

AN ASSESSMENT OF RADICAL, LIBERAL AND CONTRACTARIAN VIEWS ON SEX WORK

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The theoretical framework of the philosophical study of sex work is an extensively debated area of research among academic scholars. Two main standpoints emerge from this debate -- (a) sex work is a form of exploitation, and (b) sex work is a form of work. The first standpoint condemns sex work because it involves the sale of sex that is deeply emotional and personal. The second group tries to counter the above allegations and establish sex work as legitimate work. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the philosophical perspectives of radical, liberal, and contractarian views that try to address the phenomenon of sex work from a theoretical and context-sensitive approach. Here, I demonstrate through discussion of these perspectives how sex workers are qualified as real workers and show that they also have control over their working life and, most importantly, are not always passive victims of patriarchy without voices.

Introduction

The research on prostitution or sex work has been done from different perspectives. Prostitution or sex work has been seen either as a form of oppression or as a form of empowerment. In recent decades, the second opinion is more popular than the first. The term 'sex worker' and 'sex work' was first used by sex workers themselves during prostitutes' rights movements. In 'sex work', the addition of the word 'work' with 'sex' is an attempt to recognize the efforts of sex workers and is also a clear announcement that sex work also falls under the sphere of labour. I focus only on voluntary sex work and will use 'prostitution' and 'sex work' interchangeably. Here, I will discuss the popular approaches to the study of sex work viz. radical feminism, liberal feminism, and the contractarian view.

Radical Feminism

According to contemporary radical feminists, prostitution is a quintessential relationship of women to men. They reckon that almost every encounter between men and women has sexual overtones. These encounters are typically designed to amplify the sexual dominance and power of men over women. Radical feminists argue that, as a matter of fact, prostitution is used to satisfy the physical desires of men, but they consider this only as a subsidiary function. Primarily, they think,

Prostitution exists to meet the desire of men to degrade women. Studies made by men reveal that very few even pretend they frequent prostitutes primarily for sexual gratification. Young boys admit they go to achieve a sense of male camaraderie and freedom. They usually go in groups and gossip about it at length afterward in a way that is good for their egos. Other men have expressed the prime motive as the desire to reaffirm the basic 'filth' of all women; or to clearly separate 'good' from 'bad' women in their minds, or for the opportunity to treat another person completely according to personal whim (Alison M. Jaggar, *Prostitution in Living With Contradictions*, p.107).

According to radical feminists, in prostitution, the victims are women. They are exploited, degraded, and outcasted by all the men who directly or indirectly take and enjoy the benefits of prostitution. The basic radical feminist objection is based on economic coercion as leading to prostitution:

Sex is a fine thing when it is the free choice of the individuals involved – free of economic coercion. No one should be dependent on selling herself for support; all love should be free love (*Ibid.* p. 107).

In prostitution, women's sexuality is expressed in a manner to please men that contributes to the basic feminist objection of prostitution. Radical feminists want the complete eradication of prostitution. For this, they point out that, first, it requires a total insight shifting of men's attitude towards women. It also requires the immersion of conventional myths of male sexuality that men's biological appetite for sex is much stronger than women's. Radical feminists think that men do not demand prostitutes if masculinity is no longer attached to heterosexual performance. They point out that the demand for prostitution is not a biological necessity. Radical feminists always argue that prostitution is a result of women's inferior status in society. Emma Goldman noted:

Nowhere is women treated according to the merit of her work but rather as a sex. It is therefore almost inevitable that she should pay for her right to sex, to keep a position in whatever line, with sex favors. Thus it is merely a question of degree whether she sells herself to one man, in or out of marriage, or to many men. Whether our reformers admit it or not, the economic and social inferiority of woman is responsible for prostitution (p.122).

Secondly, the eradication of prostitution requires the annulment of men's monopoly of economic power. It also requires the change of perspective that women are sex objects. For radical feminists, as long as these two interdependent conditions exist, almost all man-woman encounters are a form of prostitution.

According to radical feminism, when women enter into prostitution, they do not exercise any kind of free choice. Here, the choice is implicit coercion that leaves no actual options for women. This problem of choice is not limited only to sex work, but also applicable to those women who work in factories, or as domestic servants or waitresses. However, minimal education and an unstable job market are two basic factors that may limit someone's choice to work in a certain occupation. Radical feminists argue that consent is impossible in prostitution. Sex is not a neutral activity. It is a process to show male power. From this point of view, rape and sex work are indistinguishable. Each situation involves male dominance which promotes women's objectification through their sexuality. This attitude allows men to think that women's sexuality is something that pertains to them or they have the right to buy or take if it is not freely given. Therefore, sex workers are regarded as victims of male desires. This victimization outlook reminds us that all women are commodified through their sexuality and they are available to men for a price.

