access to the cultural arena through *mehfil* performances in the houses of the old aristocrats, invitations from middle class Bengali homes for singing *kirtans*, and later the Bengali stage where some among the *baijis* were employed as singers."⁸¹

We get the description of nautch performance in the poem 'naughty nautch' written by an unknown English poet ⁸²

With fire in their eyes and love on their lips
And passion in each of their elegant skips,
As breathless as angels, as wicked as devils,
Performed at these highly indelicate revels.⁸³

Amiya Nath Sanyal, an expert in musical field (1895-1978) has observed: 'conventional society and general people consider *baijis* as characterless and public women because of their continuous association with a number of male (purush). But one thing should be noted here that they took the performance of songs and dance as their profession. They sustained themselves through entertaining general mass. It became the strategy for survival. ... These famous *baijis* who have always been subjected to the public humiliation and persecution; in my perception each of them is *Gandharbi*. ... This is our incapability that we are unable to reward these *baijis* their respectable position in the society'.⁸⁴

Khemtawalis and Bainach:

The Muslim *baijis*, and Hindu prostitutes belonging to upper and middle class maintained a different 'norms of behaviour' which were in sharp contrast to the life style of *Khemtawalis*. This *Khemtawalis* hailed from the background of Bengali rural folk culture. Their cultural manifestations included dance, and songs. Their dance was known as *Khemta*. This *Khemta* dance recalled the highly spirited folk dance and songs usually practised in the rural areas of Western Bengal and achieved immense popularity like the *jhumur* dance. The *Khemtawalis* were considered to be the lower

⁸¹ *Dangerous Outcast*, p.116

⁸² Devajit Bandyopadhyay, *Beshyasangeet Baijisangeet*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 2001. p. 57

⁸³ Benoy Ghosh, *Kolkata Saharer Itibritta*, vol-1, Bak-Sahitya, 1990. p.430

⁸⁴ Reba Muhuri, *Thumri O Baiji*, Pratibhash, 1986. p.14 -15

category in the socio-economic hierarchical order of the red-light areas. Unlike these *Khemtawalis* the *baijis* and Hindu prostitutes of upper and middle class cultivated Northern classical music and dancing.⁸⁵

The 'cultural representations' of *baijis* and *Khemtawalis* did not draw same importance from the clientele. A sharp difference was attached to the responses of the clientele in this regard. Though *Khemtawalis* and *Baijis* both were considered as the 'disreputable women' in the contemporary Bengali Society but a sharp distinction was found in the attitude of *Bhadralok*, English mentors and their associates towards these women. *Baijis* were fondly patronized because they cultivated the Northern Classical Music and Dance and possessed 'the ambience and charm of the feudal aristocracy of the Mughal era'. This had highly impressed British people settled in Bengal who were highly fond of 'the exotic orient' and the old Bengali aristocratic class who were still preserving their taste and culture inherited from the Pre-British cultural norms patronized *baijis* to impress British patrons. The middle class Bengali *Bhadralok* though invited *baijis* on various occasions organized at home to perform but never allowed their children to get the admission in the same school where their own children studied. This is quite evident from the vigorous opposition raised by the *Bhadralok* section against the 'admission of Heera Bulbul's son to the Hindu college in 1853'.⁸⁶

The 'discriminatory attitude' in this regard has been reflected in the writings of Bengali *Bhadralok* section of contemporary period. "The Bengali journal *Bangadarshan*, edited by the well known novelist *Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya*, denounced the *Khemta* dance as originating from barbarian Bengali *tantrik* practices, and marked by 'abominable contortions of the middle part of the body', while praising the dancing of *baijis* as inspired by the (North Indian) Hindu religious scriptures, and discovering in them a 'seriousness that is similar to that of the (Hindu) Puranas'".⁸⁷

The *baijis* used to sing in Bengali and Urdu. The lyrics of their songs centred around the romanticism as fashioned by the male poets. Unawarded love, pain generated out of the separation from the beloved one, waiting for the re-union with the lover, constituted the main theme of the love songs of these *baijis*. In sharp contrast to them the *Khemtawalis* mainly dealt with 'an unabashed expression of earthy needs and desires that quite often reflected living and working conditions in the cheap brothels'.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1998 (Reprint 2000). p.11-12

⁸⁶ Ibid. p.14

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p.15

Since prostitutes and *baijis* belong to the neglected class in society, it is but natural that their talents will go unrecognised. Sad though it is, we have to agree that while discussing about the history of Bengali literature, the song-writers and their creative talent have always been out of our purview. But in spite of that some individuals or institutions have taken pains to do their social duties, whether consciously or not, to the benefit of the future generations. In *Battala*, in the North of Calcutta, Sudharnab Press published for the first time (July 16, 1894) a collection called '**Kolikatar Beshya Sangeet**' (Whore-songs of Kolkata). The publisher was *Troilakyanath Dutta*. *Haricharan Pramanik* was the collector and editor of these songs. The comments regarding this collection in the catalogue of Bengal Library is: 'The songs collected in this work are obscene and vulgar.' Let us forget whether the 148 songs contained in these 72 pages are vulgar or not; we can remember that following this three more collections were published. In 1897 '**Theatre Sangeet O Beshya Sangeet**' (Theatre songs and Whore songs) was published; the collector was *Akshay Kumar Dey* and publisher *Jogendranath Dey*. The first part contains theatre songs and the second part the songs sung by prostitutes. Pages 37 to 61 contain 45 songs. In the year 1911, when the capital of India was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi, '*Beshya Sangeet*' was published. Both the publisher and collector was *Nutbehari Majumdar*. It consists of 174 songs in 60 pages. There are variations in the *taal* (Beat) and *raga* (basic tune, according to Indian classical music) of some songs. Even the names of lyricists vary in different versions. Where the names of writers are omitted, it is possible that the omission was purposeful. The tunes of these songs are a mixture of various ragas of Indian classical music, and folk tunes like, *Keertan* and *Baul*. Other native and popular tunes were also used keeping in mind the dancing beats of the singers, either consciously or not. From '*Calcutta Chronicle*' Printed in 1792, we come to know that in those days, English notes were also mingled with native Indian tunes: 'The only novelty that rendered the entertainment different from those of last year was the introduction, or rather the attempt to introduce, some English tunes among the Hindoostanee music...' ⁸⁹

Though prostitutes have been subjected to the public humiliation and segregated in the society. It is important to mention here The making of the image of goddess Durga is not perfect until it is made of the clay which is collected from the 'earthen floor' near the 'threshold (*beshyadawara-mrittika*)' of the prostitute's house. The popular sayings behind this is that, the 'threshold' of the prostitute's house is the last point where the clay is purest since all the virtues were accumulated at this point which were 'shed by the men who lost them once they entered a prostitute's room! By turning her

⁸⁹ Debjit Bandyopadhyay, '*Beshyasangeet Baijisangeet*', Subarnarekha, Kolkata, 2001, p.60-61

into an appendage to religious rites, the ingenious Bengali society made a religious virtue of a social necessity'.⁹⁰

Letters of Prostitutes:

The letters published in contemporary newspapers provide us with information as well as expression about the 'protest and assertion of rights by prostitutes'. The dialect, which was generally used in the red light areas, constituted the main language of their songs and sayings that have been mentioned earlier. But these letters were written in chaste Bengali commonly used in the *Bhadralok* society. The letters point out that the writers either had been trained in reading and writing in the past or took some assistance from outsiders in this regard.⁹¹

Sumanta Banerjee found a letter written by a *kulin* Brahman woman during the early phase of 1840s. It gives the description of her marriage when she was less than three years old but she was left in her parents' house 'since the husband, being a typical *kulin* polygamist went off on his marital spree elsewhere.' Then at her sixteen years of age the letter goes:

...one afternoon, a fifty years old man appeared at our door steps.... I was shocked by his uncouth appearance, his decrepit limbs and gnarled white hair, I had never /knowingly accepted him, never met him ever since I had come of age, there had never been any harmony of minds or love between the two of us, and yet he was my husband... like his ugly appearance, at night I got a taste of his equally rude behaviour. The next morning, he collected some money from my father and left, never to return. I cannot describe my disturbed feelings at that time, what with the anguish caused by this experience, what with my approaching youth and the dismal prospect of remaining denied the happiness of a life with a husband. I just wept for days together. Although I genuinely tried to remain chaste and maintain the honour of my family and religion, finally, out of sheer torment I chose to go astray, and I came to Calcutta and I am living independently now in Mechhobazar. Last year, my younger sister also, after discord and quarrels with her husband, joined me here. Further, I have located twenty of my childhood female companions who like me, are living in different parts of Calcutta.⁹²

The letter contains the signature of 'A prostitute living in Calcutta'.

There is another letter which was published during 1850s (signature of a 'Displaced prostitute' from the district of Midnapur) This letter points out how prostitutes were treated by the authorities with a 'discriminatory attitude'. The letter mentions about "a complaint made in the columns of newspapers by a correspondent against the location of a brothel near a school in Midnapur town," which resulted

⁹⁰ Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1998 (Reprint 2000). p.24

⁹¹ Ibid. p.116

⁹² Ibid.p.117; This letter was published in *Vidhyadarshan Patrika* (Journal in Bengali) in the year 1764 (*Kartik* month of Bengali calendar) Vol. 5, under the 'Letter Section'. Please see → Kamal Chowdhury, 'Patita' (Fallen Woman), in 'Abarbonita: Dehobanijya-Birodhi Trimasik' (Abarbonita: A Quarterly Journal against the Sex-trade), Indrani Sinha and Nabarun Bhattacharjee (Ed.). Sanlaap, Calcutta, 2000. p.23-24.

in the eviction of prostitutes (the writers of the letter) from the houses which were occupied by them.⁹³ The letter opposed the school authorities and it highlights critical perception of those prostitutes about the yardstick on the basis of which the distinction was made between the *bhadra* (the respectable) and the *abhadra* (the disreputable) by them.⁹⁴

Every man - whether honest or wicked in this town has become rich through earnings made by their women... The so-called respectable wives... even with their husbands around are without far indulging in adultery, and yet because of their pride of health and right to chastity due to their marital status, they are worshipped.... As for us, just because we expressed our disaffection with our husbands, and left them, are we to be treated as sinners? When these powerful, so-called respectable women in order to ensnare the males expand the net of their swaying hips and with their slightly veiled side long glances and smiles ... move around near the school, do the students put blinkers on their eyes? Or, do they get struck by those arrows?

The letter then states:

These proud women from the prestigious and respectable families can never be stained by the dark stamp of ignominy like us.... But, after they retire at night ... they have to demonstrate love to their husbands whom they hate.

The letter quoted above has excellently illustrated the perception of a totally marginalized community about the 'societal norms' prevailing in the contemporary society that operated against them. The letter also highlights their perception of the behaviour of women from conventional society, who always enjoyed privileges and remained outside of all criticism because of the immense protection provided to them 'by the socially respectable institution of marriage'.⁹⁵

Autobiography and Other writings of Prostitutes:

The cultural field in Bengal had undergone major developments during 1870s, which provided the prostitutes with a great opportunity to express their grievances and 'assert their rights through the printing press.' The stage theatre in Bengal provided them with the first exposure in this regard; i.e. when prostitutes from red light areas began to be recruited as actresses to play the female role, since women from respectable families were not allowed to perform on public stage with male actors.⁹⁶

Actresses like Golap, Jagattarini, Elokeshi, Tinkori and Binodini had impressed Bengali audience of the contemporary period to a great extent. But their influence was not only confined to Calcutta. They went on tour and visited various places in Bengal and outside under the leadership of the National Theatre and the Hindu National Theatre (the most dominant and popular theatre groups of

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 118

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 119

the audience of those places. This became an inspiration for other prostitutes who were living in other parts of Bengal to join the theatre movement which was beginning to grow rapidly.⁹⁷



বিনোদিনী দাসী

Binodini Dasi

(Source: Upendranath Vidyabhushan Tinkori, Binodini o Tarasundari)

Among these actresses, Binodini has written an autobiography where she has narrated all phases of her life. This 'provides us with an insight into the travails of the members of her profession in contemporary Bengal'. She has described her life and events through narrating her memories which included the 'bitter experience of persecution and humiliation' which were very much common in the life of prostitutes. Her life story provides us with the 'diffused glow of her grace and sense of dignity. Binodini is unsparing in her denunciation of those responsible for the plight of women like her, and shows an unerring understanding of the socio-economic powers that operated in her society' which has been clearly reflected in the following passage:

Is the life of a prostitute disgraceful and despicable? But then, how did she become disgraced and despised? Surely, she did not become a despicable creature the moment she came out from her mother's womb! It is necessary to find out, who made her life abominable? It is possible that some voluntarily choose to plunge into darkness and pave their way to hell. But many are lured by men and by believing in their false promises end up by carrying on their heads the load of calumny and suffer hellish agony. Who are these

⁹⁷ Ibid. The communication skill of these actresses had undergone a dramatic transformation in the course of playing the role of heroines in drama, when they had to utter 'high flown, ornate Bengali' in their dialogues. This influenced their speech pattern to a great extent. They started to use 'new literary Bengali idiom' which was 'fashioned by *bhadralok* society'.

by carrying on their heads the load of calumny and suffer hellish agony. Who are these men? Are not some of them members of the same male community who are admired and respected in society? Only those women, who have been cheated in this way and have been forced to turn their lives into a wilderness, can understand how agonizing is the life of a prostitute? Only they can feel deeply the poignancy of the pain.

