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## Massage Parlours: White Collared Prostitution or Women Empowerment?

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### ABSTRACT:

*The cost of living is escalating. Rental costs are at a record high. Food prices and transport costs are beyond many. This has led many to look for alternative means of supplementing incomes. Some have opened businesses on the side. Some have sought secondary jobs. Others are up to all kind of ills. Reports from the Bhopal (M. P.) Police indicate that violent crimes are on the rise. The latest fad in Bhopal among professional women is that of white-collar prostitution. Yes employed, educated and professional women have also decided to dabble in the world's oldest profession. They have jobs; they get paid good money, and they do not need the trappings of marriage and serious relationships. They are professionals, career girls who are looking to make it in the corporate world. But, of course, the cost of living is too high. These women have a taste for the finer things in life, but their salaries cannot cater for luxury town houses, designer wear, expensive jewellery, fine cars and dining in expensive restaurants. So they turn to prostitution to supplement their income. They insist that theirs is classy because their clients are some of the country's highest paid civil servants, top private sector executives, filthy rich foreigners, politicians, and among the country's who is who.*

*With the growing number of massage parlours in the city, there is increase in heinous crime like prostitution. But the question arises why there is increase in such kind of activities. This paper tries to examine the reasons behind this situation. The author is not against empowerment of women but he had tried to ask some questions from myself such as why the girls, that too well educated are opting for these kind of heinous crimes, second question in my mind arises is that are these girls doing this heinous crime in the name of empowerment, thirdly if they are well educated then why still they are opting for this job.*

*Even a hawker or a rickshaw puller earns a handsome income to nourish his/her family; then again the question is that money is the only motivational factor to get involved in these kinds of heinous crimes.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Prostitution, Massage Parlours, Empowerment.*

### INTRODUCTION

**Defining Prostitution:** Prostitution is the business or practice of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for payment. Prostitution is sometimes described as commercial sex or hooking. Prostitution occurs in a variety of forms. Brothels are establishments specifically dedicated to prostitution. In escort prostitution, the act may take place at the client's residence or hotel room (referred to as out-call), or at the escort's residence or a hotel room rented for the occasion by the

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escort (in-call). Another form is street prostitution. Although the majority of prostitutes are female and have male clients, a prostitute can be, and have clients, of any gender or sexual orientation.

Depending on the jurisdiction, prostitution law may deem commercial sex to be legal or illegal. A person who works in this field is called a prostitute, and is a type of sex worker. Prostitution is one branch of the sex industry, along with pornography, stripping, and erotic dancing. The legal status of prostitution varies from country to country (sometimes from region to region within a given country), ranging from being permissible but unregulated, to an enforced or unenforced crime, or a regulated profession. It is sometimes referred to euphemistically as "the world's oldest profession" in the English-speaking world. Estimates place the annual revenue generated by prostitution worldwide to be over \$100 billion.

There are about 42 million prostitutes in the world, living all over the world (though most of Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa lacks data, studied countries in that large region rank as top sex tourism destinations). Sex tourism refers to the practice of traveling to engage in sexual relations with prostitutes in other countries. Some rich clients may pay for long-term contracts that may last for years.

Some view prostitution as a form of exploitation of or violence against women, and children, that helps to create a supply of victims for human trafficking. Some critics of prostitution as an institution are supporters of the Swedish approach, which decriminalizes the act of selling sex, but makes the purchase of sex illegal. This approach has also been adopted by Canada, Iceland, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Norway, and France.

**Massage Parlour:** The term "massage parlour" or "massage parlor" refers to a front for prostitution, and was popularized in what is known as "the Massage Scandals of 1894". In 1894 the British Medical Association (BMA) inquired into the education and practice of massage practitioners in London, and found that prostitution was commonly associated with unskilled workers and debt, often working with forged qualifications. In response, legitimate massage workers formed the Society of Trained Masseuses (now known as the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy), with an emphasis on high academic standards and a medical model for massage training.

Particularly where prostitution is illegal, massage parlors (as well as saunas, spas or similar establishments) may be fronts for places of prostitution. Illegal brothels disguised as massage parlors are common in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, South Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, the and many other countries.

Alternatively, the massages at certain massage parlors may have a "happy ending", meaning that the massage ends with the client receiving a sexual release. In addition to a "happy ending" service, given the restrictions imposed upon most striptease venues, some erotic massage venues now also offer a service where the client can masturbate him or herself while watching an artist perform a striptease.