According to Catharine A. MacKinnon, sexuality defines through the eroticization of domination and submission. Prostitution and pornography are primary to this system. This power divergence between men and women is sexually and socially constructed, and it is so extensive that it is usually unnoticeable. MacKinnon noted that, The perspective from the male standpoint enforces woman's definition, encircles her body, circumlocutes her speech, and describes her life. The male perspective is systemic and hegemonic(p.636).

For MacKinnon, society does not value the female and feminine attributes or only recognizes them as objects, while male and masculine attributes are considered worthier. MacKinnon argues that it is impossible to construct alternative female sexuality until men keep their feet on women's necks. MacKinnon also raises the question of whether women have an autonomous self at all. If women are socially defined such that female sexuality cannot be lived or spoken or felt or even somatically sensed apart from its enforced definition so that it is its own lack, then there is no such thing as a woman as such, there are only walking embodiments of

men's projected needs. For feminism, asking whether there is socially, a female sexuality is the same as asking whether women exist(p.534).

MacKinnon's argument is based on the presumption of coercion. Her argument is: if women have no self, then it is difficult to give consent to anything. The presumption of coercion forces women to encounter the fact that women's ability to give consent is always socially confined. MacKinnon uses the law of rape to illustrate the illusion of consent:

The law of rape presents consent as free exercise of sexual choice under conditions of equality of power without exposing the underlying structure of constraint and disparity. Fundamentally, desirability to men is supposed a woman's form of power because she can both arouse it and deny its fulfillment. To woman is attributed both the cause of man's initiative and the denial of his satisfaction. This rationalizes force. Consent in this model becomes more a metaphysical quality of a woman's being than a choice she makes and communicates. Exercise of women's so-called power presupposes more fundamental social powerlessness (*Toward a Feminist Theory of State*, p. 175).

Women do not participate in the definition of their sexuality. Their sexuality is defined from the male perspective and it exclusively serves male purposes. Women are treated as sexual objects and victims. Male violence forces them to depend on some men for protection. This observation leads someone to believe that the social definition of women's sexuality is inauthentic. For this reason, the possibility for women to make a real choice is limited. For MacKinnon, Consent is supposed to be women's form of control over intercourse, different from but equal to the custom of male initiative. Man proposes, woman disposes. Even the ideal is not mutual. Apart from the disparate consequences of refusal, this model does not envision a situation the woman controls being placed in, or choices she frames. (*Toward a Feminist Theory of The State*, p.174). However, MacKinnon's theory about women's choice is criticized by many scholars. Jody Freeman is one of them. I put Freeman's view in her own words:

In my view, the notion that consent is relative and socially contingent makes sense within a feminist framework. It fits well with the value feminists place on subjectivity and community, but MacKinnon seems not to acknowledge the possibility of consent in a world where women's sexuality is not their own. This

refusal to acknowledge the possibility of consent is ironic since her vision of a truly 'female' sexuality (implied by her critique of the male colonization of female sexuality) depends, in my view on a fluid notion of consent. (pp. 96-97).

Kathleen Barry is a well-known radical feminist critic of prostitution. The foundational statement of her critic of prostitution is that prostitution represents women's subordination and establishes patriarchal male domination:

...while pornographic media are the means of sexually saturating society, while rape is paradigmatic of sexual exploitation, prostitution, with or without a woman's consent, is the institutional, economic, and sexual model for women's oppression. (*Prostitution of Sexuality*, p.24)

C. Heike Schotten has some objections against Barry's claim. For Schotten, Barry defines prostitution as sexual exploitation which continues over time, though she cannot well explain "what constitutes exploitation." (p.215). Schotten notes:

She is unable to provide an adequate account of the conditions of power, freedom, and agency under which she believes desire and consent are produced, and that therefore govern women's and men's lives to the extent that prostitution cannot be defined as anything other than sexual exploitation (p.215).