Binodini provides us with an in-depth analysis of the power and authority which were extremely enjoyed by these men who, taking the advantage of their respectable position in the society, always attempted to exercise control over 'the options and choices of the prostitutes'. She adds:

It is these men who deceive the women, who become the leaders of society, and administer the moral norms in order to crush these same unfortunate women. Just as they have ruined these women, they take the utmost care to prevent the children of these women from getting admitted to schools or vocational institutes, where the women might send their innocent sons and daughters in order to provide them with a path of virtue. Because of the sanctimonious moral ideas of these men, the miserable boys and girls are forced to take to the path of sin, and watch the world with venomous eyes.⁹⁸

She continued:

When God sent us to this world, he did not make us devoid of all tender instincts. He gave us all, but we lost everything due to our fate. For this, is not the society partly responsible? The tenderness which was there is not totally lost; it is shown in the way we bring up our children. We also nurture a wish to have a loving husband. But from where can we get one? Who would give his heart in exchange of ours? They come with sensual desire, talk of love only to please us; there is no dearth of such men, but who would come searching for our heart? Who would take a chance to see if we have hearts at all? Has anyone ever investigated to see if we have deceived first, or have learnt to deceive by being deceived in the first place? One among us was sent to seduce Haridas, the great devotee of Vishnu (*Vaishnab*); impressed by his temperament she became his *Vaishnabi*, his companion for life. This story is known to all. If she had no heart, could she become a devotee of the Lord Vishnu? Nobody can buy love with money. We have also never sold our love for money.⁹⁹

An actress under the pseudonym *Arundhati* has written down the background of the beginning of her career:-

In the theatre and outside the theatre, I dance, laugh, cry and sing. But before I started my career, the terrible incident that took place still haunts me with painful memories and weakens my mind.... how I became an actress; there is no need to tell. It is a common, mundane story. To satisfy sensual pleasures, leaving home with a debauch, then brought to a brothel, then being abandoned by the seducer, taking shelter in the theatre!...The person, with whom I started my journey to the unknown, brought me one day to the theatre. It was his wish that I should join the theatres. I had no wish of my own in those days. ...after a few days I dressed up as an actress I arrived on the stage....Since then, up to this day I am only acting.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ibid. p.119-120; Also see Binodini Dasi; Soumitra Chattopadhyay and Nirmalya Acharya (ed.): *Amar kotha o Onyanyo rachana*, Subarnarekha, Calcutta, 1987, p.61-62.

⁹⁹ Binodini Dasi; Soumitra Chattopadhyay and Nirmalya Acharya (ed.) ; *Amar kotha o Onyanyo rachana* Subarnarekha, 1987, p.41

¹⁰⁰ Debendranath Basu (ed.), *Rup O Rango*, 22 Kartick, 1331(Bengali era), 1924, p. 82-85

We find another actress named *Soudamini* who recounted similar experiences. Let us go through her descriptions:

Then I had the same fate as all the others who leave home like me. My companion spent about a week in those prostitutes' quarters with me and then fled. I went into sinful ways and spent about three months like that. Then one evening, I left with my *Babu*, never to come back again. A garden-house in Behala was fixed as my new residence. I started a new household there.... *Babu* arranged two tutors for me; one used to teach me music, the other was for studies. Here I spent the next three years very happily. I learnt to read and write some; and became an expert in music... at this time one day, *Babu* came and told me, 'I have sold this house, you have to leave tomorrow.'...With the experience I gathered in these few years, I sensed that *Babu* had lost interest in me; the story about selling the house was just eyewash. I said 'okay' heaving a deep sigh.¹⁰¹

The memoirs of *Arundhati* and *Soudamini* depict a picture similar to that reflected by the 18th century feminist poet *Lady Dorothy Worsley*-

Of all the crimes condemned to woman-kind
WHORE in the catalogue, first you will find.
The vulgar Word is in the mouths of all
An Epithet on every Female's fall.
The Pulpit thumpers rail against the WHORE
And damn the Prostitute: What can they more?
Justice pursues her to the very cart,
Where for her Folly she is doomed to smart.
Whips, Gaols, Disease—all the WHORE assail
And yet I fancy the WHORE will never fail...
Yet everyone of feeling must deplore
That MAN vile MAN first made the Wretch a WHORE.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 66-68

¹⁰² Nickie Roberts, *Whores in History*, Harper Collins Publishers, 1992, p.156



তিনকড়ি দাসী

Tinkori Dasi

(Source: Upendranath Vidyabhushan Tinkori, Binodini o Tarasundari)

It is not always that outsiders seduce women to this life of shame; even family-members can push them to a dark life. Upendranath Bidyabhushan (1867-1959), while discussing about actress Tinkori has opined:

The lowly, unsociable atmosphere in which our actresses are born and brought up points the finger of accountability towards their guardians, who, as soon as a daughter is born, wait till she grows up to reach puberty so that they can be sold for begetting riches, property, house and what not.... the society in which they are forced to spend their lives, gradually becomes another name for deprivation and deceit. Moreover, the guardians' control and dominance make them lose their personal freedom and wishes...¹⁰³

Apurba Sati (A Unique Chaste Woman) written by Sukumari Dutt, who was known earlier as 'Golap' is an excellent literary piece that we have come across. She was one of the first women recruited from the red light area to join the stage in 1873 to act in Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Shormistha*. This is a melodrama which also gives clear and decisive picture of the manners and motives of a prostitute Harmoni, who is growing old. She tries to introduce her daughter Nalini to this profession, with a hope that she will become the support in her old age. But Nalini falling in love with Chandraketu who was a *zamindar's* son, elopes with him and takes shelter in Benaras. Chandraketu

¹⁰³ Upendranath Bidyabhushan, *Tinkori*, Shishir Publishing House, 1919, p.34

was her first customer to whom she was introduced by her mother. But finally Chandraketu is forcibly brought back by his father. That gave Nalini a tremendous emotional setback and after a wild uncontrollable emotional outburst, she committed suicide. 'A heart-broken Chandraketu follows suit soon after'.¹⁰⁴

The author of *Apurba Sati* (A Unique Chaste Woman) got married to a Bengali *Bhadralok* who was a Brahmo during 1874 and left the red light area. But after one year of her marriage, she started writing the play about the 'environment and the trials and tribulations with which she had grown up'. Though the story and dialogues of the play *Apurba Sati* have been fictionalized, but it reflects the real conditions of the prostitutes in the red light area - the insecurity from which the prostitutes suffer when they grow old and in this regard their future planning, like Harmoni, the dream and desires of younger prostitutes and to fulfil that, efforts made by them to escape, like Nalini, the daughter of Harmoni.¹⁰⁵

Actresses like Binodini and Sukumari Dutta were extremely opposed by Bengali *Bhadralok* society in spite of being extremely talented in the field of stage theatre. This opposition continued till the early phase of twentieth century.¹⁰⁶

Binodini, who earned a lot of fame, voiced exasperation:

I have nothing in this world, only endless despair, only a soul filled with sorrow. Nobody, even to listen to my problems! In the whole world, there is not a single person to whom I can confide—because I am fallen, I am disgraced. I have no relatives, no society, no friends, nobody to call my own. The omnipotent God, who made all creatures big and small, scholarly and lowly, equally sensitive to feel pain and happiness; he again made us capable of perceiving insult or solace. But unfortunately, when I am down with humiliation, to open my heart to someone, to obtain love and sympathy, he has given me no one. Because I am a fallen woman; fallen in the eyes of society, I am a hated prostitute.¹⁰⁷

After the death (1912) of Girish Chandra Ghosh, who was the famous actor and playwright (many actresses from the red light area during nineteenth century were trained by him, who later became famous as best actresses), 'a public condolence meeting' was organized in Calcutta Town Hall where *Bhadralok* society did not permit the actresses (who were Girish Ghosh's disciples) 'to pay their homage to their master at that meeting.' Then they requested, Amarendranath Dutta who was another famous actor and their colleague in the following words:

¹⁰⁴ Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1998 (Reprint 2000). p.120-121

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.121

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p.122

¹⁰⁷ Binodini Dasi, Soumitra Chattopadhyay and Nirmalya Acharya (ed.), *Amar kotha o Onyanyo rachana*, Subarnarekha, 1987, p.1

We do not have the right to enter any public function in town hall, or any other place. But we hope that someone like you who had been dedicated to the task of presiding over the theatre, will not deny us - these miserable women - the opportunity of weeping in our homes, and of paying homage on bent knees on the stage, to our master and god, Girish Babu.

In response to their appeal a special condolence meeting was organized by Amarendranath Dutta at the Star Theatre during the same year. He presided over this meeting and actresses were invited and asked to speak something on Girish Ghosh. The actress *Susheelabala* addressed the public gathered over there as "the respectable ladies and gentlemen" and she said:

We may be prostitutes, we may be ostracized by society — but we are human beings. You may not believe it but like you people, we are also capable of feeling joy and grief. Like you, we also laugh when we are happy. Like you again, our cheeks also are flooded with tears when we are lashed by bitter sorrow. Surely you will not grudge this equal right of humble women like us.... If the sorrow of the disciples at the death of their master is natural, why should our tears, our wailings, our mourning, be considered crime?¹⁰⁸

The other actors also spoke and in their speeches criticized the *Bhadralok* society. They spoke against the self righteousness of the *Bhadralok* society whose virtues were already crippled from inside. Their speeches reflected their enormous self-confidence which they acquired in the field of their talent - acting. The performance by them 'in the roles of religious saints in plays like *Chaitanya-leela*' infused a sense of pride within themselves, which provided them with a superior feeling over the other prostitutes from red light area who were lacking brightness, enthusiasm and were criminalized. They observed that while the society admired their performance in the roles of these saints who were worshipped by the Hindus, at the same time they have been totally ostracized in the society by the same *Bhadralok* society.¹⁰⁹

If the prostitutes coming from middle class or high caste background used the literary expression to take a dig at the *Bhadralok* for their hypocrisy and reflected some urbanity, the ones coming from the humble backgrounds were direct and more sensuous in their self expression.

1.4. Prostitutes and The Role of Bengali Bhadralok Community, British Administrators and Christian Missionaries:

The mid-nineteenth century had witnessed the gradual retreat of the popular art forms from the cultural scenario of Bengal. A new generation of *Bhadralok* had emerged who were highly influenced by newly introduced English education; which motivated them to come out of the period of the past which was mainly a period of the 'eclecticism and cultural anarchy'. At the same time

¹⁰⁸ Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1998 (Reprint 2000). p. 123

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

they were encouraged to develop 'a distinct elite culture of their own'.¹¹⁰ "The attitude of the 19th Century Bengali *bhadralok* to prostitution and prostitutes betrayed a peculiar ambivalent which can be traced to the dilemma that these members of the male gentry were facing in trying to reconcile certain traditional norms of behaviour and grudgingly accepted social practices in contemporary Bengali society, on the values and code of duties that they were cultivating under a colonial administration, on the other."¹¹¹

The gradual transition occurred in the ideological, ethical and moral ground of 19th Century Bengali Society with the introduction of colonial administration. These new value system cultivated by colonial regime denounced the old tradition of maintaining mistresses, whoring, drinking which were quite prevalent among Bengali *bhadralok* section of contemporary period. And the new concept of 'Respectability' in society introduced by the Victorian English mentors talked repeatedly about the evils of prostitution and emphasized on happy married life where 'genteel norms and domestic virtues' constituted two basic norms on which the relationship of husband and wife was to be based upon. But despite the introduction/rise of new value system the profession of prostitution was continued to be patronised by Bengali *bhadralok* section of contemporary society. Though that time onwards their association with prostitutes was carried out quite cautiously. But at the same time a drastic change occurred at the mindset of housewives of Bengali *bhadralok*. These wives of *bhadralok* started possessing outward mentality and begun to be inclined to the independent life style of prostitutes.