**Women's Empowerment:** Women Empowerment is the process in which women expand and recreate what it is that they can be, do, and accomplish in a circumstance that they previously were denied. Alternatively, it is the process for women to redefine gender roles that allows for them to acquire the ability to choose between known alternatives that have otherwise been

restricted from such ability. There are several principles defining women's empowerment such as, for one to be empowered, they must come from a position of disempowerment. Furthermore, one must acquire empowerment themselves rather than have it given to them by an external party. Other studies have found that empowerment definitions entail people having the capability to make important decisions in their lives while also being able to act on them. Lastly, empowerment and disempowerment is relative to other at a previous time; therefore, empowerment is a process, not a product.

Women empowerment has become a significant topic of discussion in development and economics. It can also point to the approaches regarding other trivialized genders in a particular political or social context.

Women's economic empowerment refers to the ability for women to enjoy their right to control and benefit from resources, assets, income and their own time, as well as the ability to manage risk and improve their economic status and well being.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In supporting works that see the prostitute as the main cause of the spread of STI's, Wilcox (1954:96) sees itinerants like seamen as having sex with prostitutes hence being the most infected group with STD's. In an attempt to attribute the spread of STD's to prostitutes, it is assumed that the prostitutes will knowingly spread STD's to her customers. It may be a serious assumption that the prostitute does not want to remain healthy; hence she continues the spread of STD's. It is seen that there are no discussions on where the prostitutes got the infections.

If this is the case anyway, then positive measures could be suggested as described by functionalists like Talcott Parsons –where this is not the case however, an attempt may be made to investigate if the prostitute spreading STD is aware that she has a disease condition that may need to be taken care of, or where this is not the case, then possibilities that limitations in attempts made by her to reduce infection and remain healthy, is inadequate and this may be a more plausible explanation.

We also read about the institutionalized Devadasi system of India where the priestly women's gift to the gods, is to provide a sexual outlet for clients. Sexually Transmitted Diseases may have existed in these settings and were addressed. Some cultural actions like circumcision have been accepted as a means of limiting sexual exigencies and controlling the sexual drive of the girl child.

For criminologists, prostitution is seen as a moral crime, an act of prostitution itself is seen as a result of moral inadequacies. Prostitution is still a criminal offence under the South African offence act of 1957. Luiz et al (2000:32) identifies such things as the social stigma attached to the prostitution industry, the absence of political commitment to move on the decriminalisation of prostitution, the severe dichotomy present in the prostitution industry between elite and ordinary prostitutes as often having racial undertones .It presents several challenges to understanding and supporting prostitutes to prevent STI and HIV as they go underground making it difficult to be reached by health workers with preventive messages. Criminalization of prostitutes makes them a highly mobile group.

Looking at the role of alcohol and bars in prostitution, writers like Dicks (1953) collaborates the role of alcohol in making clients for prostitutes when he identified a high rate of venereal disease among men who drank alcohol heavily, thus reducing their negative perceptions towards prostitutes and venereal disease in the society. We may need to address the role of other social vices like Ryan (1955) who see the sale of alcohol by young girls as responsible for raising the number of commercial sex workers and indirectly increasing venereal disease. Ryan argues that the drunken men expose young girls selling alcohol in bars to early sexual exposure, and this consequently result into several sex partners. Vambe (2003:487) sees Zimbabwean literature, as paradoxically implicated in confirming and interrogating the cultural context within which the transmission of the disease (referring to HIV/AIDS) from person to person takes place.

The prostitutes in the goldfields use antiseptic fluids like Dettol, Omo, or swallow potassium permanganate or go to traditional healers before going to local clinics. This on its own is an indication that the prostitute wants to remain healthy while doing her job. How she does this may not be the best and that should be the concern of the health workers.

Roces (2006) in the journal entitled "Prostitution, women's empowerment and the victim narrative in the Philippines". This journal discuss about how women's organization constructed in Philippines and called themselves as "The Filipino Women". This organization take a part as the feminist project of addressing prostitution as a women's issue in the Philippines from 1985 to 2006. However, the radical positions of women's activism, the eternal binary of the woman as victim/agent, martyr/advocate or martyr/activist haunted the discourses about Filipino womanhood. This feminist engagement with these binary categories was fraught, ambivalent and contradictory. In a result, the transformation of former prostitutes into feminist advocates could be read as evidence of the success of the women's movements in refashioning women. At the same time, the contradictory and ambivalent responses over the representation of women as "victim" underscore the complex challenges faced by the women's movements who focus on prostitution as a feminist issue.