The most fruitful elaboration of Barry's theoretical critique of prostitution is to be found in MacKinnon's work. MacKinnon's theory of gender and sexuality helps to clarify radical feminist critique of prostitution. The starting premise of MacKinnon's theory is that there is no such thing as "just sex". It means sex is not somehow precultural or presocial. Here, sex denotes sexuality, which includes any type of sexual activity. Sex also refers to gender. For MacKinnon, it is impossible to differentiate between sex/gender/sexuality. These are the result of power relations. How sex/gender/sexuality is connected with this power relation is portrayed by MacKinnon in the following way: power constructs gender (here gender simply refers to either biology or social identity). Gender comprises and determines sexuality that eventually bifurcates bodies and behaviors into masculine and feminine. In this way, MacKinnon tries to establish that there is no "just sex" that is pre-established or presocial or precultural because there is no such thing as before. It also means that all sexual relations along with prostitution are not a presentation of natural sexual desire. Barry agrees with MacKinnon on this point and notes:

There are no biological givens about sex that are not social and political constructions. In that sense society precedes biology (p.22).

MacKinnon argues that sexual relations which we observe and participate in are different imperatives of male power. Thus sex, sexuality, and gender are various phenomena of male constructions. In this way, women's sexuality becomes meaningless. Women could never find a separate sphere that is outside and also independent of male power. The rules of sexual relations are made by men. Men also limit the options that are available to women, and to choose any option among them is not on any account of women's own choice. MacKinnon brings all forms of oppressive behaviors against women into one dynamic manifestation named male power and, for her, pornography and prostitution, both are "crystallized form of male domination" (p. 216).

It is not clear whether Barry supports this type of totalizing understanding of male power or not. Barry does not offer any large description of male domination. However, we have some hint that eventually implies that Barry must support MacKinnon's understanding of male domination, when she notes:

Can women choose to do prostitution? As much as they can choose any other context of sexual objectification and dehumanization of the self. Following from distancing, disengagement invokes harm, harm that takes the form of forcing distinctions between what are essentially nonchoices. This is how *women actually do not consent to prostitution* or any other condition of sexual exploitation – in rape, in marriage, in the office, in the factory, and so on (p.33).

Though Barry and MacKinnon both do not illustrate how and why women's choices have become so restricted, both concur on the same point that under male domination, women's choice is just a meaningless concept. The analysis of why and how women's sexual exploitation happens is the major contribution of MacKinnon's theory of feminism. According to MacKinnon, male power is clearly sexual. It creates the categories of sex – men and women, though it does not create them equally. It means that the establishment of men/women differences is also the establishment of other kinds of differences such as active/passive, subject/object, dominant/submissive, strong/weak into genders. MacKinnon argues that this classification must be present in any kind of sexual relation. Therefore, by extension, it can be easily said that prostitution as an industry is a pure example of male domination. Prostitution is such an industry

where women are paid for being subordinate to male sexual demands. MacKinnon expresses this idea in the following way:

Possession and use of women through the sexualization of intimate intrusion and access to them is a central feature of women's social definition as inferior and feminine (*Toward A Feminist Theory of The State*, 1989, p. 195).

This phrase is used by MacKinnon for pornography, though it is also applicable for the dynamic of prostitution.

For MacKinnon, prostitution is problematic because "it perpetuates the mystification of gendered, hierarchical imperatives of power" (Schotten, p. 218). Here MacKinnon adopts a structuralist Marxist analysis in order to demonstrate gender relations. Prostitution is a clear example of male domination. In prostitution, men are constructing women as subordinate and sexually available to men. This construction as an act of power seems invisible through several modes/forms of naturalization. Here, MacKinnon neatly applies Marx's critique of ideology and mystification to her theory of gender inequality and oppression. Under this structuralist framework, prostitution seems inevitable and totally natural and, in this way, "male domination has succeeded in essentializing its imperatives, thereby rendering women's oppression invisible and masking its own productive power" (Schotten, p. 218).

Unlike MacKinnon, Barry does not support such amoral understanding. Barry has adopted an idea of selfhood that is also sustained human's, or more precisely, women's integrity and capability of agency. She is offering a human rights perspective that conveys that prostitution is wrong because of its sexual exploitation, "it harms the human self and destroys through sex, dehumanizing women" (Barry, 1995, p. 71). Barry takes objectification and violation as synonymous – to treat a person as a body and to treat a person, not as a human being are the same thing. Barry writes:

When the human being is reduced to a body, objectified to sexually service another, whether or not there is consent, violation of the human being has taken place. The human being is the bodied self that human rights are meant to protect and human development is intended to support...In the fullness of human experience, when women are reduced to their bodies, and in the case of sexual exploitation to sexed bodies, they are treated as lesser, as other, and thereby

subordinated. This is sexual exploitation and it violates women's human rights to dignity and equality (pp. 23-24).