It is quite important to be mentioned here that the independent life-style of prostitutes had huge influence on the *bhadralok* section of the 19th century Bengali Society. The richest section of prostitutes had enough money power to regulate the market economy of the capitalist society under colonial regime. The various professionals of *bhadralok* society were openly hired for services by these rich prostitutes; e.g. - lawyers (to fight their cases in the court mainly after the commencement of the contagious disease: Act - CDA); builders (for the construction of their houses); doctors (who were openly paid for buying certificates which could exempt them from the medical examination under the CDA which caused to be a matter of humiliation to them); gold-merchant (for buying jewellery) and other professionals. Thus, the large section of professionals of Bengali society were extremely regulated by the richest section of prostitutes and for their purpose of income thus these professionals and traders became very much dependent on this ostracized community of the 19th century Bengal. Even the orthodox Hindu religious priests also could not ignore their association with prostitutes. Mainly those, who were quite rich, these prostitutes were considered to them as a

¹¹⁰ Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1998, p.152

¹¹¹ Sumanta Banerjee, *Dangerous Outcast*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 2000. p 126

source of earning. Prostitutes had always been very much inclined to practice various religious obligations/rituals - pujas. Two factors played great role behind their sentiments. Firstly, they always tried to be like those women who enjoy prestigious positions in the *bhadralok* society. Secondly, their profession of prostitution which was considered by the conventional society as a sinful act, usually generated a 'guilt complex' among them which openly /motivated them to worship various gods and goddesses in order to please them with a hope of making amend for a fault which they made through practicing their profession of prostitution. Despite the staunch religious belief off/in Brahminial Purity to be contaminated with 'untouchables' which also included prostitutes; the priests never hesitated to enter brothels and accept cash and gifts from prostitutes which 'ought to have been rejected as 'tainted' by sin according to their religious principles.¹¹²

Brahmin priests used to give their own logic in order to rationalize the fact of accepting prostitutes as their clients. It is very much evident from an account of contemporary period of 19th century Bengal. While describing an evening scene in the red-light area *Harkata Gali* which is quite popular even in the modern Calcutta, the author depicts two characters that look totally different from that place:

From one house emerged an old Brahmin, with a tuft of hair springing from the back of his head, accompanied by his son. They were carrying bundles which held together a variety of goods. Both of them were chewing betel leaves. The old man addressed his son: 'did you carefully watch, my boy, how I've gathered these clients of mine? They may be whores; but when it comes to giving gifts (to Brahmins) they are head and shoulders above all the kings and the nobility... I am introducing you to all these clients of mine. You never know how long I'll live. If you, therefore, can satisfy their whims, you'll live happily ever after! But be careful! Do not ever reveal this in your village home. The villagers will ostracize us and turn us into out casters'¹¹³

The 'traditional scriptural sanction' and the interests in commercially exploiting prostitutes for their own benefit constituted two factors to motivate religious priests and other Hindu religious establishment to accept prostitutes as their clients. Taking advantage of their guilt complex oftenly money was extracted from them for the construction of temples, maintenance of attendants of these priests. In this regard one report of early decades of 20th century shows that a house on *Manicktollah Road* located in north Calcutta, owned by a prostitute *Surat Kumari*, was donated by herself to a 'religious preceptor' - *Prabhu Jagadbandhu*. This house, later was converted into a temple called - '*Maha Uddharan Math*'.

The Bengali *bhadralok* society soon realized the impossibility of eradicating prostitution. And therefore they began to take up various strong steps to isolate the prostitutes and 'render the institution as unnoticeable as possible.' To fulfill this purpose, the *bhadralok* section of the society

¹¹² Ibid. p. 126-128

¹¹³ Ibid. p.128

tried to condemn them to exile outside the *bhadra pallies* (the society where 'respectable' and educated people live). In this regard the '*vidyotsahini sabha*' - an association formed by Bengali intellectuals in 1856, Calcutta played the leading role. This association was headed by the famous author *Kaliprasanna Sinha* who belonged to one of the famous aristocratic Bengali families of contemporary Calcutta. From this association an appeal was submitted to the colonial administration in order to push prostitutes to the outskirts from the city area and carry out their profession over there through issuing legal order. In this appeal it was also described that how various brothels flourished at proper Calcutta were openly accessed by young men belonging to *bhadralok* families. In this letter the complaint was also lodged against some people belonged to their *bhadralok* community. These rich Bengali *bhadralok* of north Calcutta was accused of giving room to the prostitutes on rent to ply their trade. Their activities were condemned of polluting the 'social environs of the respectable parts of the residential area'.¹¹⁴

The opposition raised by *bhadralok* section of Bengal against the movement of prostitutes brought these marginalized section under tremendous pressure in several ways. During 1854 the colonial government was persuaded by a judge of contemporary Bengal - *Rashomoy Dutta* with regard to 'stop prostitutes from planning against their customers in courts'. This decision was very much welcomed by a contemporary Bengali newspaper which stated:

Calcutta's prostitutes used to approach the lower courts with false accusations against respectable gentlemen.' Their complaints ran as follows: such and such person, a raja, or a rich man, kept me and agreed to pay me a certain amount as wages, but has not paid me for several months. Following this, the judges of the lower courts used to serve summons on these men. But the respectable gentlemen could not get embroiled in legal disputes with the prostitutes, and, therefore, opted for out-of-court settlements under which they were required to pay the money to the prostitutes. This provided the prostitutes with an excellent opportunity of earning money'. It continued to observe: 'Now, the respectable gentlemen have finally been able to extricate themselves from that net woven by the prostitutes.'¹¹⁵

There was a constant attempt to bar the movement of the prostitutes to any area inhabited by respectable people. In this regard their free access and participation in various theatrical performances and 'melas' faced tremendous opposition from Bengali *bhadralok*. In this regard the statement uttered by Brahma reformer *Keshub Sen* published in a contemporary newspaper is quite significant where/in which he warned the organizers of 'Hindu Mela' (an annual fair where traditional Bengali crafts and skills were exhibited sponsored by affluent *bhadralok*):

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 128-130

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p.131

... the prostitutes should by no means be allowed to enter the precincts of the 'Mela'. If you want to do good for the country, anything that is visibly ugly must be kept out of public sight.

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The prostitutes' participation in various cultural activities - theatrical performance being invited by one section of Bengali *bhadralok* faced a vigorous opposition raised by other *bhadralok* community. In this regard *Manomohan Basu*, a famous literary figure of contemporary period observed:

Young *bhadralok* carousing with prostitutes in their midst, dancing and acting on state, in public with prostitutes - how can we see and listen to all this? How can we suffer this?

Manomohan did not stop here. Centering around the issue of *Goshthabihari Dutta's* daring steps to get married to an actress Golap who herself was a prostitute, *Manomohan Basu* composed a scurrilous song, which was meant to be sung as a *nagar sankeertan* (a popular urban foral of street singing in procession). The song lampooned Golap, reminding her that when she was a public woman she had had a hundred husbands and that fate brought to her a gem of a husband through the theatre greenroom. It described Golap as 'dressed as a chaste woman, but looking for sport.' This marriage also faced tremendous criticism from Brahmo reformer *Keshub Sen*. In a news journal edited by him he observed:

Where is the proof that a woman who had turned her soul into hell through years of dissoluteness, can over-night becomes a chaste women? . . . We indeed regard every unchaste woman as a miserable creature. But then, so do we regard every drunkard... In order to show compassion to such miserable creatures, one should first try to reform their minds ...¹¹⁷

The rise of elite culture of Bengali *Bhadralok* and the suppression of popular culture of Calcutta was concomitant. The British colonial power had played an important role to foster these processes. They played a dominant role at various levels -missionary, educational and administrative.¹¹⁸ Beside the frequent use of words 'in a pejorative sense'; 'the profanities and oaths, the double entendres and bawdy quips' frequently occurred in popular songs and proverbs of women. These have always remained as a reservoir where the 'various speech patterns and images derived from folk humour' could get accumulated in a large scale, which were totally denounced by the *Bhadralok* society.¹¹⁹

The *Bhadralok* community had launched a vigorous opposition against the popular cultural forms. Such songs and expressions of popular culture were considered by the elite Bengali *Bhadralok* class as the cultural manifestations embedded with lower class belief and behaviour. At the same

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p.131-132

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 132-133

¹¹⁸ Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1989. p.153

¹¹⁹ Sumanta Banerjee, *Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal in Kumkum Sangari, Sudehsh Vaid(ed.), Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, p.146

time new patterns of difference and patronage were sought to be created by this elite section of the society. These songs and expressions were considered by *Bhadralok* class as embarrassing because these were shared and cultured by their own women in the *andarmahals*.¹²⁰

One of the chief concerns of the *Bhadralok* community of the Bengali society was to free their own women in the *andarmahal* from the influence of polluting popular cultural forms of the lower order of the society. And to fulfill this purpose they attacked various popular cultural forms and its artists; mainly those women who practised these cultural forms and freely accessed the *andarmahals*. From the mid nineteenth century onwards, a number of books and newspapers articles were published by the Bengali *Bhadralok* class to generate public opposition against the popular culture. They started organizing many meetings in Calcutta to spread awareness in this regard. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the popular forms were driven away from the boundaries of respectable urban society and pushed to the remote areas. In these places some of them are still practised by the descendants of those performers. Some are practised by the prostitutes. Some prostitutes revolted against this suppression to make a place for themselves in the theatre world of Calcutta and later in the film world.¹²¹

The *Bhadralok* section of the Bengali society was encouraged and motivated by the Christian missionaries to dissociate themselves from the popular cultural forms and their artists of lower orders. The Christian missionaries were the first who started launching vigorous campaigns against the popular culture during the first half of nineteenth century, when these popular art forms were still surviving under the patronage of Bengali aristocratic class.¹²² The Reverend James Ward and his English contemporaries in India had disapproved the folk culture of Bengal of contemporary

¹²⁰ Ibid. p.146-147

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 147-148. It is very important to mention here that during the early phase of the nineteenth century, Bengali *bhadralok* class never presented 'a homogenous set of ideas' in their perception about women and other social issues. Firstly, the maintenance of the 'status quo in the *andarmahals*' became the first tendency of Bengali *bhadralok* class. To do so, women were allowed to maintain their life style. But at the same time the requirement of women's education was recognized by this *bhadralok* community. But in this regard they preferred 'the older methods' of education rather than those recommended by 'the Christian missionaries or their followers'. There was a 'second tendency' the representatives of which were the young Bengal group and those newly educated Bengalis who converted themselves into Christianity. They launched a vigorous campaign for several issues, which included – widow remarriage, abolition of polygamy, 'emancipation of women' etc.. They preferred all these reforms through the English education, which was newly introduced. By the close of the nineteenth century the former two tendencies started to lose their 'respective sharp edges' and got blended into a third tendency – that was a tendency of "accepting the reforms at a gradual pace and in modified forms as part of the general *bhadralok* inclination towards social stability based on a set of values born of a compromise between the old and the new." The mid of the nineteenth century witnessed the rising disrespect for the popular culture among "all the three tendencies". The Christian missionaries and English administrators were the first who roused a tremendous discontent for the popular cultural forms. Ibid. p.148

¹²² Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets*. p.153

period.¹²³ But by only showing tremendous disrespect for the Bengali popular art forms they did not satisfy them. They now started making a joint effort to create a new Bengali language; just as an attempt made by Macaulay to create a new 'class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'.¹²⁴

William Cary (1761-1834) and his colleagues of missionaries in Serampore published a new Bengali newspaper *Samachar Darpan*. In this paper a new style of Bengali was brought to be used though it had faced a tremendous criticism and was 'ridiculed' as 'Missionary Bengali'. In spite of this, Cary sought to fashion a new language for modern Bengali literature. And in this regard he had stressed on Sanskritized words' and brought a systematic attack on 'the raw, earthy tadbhaba terms' which were quite dominant in colloquial Bengali.¹²⁵

The vigorous campaign was launched against the 'vulgar patois', which were rapidly used in the compositions of popular Bengali literature of the contemporary period. It was a long drawn struggle. The popular cultural forms were so deeply rooted in the society and possessed such a strong base that the first generation of Bengali printers and publishers were highly influenced by them and from *Battala press* in Calcutta a large number of popular literature were published which included religious as well as secular books composed in simple Bengali. In respectable circles, the Battala books, as they came to be known, were associated with dirty stories, spicy accounts of local scandals and poor print.¹²⁶

