

PREFACE

We are living in such a period when we talk about the eradication of all commercialized vices. We are trying to save our humanity from those vices, which are very active in blackening our human feelings. Prostitution is one of such vices or social diseases. State, Government, Administration as well as some social reformers are very much worried about this and are striving hard to eradicate this evil. But they are confronted with many difficulties and problems in their way, among which paucity of earnest co-operation of the individual as well as of the society is to be counted foremost.

Prostitution has been in existence in every society of the world from the long past, as history speaks us. From this point of view it can be regarded as the ancient evil. When I attained my adolescence, I asked myself why prostitution did exist? Why is this existing still now? Sukumari Bhattacharya seeks to trace its origin in the desire of the male's to satisfy their sexual hunger going beyond the limits of marital fidelity. This conclusion of Professor Bhattacharya has been attained on the basis of literary evidences of the past. This is the one side of the coin. On the other, chill penury in fact may be regarded as a compelling force leading the women to accept such a deplorable profession as means of livelihood. Poverty forces them to enter in this flesh trade. In many areas of our country girls are being forced into prostitution in the name of religion, culture and others.

Whenever I use to pass through the road beside Khalpara (Red Light Area in Siliguri, which is my home town), I feel bewilder and frustrated. This feeling gives birth to so many questions in my mind – Why is this area called *Nisiddhapally* (prohibited zone)? Why are these girls forced into this profession? What do they think about themselves? Do they have any dreams or aspirations in their life? What is about their parents? What is their family background? What are the views and role of the society towards these poor women? How society can come to their help and bring a shift in the traditional apathetic concept regarding this profession?

In this humble effort I have tried to investigate these questions and make a documentation as well as a socio – historical analysis of this issue. I have visited several red light areas in North Bengal, tried to make an intimate relation with them to make out my queries. I have also met some old citizens, some renowned persons, writers, some intellectuals as well as some administrative peoples who are all aware of this dark side of our society and even expressed their anxiety for this inhuman profession. In the local literatures, writings, most of the issues of North Bengal are covered, but nothing is mentioned of this vital problem in this region. What indifference still persists in the society with the problems of a considerable section of the whole population in this area!

In this article, the present writer is willing to delineate the whole transaction of women for trafficking in purpose of prostitution. How local women are made victim and what were the main factors behind such immoral activities carried out by the local brokers.

For carrying out this research I have taken the help from the ancient scriptures, epics, archival documents, news papers, magazines, pamphlets, journals as well as several reference books, electronic media etc. I have used a few archival materials directly from Sumanta Banerjee's book, which were dislocated and destroyed during shifting from the State Archive in Writers Building (Kolkata) to Shakespeare Sarani (Kolkata) and some of the documents could not be provided by the State Archive authority due to the renovation of State Archive at Bhawani Dutta Lane in Kolkata when I searched for in May, 2014.

For the scarcity of primary sources, I had to take help from several non-conventional sources like folk songs, folk tales etc. to reconstruct the history of prostitution in North Bengal. From all those sources we get the indication of prostitution and its changing condition in this part of Bengal. And the transformation of the attitude of this profession and the concerned women are the content of my thesis. More sources are available in three districts (Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar) comparatively Malda and Dinajpur.

I have tried to investigate the problem of prostitution situating it in its proper historical perspective and to attain a hypothetical conclusion after a thorough analysis. Though this is a very difficult job to make survey in the area and get real picture from the ladies engaged in such profession, which requires much of secrecy and privacy. Consequently gaps and incompleteness are obvious. So faults remains with me.


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