That self is degraded or violated through the practice of prostitution is a very common argument and the bedrock claim for anti-prostitution feminism. Although Schotten notes that such a claim leads to a significant problem that the self on which the feminist critic of prostitution is based that seems inexplicable. She notes:

... it is unclear what else human beings are besides bodies, which would thereby make it illegitimate to treat them as only bodies (or "objects") (Schotten, p. 220).

They have no clear explanation about what human beings are meant without bodies. They also have no clear idea about what self exactly means and thereby it is also unclear what the main problem in treating someone as a mere body or object is. Elaborating on this problem, Schotten adds:

... we have no account of the self, we can have no idea why objectification is a problematic way of treating someone. If feminist critics do not present an independent account of a self that somehow exceeds or is distinct from the body, the force of their argument remains tautological, not normative – objectification is bad because it has already been defined as violation (Schotten, p. 220).

Here, male domination is defined as a hegemonic gendered discourse. Under this discourse, to be a woman is to be an object. It is quite impossible to consider prostitution not as sexual exploitation of women. Male power creates and determines sexuality and its social meanings. These social meanings are not dependent on individual acknowledgment. Men, women, all kinds of sexual practices are governed by the hegemony discourse of male power. If sex/sexuality/gender is as radically constructed as Barry and MacKinnon propose, then not only women, but men are also constructed by the hegemonic discourse of male power. Even though it is true that men can access more physical, economic, and political power than women, they are not totally excluded from the coercive structure of masculine power. Under male domination, women are subjected to an image that is submissive, violable, passive, and so on. Masculine power may project prostitution as a job for women and also claim female sexual purity, but it also regulates the image of men and projects the idea that male sexual needs are

more powerful, more urgent than those of women and men are suited to show bodily strength, courage, and sexual aggression. These masculine identifications try to perpetuate the image of men as the clients of prostitutes. Hence, it is important to remember that such characteristics of masculinity that look oppressive by nature are not so natural or intrinsic to men's identity just as being passive, submissive or violable are not so intrinsic or natural to women's identity.

Liberal Feminism

The liberal feminist theory is based on the traditional liberal ideology. According to this ideology, all individuals are autonomous and it also claims minimal state intervention in the private sphere. These ideas help liberal feminism make its ideologies and theories about sex work are dependent. The sex workers have the right and freedom to choose sex work among various options - it is the quintessential component of the liberal feminist theory about sex work. In the case of sex work, sex workers would be free to use their bodies in a way that gives both money and sexual satisfaction. For liberal feminists, sex work is not degradation of women or the male domination over women; rather it is a positive way to empower women personally and economically. Recognition of sex work as empowering and liberating allows them to forsake those social barriers that try to restrict the expression of their sexuality and build a new definition of self that reflects their sexuality.

In contrast to other theories, liberal feminism does not make assumptions about why some women enter into sex work. They argue that women should be free to choose sex work as a career option and society should respect their work. The proponents of liberal feminism argue that sex work could be individually liberating for those women who choose it as a career. Sex work provides both sexual and personally liberating experiences to sex workers.

Liberal feminism presents its argument in the following way:

Throughout history, sex is used to control women. Women's sexuality is repressed. Sex work allows women to reclaim their sexuality. They are free to choose with whom they share their bodies and how they can use their bodies. Some liberal feminists even argue that this awakening experience of sexuality allows women to find out the sensuality and pleasures of their bodies. Sex worker, Veronica Monet claimed,

[s]ex work has been empowering and liberating for me ... I have been able to reclaim my sexuality by becoming aware of my bisexuality and becoming multiply orgasmic (I use [sic] to be nonorgasmic)(Sedition, in *Whores and Other Feminists*, p.221).

Liberal feminists claim that sex work allows women to keep a distinguishable division between love/sex, public/private, or fantasy/reality. These divisions allow women to 'enjoy erotic pleasures without the emotional restrictions most women wrestle with' (Teri Goodson, A Prostitute Joins NOW, in *Whores and Other Feminists*, p.251). Most cultures promote a double standard view about sexuality --- on the one hand, this ideology simply denies women avenues to freely express their sexuality, while on the other hand, inducing men to enjoy and explore as much as possible all aspects of their sexuality. This double standard ideology will continue if sex workers, feminists, and pro-prostitute organizations do not firmly organize and demand the privilege of women's sexuality.