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¹²³ "In 1806, Reverend James Ward expressed his shock when, invited to attend the Durga Puja festivities in the house of Raja Rajkrishna Dev of Shovabazar, he had first to listen to *Kavi* songs. Before two o'clock at night the place was cleared of the *nautch* girls who usually danced to the tunes of classical Hindustani music and entertained both Bengali aristocrats and their English friends, and then the main doors were opened to public." Sumanta Banerjee, 'Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal', 1989. p.148 -149

¹²⁴ Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets*. p.154

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.155

¹²⁶ Ibid. p. 155, 184

¹²⁷ Ibid. p.155

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E.S. Montagu, the Secretary of the Calcutta School Book Society, had commented on popular literature in a memorandum which was prepared by him on indigenous works included all popular literary compositions which were published by 'native' presses from 1805 onwards - '...the greater part [of the publications] as might be anticipated are principally connected with the prevalent system of idolatry, and not a few...are distinguished only by their flagrant violation of common decency; and are too gross to admit of their contents being disclosed before the public eye'. The popular literary composition of *Vidya Sundar* and similar other stories of romance also came to be questioned. The mythological stories extracted from the Pooranas were highly criticised. One pundit was convinced by Mr. Montagu and agreed to his views - "Subsequently he in conjunction with some other natives concurred among themselves to express their dissatisfaction with such works..."¹²⁹

The attitude of the Bengali elite class and Sanskrit pundits towards the Bengali popular art forms was thus gradually converted to the view point of the British colonial power. From now onwards Christian missionaries and Sanskrit pundits made joint efforts to denounce the popular art forms and fostered the process of infusing contempt among the Bengali elite class against the popular cultural forms.¹³⁰ The *Bhadralok* community of nineteenth century Bengal disapproved the popular female singers. They attempted to brand these popular singers as prostitutes, with the aim of bringing them under the jurisdiction of Anti-Prostitution Law which could easily drive them out from the streets.¹³¹

When the Bengali plays written in the style of European theatrical pieces began to be staged, the women belonging to the lower strata of the society attempted to make their future in this newly emerging cultural field. The actresses of the theatre world mainly came from the Vaishnavite community, which was considered to be the lower strata of the society or in most cases they

¹²⁸ Ibid. p.155, 184

¹²⁹ Ibid. p.156

¹³⁰ Ibid. p.156; "It was not only the contents of the songs of Bengali folk culture that shocked the sentiments of the Victorian English man, but it was the gay abandon, the playful musical laughter, the uninhibited prancing and rhythmic surprises which were a part of folk singing and dancing that disturbed him most. Even patient efforts by the Christian missionaries could not curb these elemental instincts of the converts from the Bengali lower orders". Ibid. p.157

¹³¹ Sumanta Banerjee, *Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal in Kumkum Sangari, Sudehsh Vaid (ed.), Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989, p. 153.

belonged to the red-light areas. The opposition of the *Bhadralok* community against the recruitment of actresses was so vigorous that after the performance of the play *Vidya Sundar* in October 1835, against which a tremendous opposition was raised, no such attempt was made by the Bengali theatre movement to introduce actresses again in the play till the period of early 1870s. During this period Michael Madhusudan Dutt launched a vigorous campaign for securing permission for women to perform the female roles.¹³² Even during 1870s when actresses like Binodini, Golapi, Jagattarini, Elokeshi and Shyama achieved immense success in the theatre world, then also they always received a resentful attitude from *Bhadralok* community. Manomohan Basu, who was quite a well known literary personality, raised a tremendous opposition against the introduction of these actresses into the theatre world of the contemporary period:

To get actresses, one has to collect prostitutes from the red-light areas. Young *Bhadraloks* carousing with prostitutes in their midst, dancing and acting on stage, in public with prostitutes - can we see and listen to all this? How can we suffer it?¹³³

In this hostile attitude which he expressed towards the women artist, he even partly tried 'to overcome the *bhadralok* prejudice against *Jatra* artists' saying:

It is even better to have the abominable acting of the *Jatra-Wallahs* (male performers) which goes against the grain of our existence. But still, our national theatre community or other acting communities should not adopt this shameful system (of introducing actresses) which encourages vices and destroys our religious principles.¹³⁴

The opposition raised by the *Bhadralok* community against the recruitment of actresses in the theatre world was mainly caused by their hostile attitude towards prostitutes. As the major part of the female population during nineteenth century Bengal was prostitutes, sometimes they created 'their own cultural genre'. All these became threatening to the confidence of the *Bengali Bhadrak* about their own wives and daughters. The fear generated among educated Bengali *bhardok* class was reflected in an article published in a famous Bengali journal of the contemporary period. The journal mentioned about the bad influence of the prostitutes on men of Bengal and then it stated:

It is not only men who are led astray. Many women of the *andarmahal* deviated from a religious life under such influence. When they, being imprisoned (in their *andarmahals*) see how free the prostitutes are, when many among them find their own husbands addicted to frolics with prostitutes, is it surprising that they also would be fired with the desire for such vices, mistaking them for delights? We learn that many such women have left their homes to join the ranks of prostitutes...¹³⁵.

¹³² Ibid. p.154-55

¹³³ Ibid. p.155-156

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵ Ibid.p.156; The women actresses came from *Vashnavite* group and prostitutes were not the only one who were segregated and suppressed in the society. Any women belonging to any class, who led an 'independent life style' and those, who could easily influence their women through their cultural activities came to be subjugated by the *bhadralok* section of the Bengal. Sumanta Banerjee, '*Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal*' (An Article) in Kumkum Sangari, Sudesh Vaid (ed), '*Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*', Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989. p.156

Though the popular cultural forms enjoyed the patronage in the *andarmahals* till the end of the nineteenth century, but with the emergence of educated ladies, which constituted a new generation, the older generation began to be replaced by them. And the ties of the older generation in the *andarmahals* with the cultural manifestations of popular forms were snapped. They treated the various personal and social issues with a 'soft sentimentality', which was strikingly different from the tone and language used in the popular cultural manifestations of women – which were 'forthright, aggressive and ribald'.¹³⁶ This new style emerging in the Bengali literature had also influenced the writings of the prostitutes of later period during nineteenth century. During 1840s and 1850s some letters of prostitutes were published in some Bengali newspapers. In 1870 a book *Kamini Kalanka* was written by *Nabinkali Devi*; the name of the book was. It was an autobiography of a prostitute. The prostitute Golap who was a theatre actress wrote *Apurva Sati* in 1875. She performed in the drama *Sharmishtha* by *Michael Madhusudan Dutt* in 1873. She came to be known as *Sukumari Dutt* after getting married to a *bhadralok*. A collection of stories was published by another actress Tinkori in 1894. She acted in a Bengali version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at the Minerva Theatre in Calcutta and became so rich that on her death, she gifted two houses to a hospital in the city, and willed the sale proceed from her ornaments to needy tenants in the neighbourhood. The best literary composite from red-light area was the collection of poems written by *Binodini Dasi* the great theatre actress. This collection was entitled *Kanak O Naline* (1905) and her autobiography *Amar-Katha* (1912).¹³⁷

The speech pattern of these actresses was highly influenced by high flown, ornate Bengali cultivated by *Bhadralok* and *bhadramahila* section of society. But even then they remained alienated and were totally ostracized in the society. When the review of the *Kamini Kalanka* written by *Nabinkali Devi* was published in *Hindoo Patriot*, it was highly criticized and a bitter comment was passed by the progressive *Brahmos* in the *Indian Mirror*.

Imagine a public woman depicting in her peculiar language the scenes of her early life and the strange vicissitudes, which a career like hers necessarily presented... The repentance was all a sham for we are told the authoress was still pursuing her ignominious course....¹³⁸

Gradually all the popular cultural forms practised by women started disappearing by the beginning of the twentieth century. After facing vigorous opposition raised by the Christian missionaries, British

¹³⁶ Ibid. p.160-62

¹³⁷ Ibid. p.163-164

¹³⁸ Ibid. p.164

administrators and *bhadralok* community of Bengal, these women had to surrender their creativity to a male world that always remained hostile to them.¹³⁹

But here it can not be denied that there was also a section of *bhadralok* who had always possessed a sympathetic attitude towards prostitutes which could be regarded as a quite bold and courageous steps in the Bengali middle-class society in the context of 19th century Bengal while / when it was increasingly being governed by 'Prudish Victorian values'. The theatre world brought actresses who were already considered as an ostracized community in the society and those *bhadralok* who were excommunicated in the society for their constant association with prostitutes for theatre purpose, together. Their common grief of social humiliation created a space for interdependence' and 'mutual understanding' between the members of these two groups. These theatre directors were considered in the society as 'drunkards and womanizers' (this attitude continued to be present in the society till as late as the 1940s). These two groups had been subjected to the social criticism, humiliation, ignorance which brought both of them to a common platform where they could shared their plight to each other. The mutual understanding and interdependence between male theatre personalities - Girish Ghosh, Amritalal Basu, Ardhendu Shekhar Mustapi, Amarendra Dutta and actresses - Binodini, Golap (who came to be known as Sukumari Dutta after getting married to Goshtabihari Dutta), Tinkori, Tarasundari course of performing plays created such supportive, healthy environments that produced very much efficient, trained, successful theatre actresses of 19th century Bengali theatre world. Their talent was extremely explored in course of their training under the teaching of Girish Ghosh and other theatre directors who remained versatile talented. The autobiography of Binodini is a reliable source which reflects here memories of/ about all great experiences of her training under Girish Ghosh, how it helped her talents to be explored and memorable moments spent with Golap, Tinkori and many others of her group.¹⁴⁰

Thus theatre world of 19th Century Bengal provided these actresses with a greatest exposure to exhibit their talents which they cultivated in course of practising their profession. This close relation between the world of prostitutes and the world of theatre had constituted an important part of the history of dramaturgy' in the East and West both in ancient period and early period of Modern age which has been vividly described in the words of *Baudelaire* : -

What can be said of the courtesan can also be said, with reservation, of the actresses; for the latter, too, is a manufactured confection and a thing of public pleasure. But where the actress is concerned, the conquest and the booty are more noble, more spiritual. Her

¹³⁹ Sumanta Banerjee, *Marginalization of Women's Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal* (An Article) in Kumkum Sangari, Sudesh Vaid (ed), 'Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History', Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1989. p.160

¹⁴⁰ Banerjee, Sumanta, *Dangerous Outcast: The Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2000. p 133

business is to win general favour not only by her physical beauty, but also by talents of the rarest order. If on one side the actress is akin to courtesan, on the other side she is akin to the poet.

Baudelaire observes in the context of mid 19th Century France, he says that have courtesans - cum actresses of his contemporary period had free movement breaking 'spatial and temporal' confinements:

We must remember that, apart from natural beauty and even for many artificial beauty, all human creatures are stamped with the idiom of their trade - a characteristic that can physically express itself in ugliness, but also in a sort of beauty of the profession.¹⁴¹

The theatre personality *Amritalal Basu* has honestly confessed that how his mentality with regard to his attitude towards these women got transformed in course of his theatre life. His such statement reflects that how he, who once had possessed a negative attitude with full of hatred towards these women got transformed into a 'sympathetic friend':

I was under the mistaken belief that, considering the class of women the actresses would be chosen from, they were bound to be licentious and indisciplined, and even if able to sing and dance, would be quite incapable of doing justice to the roles of superior women ... But this belief was thoroughly shaken within two weeks of their arrival. Their salary was extremely low compared to the present rate, but the five actresses who first came to us - their extreme desire (thirst) for proper instruction in all aspects of theatre, their commitment and respect for the sanctity of the workplace, has obliged many of us men, to take stock of our own 'character'. They (the actresses) have frankly told us 'you have rescued us from inexpressible suffering by opening up this new path for the oppressed...'

Amritalal echoed the feelings of most of his male colleagues in the theatre when at the death of *Grangamoni Dasi*, a famous singer and actress of those times, in a poignant moment he composed a poem describing her as *shishya, sakhi, sahachari... ranga-manchey baar baar samparka hoyechhey aar sukhey dukkhey sama sathi probashey sadaney....* (Pupil, friend and companion...our affinity deepened on the stage, and you were my comrade in happiness and sorrow, at home and abroad...),¹⁴²

These actresses of red-light areas were highly appreciated and recognised by certain section of Bengali *bhadralok* of 19th Century Bengal which was totally beyond expectation. "*Ramakrishna* - the priest of *Rani Rashmoni's* Kali temple at *Dakshineshwar*, near Calcutta, who, by the early 1880s, had become a sort of cult figure and worshipped as a saint among Calcutta's educated gentry - visited the Star Theatre in the city on 21 September, 1884, to watch the actress Binodini in the role of the 16th Century Bengali religious reformer *Chitanya* in the play *Chitanya - Leela*. A high strung mystic by nature, *Ramakrishna* was immediately overwhelmed by Binodini's acting and after the

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p.134

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 134-135

performance was over, was reported to have walked into the green room to give Binodini his blessing". This incident soon turned into sensational news and became quite debatable among Bengali *bhadralok* society. *Ramakrishna's* sympathetic and tolerant attitude towards prostitutes-cum-actresses and close association with other theatre personalities e.g. - Girish Ghosh (During 19th Century theatre world acquired immense popularity but it was never respected) had twofold impact on contemporary society. One hand, one section of *bhadralok* transformed their mentality which they had possessed towards these actresses and theatre personalities. But on the other hand the activities of *Ramakrishna* faced lots of criticism from some among his *bhadralok* disciples.

The German Orientalist *Max Muller* who always remained a great admirer of *Ramakrishna* narrates that how continuously a request was made to him by 'a relative of Keshub Chandra Sen (who was *Ramakrishna's* disciple)' who brought strong allegations against *Ramakrishna* for demonstrating the tolerant attitude towards prostitutes. *Max Muller's* defensive statement in favour of *Ramakrishna* was:

If, as we are told, he did not show sufficient abhorrence of prostitutes, he does not stand quite alone in this among the founders of religion' (as quoted by S. B.) and then started quoting 'similar instances from the life of Christ'.¹⁴³

But *Ramakrishna's* tolerant attitude towards prostitutes continued to face vigorous opposition from one section of this *bhadralok* disciples even after his death. Swami Vivekananda received a complaint from one of these *bhadralok* disciples relating to the permission granted to the prostitutes for attending religious festivals at the Dakshineswar Temple in 1896. Vivekananda's replied to it in his 'usual spirit of defiant irreverence':

I pray to the Lord - let prostitutes come in hundreds to pay obeisance to Him. Even if not a single *bhadralok* comes to the temple, let it be. Let others come - prostitutes, drunkards, thieves, robbers - every one. His doors are open for all.¹⁴⁴

Outside the orthodox Bengali *bhadralok* section there had always been present one section of *bhadralok* who always demonstrated a sympathetic attitude towards prostitutes and always attempted to 'rehabilitate' them in society through getting them married off. *Shibnath Shastri* (Brahmo reformer) was one of them under whose initiative the 14-year-old daughter of a *Dhaka* prostitute called - *Lakshmani* got married to a young Brahmo. Following this incident few other prostitutes also approached him. *Thakomoni* - a prostitute approached him for saving her daughter from this suppressive life of red-light area and said, otherwise there would not be anyways left for her daughter except adopting this profession of prostitution, if she grew up in that environment of

¹⁴³ Ibid. p.135

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 135-136

red-light area. When *Shibnath Shastri* said about her infant state and still she was being feeded by *Thakomoni* (her mother), she replied: "That's a problem. But I think she'll forget her mother if she gets a little affection and care. She'll get devoted to your wife, once she showers love on her." *Shibnath Shastri* then asked her to wait for sometime more but later on could not trace her. Recalling this experience with *Thakomoni*, *Shibnath* observes: - "May be she changed her mind. Or, may be she could not trace me."¹⁴⁵

'Change of Mind' of prostitutes was a common problem faced by Bengali *bhadralok* reformer in course of taking steps /then venture to rehabilitate the prostitutes. In this regard the experience of *Nilmoni Chakravarty* with a prostitute has been narrated in his autobiography." during his youth in Calcutta in the 1880s, he was approached one evening by a young medial student who sought his help to rescue a prostitute who wanted to escape from her profession. The next morning, when *Nilmoni* with another Bramho friend of his, arrived at her house in a 'narrow lane in *Burrabazar*', and reminded her of her wish to be rescued, 'she started giggling'." On the failure of their joint attempt, *Nilmoni* comments: 'The woman's mind changed'. A question arises that why did prostitutes change their mind whenever they had the opportunity to leave their profession? *Sumanta Banerjee* gives his explanation to it in the form of question, 'was it 'caprice' - the quality usually associated with the stereotyped image fixed in the *bhadralok* mind?'¹⁴⁶

It is very much important to be mentioned here that *Nilmoni Chakravarty*'s sole interest in the matter of the prostitute was stopped by her 'giggling'. He did not take any further action to deal with the matter. Even *Shibnath Shastri* did not possess a positive attitude towards the prostitutes at first. Even on the first day when he was approached by *Thakomoni*, her 'immodest behaviour and laughter' offended him very much later he took interest in the case of *Thakomoni* after being persuaded by his Brahmo friend *Kedarnath Roy* who also was a social worker involved in social work among prostitutes. It thus seems that the *bhadralok* reformers, their well-meaning intentions notwithstanding, tended to treat the prostitutes as pathological cases, miserable creatures who could not exercise a rational control over their lives. But here some rational outlook remained definitely present behind their reluctance to quit the profession. It seems, the lack of trust over those males of *bhadralok* society constituted a major factor behind their decision. Because many of this *bhadralok* society seduced them at first stage and still they remained victim of their exploitation. Therefore, the trust on the male gentry of the *bhadralok* society was naturally missing.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 136

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 136-137

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. p.137

Binodini speaks out sometimes her bitterness against men in her autobiography:

we also crave the love of husbands. But where can we get it? Who will exchange his heart for mine? There is no dearth of men charming us with talks of love, but that's all out of lust. But who will wish to offer his heart and test us whether we also have hearts? Has anyone ever found out we were the first to deceive or we learnt to deceive after having been deceived? ¹⁴⁸

"Binodini's stunning indictment shakes us up to the recognition of the stark fact that the terms of relationship in a hierarchically ordered society are dictated by those in power. These terms are replicated at the different levels of such a society. They percolated down to all the levels. In the descending order of the struggle for existence conducted on the principles of *laissez faire*, the art of deception becomes all pervasive. This art is crucial to the technology of power that enables those who wield power - at different levels - to control the ever -widening circle of human activities. In the male dominated hierarchal ordered society, among all strata of women, the prostitute continues to occupy the singular position of being a victim of male deception (representating those who are seduced and then deserted by men) as well as of a wielder of power over men through the same device of deception. It is in this context that one has to understand Binodini's perceptive observation: '... we learnt to deceive after having been deceived'." ¹⁴⁹

The prostitutes in the 19th Century Bengali society learned the art of deception very well often being deceived by the male who once seduced her. She became so proficient in this art that a man became powerless while entering the brothel world, because in this small world the prostitute enjoyed supreme power. 'It was her little empire, where she had the power to put her sexual prowess up for sale to the highest bidder, and dictate her terms.' ¹⁵⁰

But the power which these prostitutes exercised in the brothel world was also controlled by 'belligerent macho threats' which even sometime resulted into murder in the red-light areas and by frequent police interventions. (Commencement of contagious disease Act led to the frequent police interventions). Certain freedom was always enjoyed by prostitutes in their little empire which were not possible for bhadramahila of conventional society to enjoy. There might be a sense of insecurity developed among prostitutes to lose this freedom and right extensively. It seems, this insecurity constituted a major factor behind their reluctance to get rehabilitated in the form of marriage. Even those famous actresses from red-light areas who got huge exposure in the theatre world and proved their talent through their excellent performance, had been reduced to were house-wives. (As an

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Also see Binodini Dasi, Soumitra Chattopadhyay, and Nirmalya Acharya, (ed.); *Amar Kotha o Onyanyo Rachana*, Subarnarekha, 1987. p61-62

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. p.138.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

example, Golap left theatre life after her marriage. She returned to it only for a short period, after duration of long gap).¹⁵¹

According to Sumanta Banerjee:

The history of *bhadralok* efforts to come to grips with the problem of prostitution in 19th century Bengal suggests a complex mentality. It typified both the prevalent patterns of class and gender domination in contemporary Bengali society and the new requirements of a colonized educated middle-class to codify sexual relationship - within the family as well as outside - according to the norms set by the colonial rulers. Proposals for repressive steps (like forcible eviction of prostitutes from the cities, or imposition of taxes on them, or restriction on their movements in public) were quite often mooted by the *bhadralok* to protect their own families. They were particularly obsessed with the fear that their women-folk might get idea from what they thought was the footloose life-style of the prostitutes. Even when condemning the men who consorted with prostitutes, the *bhadralok* reformers significantly refrained from proposing any penal action against them. They were in agreement with the precept laid down by the Royal commission that with the women 'the offence is committed as a matter of gain', while with the men it was 'an irregular indulgence of a natural impulse'. The 'respectability' of the *bhadraloks* and the reactions of the prostitutes to this remained insuperable barriers, even when the former tried to 'rehabilitate' the latter.¹⁵²

It is quite interesting that '*bhadramahila*' of 19th century Bengali society started internalizing a mixed feeling among themselves towards prostitutes just like their male counterpart possess during the contemporary Bengali society. Rather sharing with the prostitutes their common 'vulnerability' to the suppression and domination of male within the patriarchal structure, these educated women – *bhadramahilas* demonstrated a sympathetic and tolerant attitude to these prostitutes. It might be the result of education which they acquired in convent school or from English governesses or from their English educated husbands. But in practical, these educated *bhadramahilas* still remained confined to the social behaviour and economic choices that were still dictated by male desires. They still could not free themselves from these traditional norms of dependency on males. Only introduction of 'Victorian value' re-enforced those traditional norms in a new form/ dimensions. These Bengali *bhadramahilas* never condemned *bhadraloks* of her society and perceived prostitutes as sole responsible for their victimised condition. But rather excommunicating them these women often showed their inclination to rehabilitate these prostitutes (though in practical any constructive programme remained always absent). In this regard, a poem written by a Bengali *bhadramahila* published in a Bengali women's magazine during the last half of the 19th century is quite significant. This poem was entitled '*Patita*' (the Fallen Women) in which the heroine, who was a prostitute, has been described as a 'half - blossomed flower bud' and she was told:

Korechhili bipathey gamone,

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p. 138-139

¹⁵² Ibid. p. 139

Tai tore e dasa akhone.

(You took to evil, and hence this is your fate now).

She was then approached by the poetess to quit the profession and stay with her at her place where she was promised all sorts of care and comforts.¹⁵³

The *bhadralok* associated with theatre, *Ramakrishna*, and many Brahmo reformers who always demonstrated a tolerant and sympathetic attitude towards prostitutes, were capable enough to point out the social economic factors (poverty, male exploitation) responsible behind the growth of prostitute and prostitution. Their venture to rehabilitate them in the form of marriage (the model was ideal middle class house-wife) failed to motivate prostitutes in large scale. Because in this process the capacity of individual prostitutes to exercise a rational control over her life – a capacity which was enjoyed by her in her environment was totally ignored; though all prostitutes could not enjoy freedom or privileges in the brothel world. They used to live life in miserable condition under the suppression of *bariwallis* and other elements. But yet, they never showed their sole consent to get incorporated in the *bhadralok* society through marriage (dependant life). It was this ambiguity in her attitude – her desire for a home, and yet her reluctance to accept the strictly ordained rules of domestic life (which was mostly perceived her as a death threat to the comparatively free life style which were enjoyed by her as a prostitute) constituted the main factor to frustrate reformers like *Shibnath Shastri*.¹⁵⁴

1.5. Legislative Measures In Relation To The Prostitutes Under the Colonial Regime:

The problem of prostitution had drawn a close attention to/of the active social reformers – Keshab Chandra Sen, Sivnath Sasthri, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan and Gouri Sankar Tarkabagish also dealt with this problem vigorously. Mrs. Josephine Butler in Liverpool was approached by Keshab Chandra Sen in 1875 with a request. According to which, her sole interference in the matter of supplying large number of Japanese as well as Indian girls and women to the British Soldiers in India was demanded. This visit succeeded in securing her promise for full of co-operation in this matter. Which further resulted into the beginning of the joint venture of the 'All Indian Social and Moral Hygiene Association' and its main body in England to work on this problem in India at the early period of this Century.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Ibid. p. 139 –140.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p.140-141

¹⁵⁵ B. Joardar, *Prostitution In Nineteenth And Early Twentieth Century Calcutta*. Inter-India Publications, New Delhi. 1985 p-52

The 'good old days of honourable John Company' had witnessed the commencement of various 'social legislation' relating prostitutes and prostitution. The year of 1868 is quite significant in regard to the various legislations affecting prostitution. During this year the authorities of East-India Company had undertaken various legal steps to combat/fight against prostitutes and prostitution. In 1869 and 1877 some orders were issued by Governor Anguri with the purpose of controlling the 'Punch houses and brothels' and preventing soldiers from their intimate association with/of prostitutes. This was the first time, that, the brother was brought under the Jurisdiction of law in British India. In this regard a memorandum is very much significant which was submitted by Fabre Tonnerre – the health officer of Calcutta, in 1867. A Draft Act for the prevention of contagious diseases was also submitted by him. His anxiety in regard to this matter was quite prominent in his writing: ¹⁵⁶

I beg to state that in addition to my usual duties, I am willing to undertake the organization of the new office, to superintend the registration of the prostitutes, as well as to take an active part in the inspection of the Public women.¹⁵⁷

A similarity has been found between the draft of Fabre Tonnerre and the British legislations Commenced in colonial Bengal of contemporary period. The Lieutenant -Governor of Bengal agreed that Bengal's ports needed a contagious Disease Act in the same line as that of the English Legislation. The major difference between the Draft Act and British Legislation laid on one ground – the former suggested, registration of name as compulsory for the prostitutes, when on the other hand, the latter suggested that any legal action could be applicable only after receiving detail information from police against the woman as concerned. As there was a large number of prostitutes in Calcutta, Lieutenant – Governor thought that the suggestion given by Fabre Tonnerre was better to be accepted for the interest of city.