Another liberal feminist argument claims that sex work provides economic independence to women. This financial stability has given women a chance to come out of poverty. Sex workers manage to give a sustainable life to themselves and their families. Liberal feminists also argue that economic need is not the sole reason for continuing the sex industry. They notice that women's labor is depreciated altogether, but sex work gives a chance to enjoy financial freedom. Simone de Beauvoir writes, In a world where misery and unemployment prevail, there will be people to enter any profession that is open... It is often asked: why does she choose it [prostitution]? The question is, rather: why has she not chosen it?(*The Second Sex*, p. 530).

Liberal feminism demands laws that allow sex work, but also recognizes that some legal restrictions are necessary. The choice of entering into sex work should not be legally regulated; the laws should regulate or control the act of sex work only where it can cause harm. The laws that are used to control violence, harm, threat, or coercion would be acceptable. As such, liberal feminists promote consensual sex between individuals until no one gets harmed in the act.

As a whole, the liberal feminist approach is the most acceptable approach to sex work. Belinda Cooper applauds the ideology that tries to empower women economically, sexually, personally, and independently. She notes that when society recognizes sex work as work, then much of the stigma associated with it will be removed. However, she does not blindly assert that all women who engage

in sex work encounter the liberating effect of sex work. The author notes that freedom of choice is a fundamental element of individual autonomy. But the author also acknowledges that the concept of choice is not as clear as it seems. In choice-making, many outside factors such as social condition, economic status, education, and personal history may have an influence. If we acknowledge a woman's choice to say no to sex, then we should also acknowledge a woman's choice to say yes to sex. In a larger context, the support for sex workers also conveys the support of choices and rights that all women, in general, make outside the realm of sex work. These rights and choices include the choice or right to have an abortion, the choice or right to be married, etc. To illustrate the importance of this view, pro-prostitute activists wear T-shirts, hold signs with the slogan 'a choice for the prostitute is a choice for all women'.

Contractarian Approach

Lars Ericsson in his article 'Charges against Prostitution: An Attempt at Philosophical Assessment' states that a prostitution contract is a form of employment contract like any other. In this article, he wants to show why a prostitution contract is considered as a legitimate form of employment contract and how a prostitution contract empowers women. In order to establish his view, Ericsson counters the seven most common arguments used against prostitution. These seven arguments are the conventional argument, the sentimentalist argument, the paternalistic argument, the Marxist argument, the commercialisation argument, the argument that prostitutes have a disturbed emotional life, and the feminist argument.

The first charge which Ericsson counters is the conventional moralist claim against prostitution. According to this claim, prostitutes are victims, they choose prostitution only for survival, they are equivalent to sex slaves and they do not get any benefit from prostitution. According to this claim, prostitution is only beneficial for male clients. These claims are mainly made from an anthropological perspective which states that sexual relations are important if they are related to procreation, and sexual relations for pleasure and gratification are regarded as unnecessary. For Ericsson, this claim is outdated because it is based on a pre-modern understanding of human sexuality. According to this understanding, human sexuality only serves the community through procreation and not for individual gratification. Ericsson states that "if two adults voluntarily consent to an economic arrangement concerning sexual activity and this activity takes place

in private, it seems plainly absurd to maintain that there is something intrinsically wrong with it”(p. 338). The same view is also proposed by liberal feminists who state that if prostitution is voluntary and not coerced, then there is nothing morally wrong with it.

The second charge which Ericsson counters is the sentimentalist argument. The sentimentalist argument claims that sex is the physical expression of love and love enhances the quality of sex. According to the sentimentalist perspective, the sex which takes place in prostitution is not of a high standard, and prostitution is considered impoverished, immoral, and impersonal because there is no emotional attachment in the prostitute-client relationship. Ericsson condemns the sentimentalist charge against prostitution. The quality of the sex which takes place between a prostitute and her client is not important. The main concern of the prostitution contract is the mutual benefit to both the parties i.e. the prostitute and the client. As per this contract, the prostitute provides all sexual needs to her client and receives some form of remuneration. According to Ericsson, the best prostitution sex is better than the average marital sex.