H.S. Maine as a law member had played a leading role to introduce a bill in the legislative council of Governor – General. The base of this bill was the draft of Fabre Tonnerre. With regard to this issue Mr. H.S. Maine continuously demonstrated his distrust on Indian bill and condemned them as responsible for 'grievous' oppression in this matter. In this argument, a thorough character of this kind of law was demanded (Governor – General's legislative council debates, March 27th 1868). This bill led to the commencement of the law called – 'Indian Contagious Diseases Act' (Act XIV of

¹⁵⁶ Ibid p.52-56

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

1868).¹⁵⁸ The provision of the Act could be introduced in places specified by the local Government only after the sanction of the same by the Governor – General in council.¹⁵⁹

In 1864, the 'Contagious Disease Act' was passed in Britain and also introduced to other parts of the British Empire. This act was amended between 1866 and 1869 with a motto of its effective application. With the commencement of this Act it became compulsory for women, especially prostitute who were suspected of having venereal disease to undergo medical examination. This medical examination was compulsory for prostitutes not for clients. Therefore, it became more burdensome for prostitutes, not for their clients. In India, prostitutes who used to be frequented by British soldiers were more segregated and forced to go for this compulsory medical check-up.¹⁶⁰ According to the provision of this Act prostitutes could also be asked for not residing in specific areas of the city.¹⁶¹

The period after Crimean War had witnessed a sharp increase in the number of British soldiers suffering from venereal disease which created a huge pressure indirectly on doctors and officers, which became an important factor for growing pressures on doctors and officers. These factors combined together led to the development of legislations related to the venereal disease. The quartermaster General's memorandum of 14th June, 1886 had clearly stated the Military logic of the Contagious Disease Act in India. It was necessary for regimental authorities to maintain a sufficient number of good-looking women in the regimental Bazaars to make the young soldiers avoid the risk involved in association with women unrecognized by regimental authorities. The Act of registration constituted the major factor through which the Indian Prostitutes was enrolled as a colonial subject. The process of registration used to be completed through the medical examination in the rock-hospitals. The prostitutes were also asked to fill up a form giving details about her social and psychological status. These forms used to get translated into regional languages and a number of small book-lets like the 'Beshya Guide (Guide to Prostitutes)' in Bengali were published during this period.¹⁶² Kenneth Ballhatchet puts it succinctly:

Special provision seemed necessary for the sexual satisfaction of British soldiers because they came from the lower classes and so were thought to lack the intellectual and moral resources requires for continence, while as ordinary soldiers they lacked the material resources required for marriage, except for the few who were allowed to marry 'On the strength' of a regiment and were accordingly allowed married quarters. The official elite, on

¹⁵⁸ B. Joardar, *Prostitution In Nineteenth And Early Twentieth Century Calcutta*. Inter-India Publications, New Delhi. 1985 p-56

¹⁵⁹ Ibid p.57

¹⁶⁰ Ratnabali Chatterjee, *Indian Prostitute as a Colonial Subject : Bengal 1864-1883*, http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/organizations/healthnet/ASia/repro2/colonial_subject.html p.1

¹⁶¹ B. Joardar, *Prostitutes in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Calcutta*; p.57

¹⁶² Ratnabali, Chatterjee, *Indian Prostitute as a Colonial Subject : Bengal 1864-1883*, p.1

the other hand, were supposed to shun Indian mistresses and content themselves with British wives, for rules should be aloof from the people and so transited as beyond corruption and feared as remote from the ways of common men.¹⁶³

He goes on:

As there were relatively few British troops in India the preservation of their health and vigour seemed particularly important. By the middle of the nineteenth century there were some forty thousand, with six times as many Indian sepoys. After the mutiny of 1857 there was an adjustment of these proportions so as to provide some sixty thousand British troops and only twice as many sepoys. British soldiers now seemed less heavily outnumbered. But commanding officers of Indian regiments had previously expressed such faith in their sepoys' loyalty that the Mutiny seriously undermined British confidence. British rule now seemed all the more dependent on the British soldier. The authorities redoubled their efforts to enable him to satisfy his virility without endangering his health.¹⁶⁴

'The necessity of keeping up a steady supply of 'attractive women' to keep the British soldiers contained within the cantonment was becoming a problem and the authorities used any excuse they could find to drag in young, healthy, and good looking Indian woman as registered prostitutes in the cantonment bazaars who could then be physically examined'.¹⁶⁵

Thus the 'crude assessment of demand and supply' became the major criteria upon which the desirability of Indian prostitutes was depended. According to Ratnabali Chatterjee – "In the face of growing demands for more candidates engaged in profession of what was termed 'mercenary love' and a short supply from the native subjects, the Indian prostitute, with her ability to evade and even actually refuse approaches, offered the colonial state a challenge. In the struggle that followed between the colonial authorities and the subject population, the women's body itself became a battle site." Foucault has stated that when sex is regulated through policing it takes the form of public discourse. In colonial India, Indian prostitutes were treated as criminal after the commencement of contagious Disease Act. It was first developed in Britain and was then implemented in India. There were three major factors in Britain which used to regulate the public notion about prostitution as a major threat in the society: 'i). The visibility of the vice; ii). Its association with the city and, iii). Its spread over wide areas.'

The prostitution in mid-nineteenth century Britain used to be looked upon with a class prospective/from a class angle. Prostitution's seen as the play of working class women to get the classes above them. Middle class men's association with women having from working class was condemned not only from medical or mortal point of view but for breaking down the class

¹⁶³ Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj : Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793 - 1905*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979. p.2

¹⁶⁴ Ibid p.3

¹⁶⁵ Ratnabali Chatterjee, *Indian Prostitute as a Colonial Subject : Bengal. 1864-1883*. p.1.

boundaries. These British prostitutes as 'subversive agent' were permitted to grow in the official discourse. During this period various writings and lecture on moral ground came into focus which specifically dealt with the problem of the prostitution. For example, in Wordlas's lectures on 'female prostitution' (1842) the link was established between 'deterioration of national character and consequent weakness, and the decline and fall of nations.' As Lynda Nead has pointed out "The terms plot both a moral and an imperial narrative and a fall from virtue can symbolize the end of an empire."¹⁶⁶ [As quoted by Ratnabali Chatterjee].

The Rising Consciousness created through public debates etc. caused the growing moral pressures on British women by the 1880s which and it dealt with the private area of the home through defining respectable/unrespectable femininity first/which defined respectable/unrespectable femininity along with the private area of the home taking into its account. The moralist doctors like Millian Acton has stated that the context in which sexuality was performed used to constitute other factors to determine the nature of women's sexuality. The ideal wife and mother of Britain could not fully enjoy sex and detest all sexual pleasures due to her whole-hearted devotion to the traditional as well as moral duties. And her 'sublimated sexuality' was perceived as 'normal'. The prostitutes on the other hand more stripped off her all womanly emotions, sensual pleasures which entertaining 8-12 different men in the same night. The statistical survey, which became prominent as a 'major basis of British ruling class knowledge' during the 19th century, gives the detail picture of prostitutes' class structure. The economic status of their clients seems the major determinants/factor to determine the class-structure of the prostitutes:

'i). The aristocratic courtesan; ii). The mistresses maintained by middle-class professionals and iii). Common prostitutes hanging around/soliciting around the soldier's barracks.'

The prostitutes of this last category hailed from mainly working class were treated as criminals by the colonial police. The criminal law seemed to have become a medium through which 'class-antagonism' of Britain used to get leafleated. The police got empowered through the commencement of 'Contagious Disease Act' which made them able to 'isolate a particular group of women from working class culture and make them into deviant outcastes.' 'This image of the British working class prostitute taken out of its context was turned into a metaphor with wider significance'. There was a fear of deviant sexual behaviour and prostitution growing in Victorian England. This fear got transferred to the various British Colonies through the middle class members of the official bureaucracy. The first batch of British Civil Servant sent to the India after 1858 were advised to maintain a life like Victorian gentlemen. And to keep themselves away from having Indian *bibis*

¹⁶⁶ Ibid p.2

(Mistresses), attending nauteh parties, and dressing like 'Native aristocrats'. The major/prime principle of the British officials directives was to maintain distance from the 'natives'. The Indian quarters were now perceived as the real source of 'Miasma' (an oppressive atmosphere) which was considered to be the cause of spreading diseases. The entire area had an oppressive environment full of filth, pollution and vice, as it was surrounded by garbage, domestic animals, crawling children and the foul smell of human exertion. Moreover, added to this, there was a fear being generated among British officials against natives considering them as rebels. The entire environment directed the British perception of 'native' prostitute as a combination of all three—filth, disease and crime.¹⁶⁷

This 'Unilinear' perception of British officials existed in sharp contrast to the indigenous description which categorized Indian prostitutes. In Bengal the word 'Beshya' denotes the phenomenon of prostitutes which also in commercial sense can be traced back textually to the classical manuals on erotic and dramaturgy.¹⁶⁸ In the context of Indian tradition a prostitute needed to use to cultivate various skills in order to entertain clients and often they used to get associated with various professional entertainers. The term Nati (actress), Baiji (court-dancer) had been brought in India by 'Muslim Court Norms'. And these terms continued to be used in the 'Vernacular' until the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁹

The Indian prostitutes had now been a homogenous group. Till the end of the 18th century the courtesans as dancers and musicians were considered to be the feudal product. They used to represent the feudal society aesthetically. The existing class-structure or the hierarchy through which the indigenous society was being controlled in the mid 19th century also regulated the lives of prostitutes. There was a deep link between the social position of prostitutes and the clients. The social position of prostitute was mainly determined by the socio and economic position of their clients. But British totally ignored this aspect of the prostitution. By 1872 a survey report in Bengal had shown that there was tremendous influx of a large number of rural women in the profession of prostitution in Calcutta. These women mostly hailed from lower castes. Some among them were sold by parents due to dire poverty; some girls were kidnapped, some were lured with false stories and sold to the brothels. And some were the daughters of prostitutes who shifted to Calcutta leaving behind their villages with a hope of better income. But there was one section of women whose position really confused British officials and caused the embarrassment of the Bengali gentlemen. These groups of women were the upper caste Hindu widows who ran away from village home failing to practice austere life style and they became/came to the desperate to free themselves from social

¹⁶⁷ Ibid

¹⁶⁸ Ibid p.2-3

¹⁶⁹ Ibid p.3

restrictions. These women sometimes joined Vaishnavas religions sect. This sect followed a liberal outlook/professed to be associates with a liberal outlook and believed in the theory of 'free love'. They used to avoid all comforts of material life to practice a mendicant's life. This free-life-style and freedom of movement of this religious sect was totally disapproved as sexually immoral by both the indigenous clientele and the colonial officials.

According to Ratnabali Chatterjee – 'That the Indian woman as a subject of reform needed different standards of assessment was the view expressed by the officials in their reports.' The colonial officials were also forced to acknowledge that it was not an easy task to categorize Indian prostitutes as the prostitutes could be easily categorized in Britain. Prostitution is an institution and existed in India with its all ancientness though the history of Indian prostitutes got faded away with the ages. 'Prostitute danced before Yudisthir and Rama and in the guise of dancing girls and singers they are a necessary part of domestic ceremonies today'.

The above observation was made by British officials but despite this observation Indian prostitutes were categorized into only two group – 'i) the decent or repeatable prostitutes' who inhabited the regimental bazaar and therefore they could easily be medically examined. And 'ii) 'idle or disorderly prostitutes' who used to reside in 'native bustees' or big cities which could remain beyond military control.' The British officials possessed an ambiguous attitude towards 'native prostitutes' which was clearly reflected in their official reports. To solve this problem they stuck to the lock Hospitals through which the Indian prostitutes could be easily institutionalized. 'Whenever a woman is reported as an absentee from the periodical medical examination a warrant for her arrest is immediately ordered, issued, and made over to the police for execution. In this not day's delay takes place... I may mention here that the registered prostitutes are examined at the lock hospital fortnightly. On the 1st and 3rd Monday of very month' people responded to these legal measures of the colonial government in different ways. Men and women hailing from the poorer section of the society who used to be the friends and relatives of the women looked for, by the British officials had shown a 'Sullen protest'. Their main weapon to protest against these official measures of colonial govt. was 'Silence and non-co-operation'. The British colonial regime faced a direct challenge offered by the Indian prostitutes. In this struggle 'woman's body itself became a battle site'. 'When the police proceed to the woman's place of abode they find that perhaps ten days or a week previously, she had absconded and left the jurisdiction... is very certain that none of her friends or relatives will afford the slightest due her whereabouts, it is possible that she is lurking within the jurisdiction and so the warrant is kept in hard'.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

Through this struggle and constant hide and seek game between colonial police and Indian prostitutes, the Indian prostitutes finally became identified as criminals. Those women who despite being alienated and segregated in the society once had/enjoyed certain space in her 'indigenous society' were now totally driven out of the society by the officials measures introduced by colonial Govt. These were recorded by some of the visiting missionaries who became a second voice in the official discourse.¹⁷¹ 'Imagine yourself as one apprehended and the case assumes a different aspect. A policeman comes to your door and reads a warrant of your arrest as a common prostitute; you ask on what authority. You are informed that the name of the informant is not to be made public.... You contend that you have a right to your good name..... and that it is the punishment of the worst sort to be taken by a policeman through the street in a hospital where only disorder of a certain kind are treated. You are then informed that if you do not go, you will be taken out of the town in which you live, set down as a common vagrant by the roadside and if ever again found within the limits of the city in which your parents, brothers and sisters live you will be arrested and put in jail.'¹⁷²

When various legal measures were being introduced to recruit and control Indian prostitutes within the cantonments, that time a large number of British Soldiers went to Calcutta, came back with venereal disease. The problem became more serious with the rising number of white male person without a settled home and prostitute in the city. The situation became so worst that the medical officers and military authorities lastly agreed to bring Calcutta and larger cities near the Cantonments under the Contagious Diseases Acts. 'Since cities like Calcutta with its large civil population could hardly be considered appendages to garrison towns like Barrackpur or Dum Dum, new acts had to be passed to ensure the safety of the soldiers. The Contagious Disease Act by special amendment known as Act XIV was thus applied in 1868 to the whole city of Calcutta. Not only the whole city of Calcutta. Not only the prostitutes but all brothel keepers had to be registered. Any prostitute could now by law be detained in the Lock Hospital if detected with General disease and released only when she was cured and certified as safe. The police were further empowered to keep the prostitutes confined within certain areas of the city.'¹⁷³

'Friend of India' raised a vigorous opposition against this Indian Contagious Disease Act (Act XIV of 1868). 'The Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta had pointed out the vagueness in the Wording of this Act and hence he expressed his intention to issue process for illegal confinement in any case

¹⁷¹ Ibid p.3 - 4.

¹⁷² Elizabeth Andrew, and Kate Bushnell, *The Queen's Daughters in India*, London, 1899. p.15

¹⁷³ Ratnabali Chatterjee, *Indian Prostitute as a Colonial Subject : Bengal 1864 - 1883*. p.4

in which a prostitute complains of arrest'. In this regard a committee was formed. The member of the committee comprised four medical officers and Mr. B.W. Colvin was the Chairman of the committee. According to the statement presented by the deputy Commissioner of that contemporary period 'Lambert' to the Colvin Committee that this Act failed to achieve popularity among natives. As they believed that the sole motto behind the commencement of the Act was to benefit Europeans. According to Cunningham, the surgeon General the Act was 'altogether insufficient to justify the expenditure of money'. He continued to say that its expenditure stood 5000/- per month. But in practical field the disastrous effects of the other disease like dysentery and other tropical diseases were comparat than that of 'venereal diseases'. Moreover, it was also highlighted that the enforcement of the Act with its effect was not/could not be possible until unless Howrah was included. But inclusion at Howrah would nearly double the number of the prostitutes under supervision which would be tough to be dealt with in the present situation. It transpires from the report of the Colvin Committee that the annual average incidence of venereal disease among the European soldiers in the garrison of Fort William had fallen from 32.82 per cent in the decade before the Act to 19.27 per cent in the decade after it.' Therefore, Colvin Committee came to be quite optimistic about/regarding the success of this Act.¹⁷⁴

Amidst this situation the Government of Bengal quit the idea to implement this Act in Calcutta. Two factors mainly played major role behind this decision of Govt. Firstly, they had considered this Act to be applied only to those prostitutes with whom Europeans used to get consorted frequently. And secondly, a question was raised that whether the expenditure to control this evil effects of venereal diseases through the enforcement of Act would be extracted from 'general revenue of Bengal' or the prostitutes themselves would be made to pay the tax for this. The council raised the demand to repeal the Act and soon it turned into a controversial issue and after a long controversy it was not allowed to repeal the Act. But, it cold be suspended as an experiment, they thought. As a result the Act was soon suspended in Calcutta.¹⁷⁵

The missionary discourse developed in Britain transformed Indian prostitutes from the stigma of a criminal to a victim of official discrimination. 'The presence of European and Eurasian prostitutes in Calcutta even more than Indian prostitutes seemed to engage the attention of the colonial authorities in 1870. In a detailed report given by an anonymous missionary gentleman, we find that of the 525 Christian women engaged in prostitution in Calcutta in 1871, the largest number were Europeans and Eurasians their life styles varied according to their incomes while the ventilated

¹⁷⁴ B. Joardar, *Prostitution In Nineteenth And Early Twentieth Century Calcutta*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1985. p. 57

¹⁷⁵ Ibid p.57-58

house in the fringe areas of European dwellings the third lived close to the 'native quarters' like Cheena para, Mallanga, Cheenaum, Gully, Goomghar, and Teretaa Bazaa. This was considered a great embarrassment by the rulers.' This added strength to the demand raised for the suspension of the Contagious Disease Act which further turned into an organized movement led by Josephine Butler broke away to form the separatist Ladies Association. Two of their members visited India with a motto of examining the real condition prevailing in the colonies. In this visit they found British officials guilty and condemned them for harboring and even encouraging sine in India. Through the development of this missionary discourse in Britain the transformation of the Indian prostitutes from a criminal to a victim of official discrimination occurred. According to Ratnabali Chatterjee 'The descriptive focus of the missionary narrative rested on recreating an atmosphere of vice. This was done to show the exact division of space that existed between the rulers and the ruled. Since the logic of Christian belief pervaded the entire discourse, the British officials in India were accused not on political but strictly on moral grounds. When so called Christian England took control of heathen India and plots of ground called cantonments were staked off for the residence of the British soldiers and their officers, full provision was made for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. These loud denunciations by the Repeaters inflicted a blow to the colonizer's self image as the 'white savior' and caused fracture in the official discourse. This was to be seen in the defensive toners of the official reports.'¹⁷⁶

By 1883, the Contagious Diseases Act was finally suspended. Officially, with the suspension of CDA the general power of the military and police to arrest and punish prostitutes irrespective of any discrimination was curtail. In India, prostitutes, solely recognized and reserved for the British soldiers were allowed to walk out. Yet it did not take place. And in official reports it was stated that 'native prostitutes' were now more worse than before. Their right to claim the benefit of the military hospitals or the residence in clean houses within the cantonments was encroached. During 1893, a meeting on 'Social Purity' was held at Town Hall. It was mainly organized by the Calcutta Missionary Conference. The Protestant Missionaries, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi speakers all participated in this meeting and offered their sole support to this Social Purity Movement. According to the argument presented by Mr. Bishop Thouburn, the Chairperson of the Methodist Episcopal Church – self-restraint accorded with self-interest for sinful behavior in public places must have had a depressing effect on moral value'. He further added that – 'the whole neighborhood had become so infested with bad characters that the price of real estate was seriously affected'. He continued to say that – 'in particular south Calcutta was troubled with the exception of a few select quarters in

¹⁷⁶Ratanbali Chatterjee, *Indian Prostitute as a Colonial subject, Bengal 1864-1883*,
<http://www.hspu.harvard.edu/organizations/healthnet/sasia/repro2/colonial-subject.html> p.4

which the more wealthy European lived, there was hardly a street or land through which decent people could take their children with them if they wished to go for an evening stroll'.¹⁷⁷

It was very real fact that the most of these public women in the city were European, not Indian. Therefore, Indian people living in the north Calcutta were less annoyed and were not subjected to the public anger. But things were totally opposite to/with the people lived in the European quarter. They were very much annoyed with the situation. But enough complaint was also lodged from Indians/there were also enough complain also lodged by Indians. It was said that the elimination of this vice was not possible but it could be controlled. It was said that 'such vice should be compelled to shrink back into its own congenial darkness, and not disfigure our street'. Trafficking women should be stopped. A large number of mature women were trafficked from Europe. This aspect of the problem of prostitution was extremely highlighted focused upon by Bishop Thorburn. He contemplated the spectacle of a 'colony of foreigners of both sexes – a colony which has been established in the interest of public vice'. The moral character of these people was very low/these people possessed a low moral character and helped to spread immorality and vices in all its forms. Many houses were occupied by the prostitutes which should be occupied by the decent people. The entire this thing/the entire fact badly affected the value of the real estate. It (constitutes the major cause) also caused to the loss of respect of European in the eyes of the Eastern people, the Bishop added.¹⁷⁸

The meeting made a significant impact. This meeting was highly criticized by Reis and Rayaat – Journal of contemporary India. They accused these 'purity wallas' to be/as /of being hypocrite as they chose to attack the weakest interest in the community – the prostitutes. But despite this it drew much attention of Crut. A section of the purity wallas wanted the amendment of law. On the lines of the English Criminal Law Amendment Bill of 1885 and demanded to make it a punishable offence to keep a brothel. But this idea faced a strong opposition from the Sir John Lambert, the Commissioner of Police. He found it to be impractical. In 1880, there were 2,458 brothel keepers on the record and 7,000 prostitutes i.e. nearly 10 percent of the population. Only eight or ten of these brothel keepers were Eurasians and 65 Europeans'. According to the census report of 1883-84 there were 20,126 prostitutes and brothel keepers. Therefore, it was not possible for Lambert to deal with such a large number of prostitutes. Lambert further claimed the adequacy of the law/related to

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. p.5

¹⁷⁸ B. Joardar, *Prostitution In Nineteenth And Early Twentieth Century Calcutta*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1985. p. 58

the law to close down the brothels on the complaint lodged by the public. A large number of brothels were closed down between 1892 and 1894.¹⁷⁹

The Rev. H. Anderson of 37 Elliot Road lodged a complaint against the presence of seven brothels in Elliot Road. He proved with evidence that in every case public nuisance was the result. This led Lambert to issue notice to expel prostitutes from those houses/through issuing notice. Among seven such brothels six were occupied/inhabited by the European women. Four of them prostitutes left India and the rest three shifted to different parts of the city. Lambert took the similar action in case of other complaint lodged by public.¹⁸⁰

Thus, Lambert proved through his action that the existing law was very much adequate to deal with the problem of prostitution. Lambert stated that in 1893 there were about 70 European procurers and about 70 European prostitutes. But in 1894 there were about 36 European procurers and about 50 European prostitutes'. Thus, showing this figures Lambert claimed that the number of European procurers and prostitutes was on decline/declining. But despite this, the purity committee created a huge pressure on the Government with regard to the matter of deportation of foreign procurers. Lambert was very much confident about this matter and said that if police is given little more power then it would be easy / easier to dealt with the situation. He posed an allegation to the present law stating that it does not empower a policeman to arrest any person for soliciting without independent evidence / under the present law independent evidence it was to be essential to have independent evidence to arrest anyone for soliciting. Hence, he proposed that any police officer above the rank of native constable would be (given power) empowered to act on his own authority. It was justified by him that it was very much hard for those person coming from respectable family to appear before the court-of-law to testify in that type of case. A Bill was introduced by Lambert, but it faced strong opposition from/ raised by nationalist Leader Rashtra-Guru. Surendranath Banerjee. He described the bill as 'a threat to individual liberty'. Another nationalist Leader Lalmohan Ghosh claimed that the bill would 'open the gateway of blackmail'. Surendranath and Lalmohan were not given any reassurance by the wording of the said Bill, which had excluded the Indian constables only from the enlarged power proposed in the Bill.¹⁸¹