The third charge which Ericsson counters is the paternalistic argument. The paternalistic argument states that prostitution is immoral because it creates both physical and mental hazards for prostitutes. Many prostitutes face violence and social stigmatization which are psychologically damaging. Paternalists argue that prostitution is not the best option as a profession and they try to prevent people from becoming prostitutes. Ericsson questions this argument. He says that prostitution cannot be considered immoral because it is considered by others as hazardous. To explain this, Ericsson uses the example of a miner. Like prostitutes, miners face dangerous situations in their workplaces. However, their profession is not condemned by others because of those dangers; instead, their profession is seen as socially valuable and every possible step is taken for minimizing the risk. According to Ericsson, prostitution is not seen as a socially valuable form of work and this leads to a situation where prostitutes face physical harm and social exploitation. For Ericsson, if it is considered that prostitutes are providing a socially valuable service, then society will try to minimize the risks as much as possible.

The fourth charge which Ericsson counters is the Marxist argument against prostitution. The main concern of the Marxist argument is not prostitution, rather it is mainly the institution of wage labour. The Marxist argument states that both

prostitution and wage labour are inhuman and degrading. Prostitutes are more degraded and exploited than wage labourers because prostitutes are selling sex which should not be a part of the capitalist market. Ericsson condemns the Marxist argument and states that the existence of prostitution is not a result of capitalism. Prostitution is a phenomenon that existed even before the emergence of capitalism. Also, prostitution is not a result of capitalism, as it also exists in non-capitalist societies. For this reason, prostitutes cannot be regarded as victims of class. According to Ericsson, women choose prostitution as the best available option from a limited list of options. Ericsson also rejects the view that prostitutes are desperate women who choose prostitution only for economic survival. He focuses on prostitutes' relative agency and argues that prostitution is the most lucrative option available to prostitutes and it might offer them a good standard of income, some sort of autonomy, flexible working hours, etc. For Ericsson, people freely enter into this industry and rationally calculate their benefits.

The fifth charge which Ericsson counters is the commercialisation argument. According to the commercialisation argument, prostitution is strengthening the commercialisation of society because it sells sex that is not available as a commodity. For Ericsson, prostitution is a minor commercial phenomenon in commercial societies. Ericsson argues that there is no causal connection between prostitution and commercialisation. Capitalism is the cause of commercialisation, not prostitution. In order to reduce the commercialisation of society, it is necessary to regulate and break the system of capitalism.

Ericsson's sixth claim counters the argument that prostitutes have a disturbed emotional life. According to this argument, prostitution damages a woman's mental and emotional well-being. Many prostitutes suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, compulsive disorders, self-degradation, and self-destructive tendencies. Therefore, prostitution should be eradicated for the benefit of those women who are involved in this industry. Ericsson argues that the mental and emotional illnesses that prostitutes face are a result of the social stigma against prostitution. These problems are not unique because people from other fields also experience some work-related stress, but these forms of work are not condemned for creating emotional and mental hazards to their workers. Ericsson also states that many prostitutes do not experience emotional problems due to their profession. That is why prostitution should not be criminalized on the ground that it is harmful to workers' emotional well-being.

In the seventh claim, Ericsson counters the feminist charge against prostitution. One of the most important feminist charges against prostitution is that sex and sexuality are closely connected to one's sense of self and when a prostitute sells her sex, she also sells her sense of self and identity. In Ericsson's understanding, a prostitute does not sell herself. She is able to separate her body from her sense of self; it is not the self, but only her body that is involved in the prostitution act. She actually gets paid for her time and skills. Another feminist claim against prostitution is that prostitutes are objectified by their clients. However, Ericsson argues that the prostitute and the client both use each other as a means. The client uses the prostitute for getting sexual pleasure and the prostitute also uses the client for receiving some kind of benefits. Individuals have the right to decide the benefits for themselves. According to the contractarian viewpoint, prostitution is a free choice. For Ericsson, a prostitution contract is a reciprocal contract where both parties freely enter and get some mutual benefits.

Conclusion:

I have shown three contemporary opinions that deal with sex work. Sex work should be decriminalized or legalized. Here, liberal feminism and the Contractarian approach is the most acceptable approach to sex work. Even if sex work is decriminalized and run under the control of women instead of patriarchy, the image of a woman as a sex worker will not change very soon. However, decriminalization or legalization makes sex work less abusive. It is not risk-free work. It has its own unique risks, and legalization or decriminalization of sex work is a step in the right direction to protect sex workers from such harm. It provides more protection, visibility, legal accessibility, and better legal representation to sex workers without imposing any moral parameters. Decriminalization or legalization offers a better situation where sex workers are empowered and get proper recognition for their social and economic contributions. Hopefully, this empowerment will help sex workers to break the patriarchy-created image of women in sex work.

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