Finally following the suggestion offence by Rastra-guru Surendranath the Bill was amended. This amendment of the Bill made John Lambert very much upset but ultimately he had to accept this. According to this law, 'soliciting was punishable by a fine of fifty rupees or eight days' imprisonment

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p.59

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. p.59-60

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p.60

provided that it was done to the annoyance of the person solicited or at least two inhabitants or passerby. A police officer above the rank of native constable had the power to arrest without any warrant at the instance of the person solicited or two inhabitants or passerby, as the case may be provided the person did not have any preliminary information like name, religion, mother-tongue, or the like about the accused person. In fact, this was a milder form of the original proposal. As an alternative penalty imprisonment was prescribed.¹⁸²

Condition of prostitutes in licensed brothels:

Prostitutes living in a licensed brothel used to pay a percentage of their earnings to the brothel keeper. They did not own the rooms or the furniture and had to pay for their board and lodgings out of their income. The independent prostitute could easily move at their own sweet will. These registered prostitutes willing to change her address had to give notification in person to the police commissioner for the district of the old and new address within 24 hours. During the inspection of a brothel prostitutes used to be given the opportunity to lodge the complaint of their treatment and in particular in respect of their freedom to leave the house. In the licensed brothel a prostitute was almost always indebted to the mistress of the brothel, who used to bend her money for purchase of articles of luxury in order to trap her within her clutches. But such debt (was) however, remain unrecognized by law and could not be enforced in the court. In a licensed brothel a prostitute had to undergo compulsory medical examination once in a week. The dispensary physician used to visit the brothel at an appointed hour and examined the girls.¹⁸³

Medical Examination:

It was compulsory for every registered prostitute to undergo medical examination. For the visits of medical authority, the keeper had to provide before hand -

- (a) An examination chair of an approved pattern
- (b) Vaginal specula
- (c) Antiseptic lotion and necessary linen
- (d) For every female, her own washing apparatus, her own syringe and two or three sponges

It was compulsory for every prostitute to be present and pass the medical examination. In case of absences of anybody a report was made to the Commissioner of Police for the purpose of instituting criminal proceedings. According to the rule, under this medical examination all parts of the female body were required to be thoroughly examined. The medical authority was also asked to employ here necessary all the scientific devices which were available to him, in particular the vaginal

¹⁸² Ibid.p.60-61.

¹⁸³ S. N. Mukherjee *Prostitution in India*, Das Gupta & Co., Calcutta, 1936, p.427-428.

speculum. The prostitutes who used to live in their own houses had to visit the doctor in his dispensary once a fortnight, Prostitutes failing to report themselves for any medical examination were reported by the Medical officer to the Commissioner of Police, who in the absence of a valid excuse, used to take steps to secure their attendance without prejudice to criminal proceedings. The result of the medical examination was noted in a book kept by the physician and also on the card of the prostitute. In case of licensed brothels, entries were also made in the passbook of the house. In case of, if any prostitute was suspected of having venereal disease, she was warned by medical officer against continuing sexual intercourse. If she was an inhabitant of licensed brothel, then the mistress of the house was warned not to allow the diseased prost to entertain any clients. The woman was then sent to hospital for treatment and her name was entered by the medical officer in his day book. On her discharge from hospital, the hospital report were used to be sent to the Commissioner of Police, was further communicated to the medical officer for entry in his day book.¹⁸⁴

Residential Changes:

A prostitute was not allowed to move to another house of prostitution without the consent of her former keeper. In this regard, three months' notice was necessary while reasonable grounds must be shown to the police for such changes. Brutal treatment by the keeper was a good reason. No woman was allowed to have a brothel for the purpose of carrying on prostitution independently without permission of the police. It was essential for a woman to pay all the debts before she could shift from one brothel to another, or before she could have one house to start another on her own account. A woman wished to return to a virtuous life was permitted to do so. No woman desired to quit the brothel life to change her mode of life and support herself honestly could be retained against her will. The woman would have to make an application to the police explaining the reasons in detail for changing her mode of life. Under the following cases the name of a girl was struck out from the roll of prostitutes:

- (a) In case of marriage of the girl.
- (b) Organic disease
- (c) When parents or relatives undertook the reclamation of a prostitutes; in such case police was/has granted the power to compel restitution of her person ignoring the claims of the brothel keeper or even of the woman's own refusals.

A prostitute desired to be de-registered, had also to undergo medical examination by the medical officer. If she was suspected of having venereal disease, then she was sent to hospital for treatment and her release was not granted until she was discharged there from. The police might at their

¹⁸⁴ Ibid p.429-430.

discretion free a prostitute temporarily for a certain period to observe/monitor whether the girl really wanted to change the mode of life and lead a respectable life. This system was known in France as 'Provisional radiation'. If she was found to behave properly during this period, her name was removed from the roll of public women. If any woman was found to quit brothel on pretences of a host calling, she was liable imprisonment. A woman who withdrawn herself from control without having previously been de-registered was also liable to prosecution. In case of woman, whose name had been struck out, wished to return to her old trade she was allowed to do so.¹⁸⁵

Registration of Prostitutes and their Supervision:

The registration was carried out by the Commissioner of Police. The following persons were not permitted to get/be registered:

- (i) Girls below the age of 16 years.
- (ii) If a virgin desired to be registered, permission was refused by the police authority and she was sent to a rescue home.
- (iii) Pregnant woman.
- (iv) Married women not legally divorced.
- (v) Women infected with venereal disease.

Women infected with venereal disease were sent to hospital before being registered. Women were registered either -

- (a) On their own request.
- (b) At the instance of a registered brothel keeper.
- (c) On the report of the police.

Every girl, before being registered, was required to give documentary evidence of her identity and domicile. The following questions were usually asked and answers were taken down in writing.

- (i) Name of the applicant and her residence.
- (ii) Her age.
- (iii) Name, address and Occupation of her father.
- (iv) Whether she was unmarried or married; wife or widow; if married, the name and address of her husband.
- (v) Whether she had children and where they were.

It was necessary to ascertain the correct age of a girl especially if she had a younger look than the age given by her if registration certificate was required but in most cases girls were unable to produce it. On such cases an inquiry had to be made to the police authorities of the native place of the woman. A minor girl could get registered if the Commissioner of Police was satisfied that the girl was morally abandoned and there was no possibility of reformation. Even, if there was a remote possibility of such improvement, then the girl was not permitted to get registered until all measures

¹⁸⁵ Ibid p.433-435.

taken to reform she had failed. In such cases an opportunity was given to her parents to guardians to examine due influence over her if guardian expressed then desire to take the girl back. The girl used to be sent back to her home. But in most cases these girls were refused to be given shelter by her family as she had brought disgrace to her family.

When a girl used to apply for registration, she had to face several questions, whether she used to live with her parents or husband (if married) and if not then when and how she had left them. In case of a girl who was already a prostitute in her previous life, the case used to become different. Every woman used to be asked whether she had ever been a prostitute in her previous life? And if so, what was the time period of her involvement in the profession. Any previous criminal conviction was also required to be noted. The information with regard to this matter used to be obtained by communication with the police authority of the district of her belongings origin. Finally the girl had to undergo a compulsory medical examination in a special venereal diseases dispensary. The result of the examination was noted in the report. In case a girl was arrested by the police for indulging in clandestine prostitution the procedure used to be a little different. In such cases the girl used to deny the allegation. It was thought wise to discharge her with a warning. If, however, she was found incorrigible even after three or four warnings, her name automatically was registered in the list of prostitutes. Every registered prostitute used to be given a card bearing her name and registered number. In those cards there was also space for recording results of periodic medical examination.¹⁸⁶

The system of registration of prostitution in India was abolished in the year 1929. But the system of licensing brothels was partially suspended in 1884 and stopped in 1888 (at least on paper as a result of the intervention of the Parliament). The compulsory and periodical examination of prostitutes was prohibited through the commencement of a new Cantonment Act in 1889 and its amendment in 1893. The abolition of this system of medical examination resulted into the rapid increase in the number of cases of venereal disease among the soldiers. In 1897, a new Cantonment Act was passed which granted more power to the military authorities to remove brothels and also to prohibit prostitutes living or loitering near Cantonment areas. Under this Act, persons suffering from syphilis or gonorrhea might also be ordered to attend a dispensary.

In Calcutta the prostitutes were not interfered with unnecessarily. Police authority used to interfere in the following cases in which:

- (a) Young girls were connected with and

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p.422-426.

- (b) Prostitutes behaved in riotous, disorderly or indecent manners; frequenting bars; or soliciting to the annoyance of passers by.

In case of the prostitutes unknown to the police, she used to be arrested and the person solicited was asked to produce detail evidence. But in case of solicitation if the prostitute was known to the police then the police used to make a charge against her. A girl arrested for solicitation was generally sent to the Rescue Home (Govinda Kumar House). Parinatti and minor girls used to be sent to the Rescue Home for Minor Girls, 45 Lower, Circular Road, Calcutta. Occasionally at the request of local residents, the police used to declare a street or streets or part of street as a 'main thoroughfare' and brothel keepers were ordered to shift their trade elsewhere. Such a policy might give relief to one section of people who resort to that particular street area but surely always at the cost of others where those brothels could be removed.¹⁸⁷

Prostitutes under Supervision:

The general administration of the regulations for the supervision of the prostitutes was the duty of the Commissioner of Police, except so far as it lies with the exclusive jurisdiction of the Moral Police Force. The following matters were brought under the jurisdiction of Moral Police Force:-

- (i) General supervision of prostitutes, and brothel keepers;
- (ii) Dealing with unregistered prostitutes who had been detected by the officers of the department;
- (iii) Registration of prostitutes;
- (iv) Control of traffic in women;
- (v) Holding inquiries into complaints respecting the behavior of prostitutes;
- (vi) Hearing appeals against the decisions of the Commissioner of Police;
- (vii) General supervision over the police commissioners for the purpose of securing uniformity in the administration of the regulations dealing with prostitution.

General Police entrusted with Duties:

The Commissioner of Police used to assist the Moral Police in the supervision over the prostitutes and brothel keepers. The General Police had to report to the office of the Moral Police about any changes occurred amongst the registered prostitutes and any complaint lodged against any woman or person suspected of carrying on traffic in women and of any case of failure in attending medical examination.

Inspector of Brothels:

The role of 'Inspector of Prostitutes' was to monitor the regulations governing the prostitutes were carried out. This office was open only for men of good moral character and then used to draw

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p.456-460.

decent salaries. The Inspector was granted the power to arrest a woman guilty of any offence and took her to police headquarters.

Unregistered Prostitutes under Supervision:

Many prostitutes used to turn to evade registration. The moral police had enough power to arrest a woman suspected to be a prostitute. But sometimes, even ladies from respectable families waiting in parks or near places of amusements were suspected to be prostitutes and arrested. Later on, it was laid out that a woman suspected of practicing the trade of prostitution should only be arrested where the evidence was very much clear and beyond all reasonable doubt. This evidence should be gathered on the basis of repeated observation over a number of days. Persons who used to carry on prostitution secretly under the cloak of some other profession were kept under observation of the police before any action could be taken by him. The officers of the Moral Police were only granted the power to make such arrests while the ordinary police could only report the suspected cases. In every case, it was very much essential for the Inspector to submit a report to the chief of the Moral Police containing the grounds for the prosecution.

Penalties for the Unregistered Prostitutes:

A woman charged for the first time with carrying on professional prostitution, was generally allowed to go only with a warning. If the woman had to take up the prostitution as a profession as a result of accidental circumstances, the stigma of a criminal conviction would become main obstruction for her to return to respectable life. Hence, in such cases action was taken only in the direction of securing proper guardianship. Such steps were taken in all cases where the girls were the minor. Women practicing prostitution who were not first offender were to sent to jail. In determining the duration of sentence, the unregistered prostitutes were dealt with more harshly than the registered prostitute. No women accused of practicing would have to submit to medical examination until the charges were proved.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p.443-446