Kinsley (1948:) in criticizing the functional role of prostitutes, discusses the fact that the world literature contains hundreds of volumes attempting to ascertain the social significance of prostitution, yet for him prostitution is nothing other than an activity which contributes no more than it does to the sexual outlet of immigrants or soldiers. Like the biological sex theorist, prostitution for Flexner only serves for meeting the needs of male over-powering sex drive. This in itself can be functional to society as it may have lead to abandonment of soldiers or suicide for lonely immigrants.

Perscheler-Desai (2001:115) postulates that the escalating number of HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa seems to be a major reason for the increase in child labour in general and child prostitution in particular. In confirming that prostitutes are conscious of sexually transmitted diseases and attempt at doing something about it, Luiz et al (2000) in describing the mining industry of the Orange Free State Goldfields in South Africa, discusses attitudes and practices of prostitutes regarding sexually transmitted diseases. STDs are used as a rationale for criminalisation of prostitution in South Africa.

Vambe (2003:482) in reviewing literary work, the role of metaphor, women and HIV/AIDS, acknowledges that the carriers of AIDS are ordinary men and women and there is a direct correlation between poverty, prostitution and the spread of the disease. He says that poor

domestic workers attempt to make ends meet and sleep with other women's husbands. He sees what he describes as the 'casualness' of sex and how it is experienced in this poverty – stricken society, as alarming. He discusses the metaphor of toilet as decay and the morally corrupt when the story of Sara and Eddie are found having sex in the toilet by Eddie's wife. In discussing clientship for sex workers, most writers agree with clientship for sex workers coming from different walks of life, only the itinerant nature of the job decides the level of patronizing. Nnabugwu-Otesanya (1987) in her master's thesis, observed that about 80% of patients who attended an STD clinic in Zaria teaching Hospital had sexual intercourse with casuals or prostitutes.

### OBJECTIVES:

1. To Study Whether Unnecessary Boast of Women's Empowerment Has Encouraged the Growth Prostitution in the form of Massage Parlours.
2. Is Prostitution Being Considered a Part of Women Empowerment in Bhopal?

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

1. Descriptive study i. e. the state of affairs as it is existing at present and the researcher has no control over the variables. We have tried to report what has happened and what is happening after the implementation of GST.
2. The data used in the study is purely secondary or tertiary in nature. The data available in the form of news, discussions held either on print or electronic media had been used to come on certain conclusions and results.

### DISCUSSIONS

*a. Massage Parlours A Front To Run Sex Racket: Police, Ankur Sirothia/TNN | Updated: Apr 18, 2013, 06:04 IST, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/City/Bhopal/Massage-Parlours-A-Front-To-Run-Sex-Racket-Police/Articleshow/19607724.Cms>: Unearthing of a flesh trade racket being operated from a beauty parlour in upscale 10 Number Market two days ago has led the police to believe that it was not an isolated case wherein a parlour was only a front for running illegal activities. This is the second time when a sex racket was unearthed in the building during past few years. Seizure of a diary in the raid with names of some 40 persons, including some influential as customers has once again brought in focus dubious activities being run from massage parlours in the city, police said. Police raids in the past point out that unscrupulous elements resort to offer massage service to throw law enforcing agencies of their tail. Those indulging in sleazy activities do not have to go out for customers, police said.*

After thorough interrogation by the police, the girls who were caught red handed disclosed their qualifications. Most of them had higher education but instead of working in corporate/ companies they preferred to work in these brothels or so called massage parlours so to earn easy and have all the luxuries of life, as already discussed in the introduction part. Most of

the girls used to hide their identities through burqa so that no one can notice them. This discussion has nothing to do with religion.

- b. *Where are the So Called Women's Empowerment Organizations/NGOs?*** In the previous four to five years several massage parlours which were and are involved in sex trade have been busted by police but till date no such NGO/ Organization have ever made any statement against this crime. Moreover these boasted organizations have not taken any step to rescue these girls, not even they are ready to take bails. It is not the case that these NGOs/Organizations are unaware about the prevalent scenario. In my opinion these kinds of NGOs/Organizations are good for nothing. They just know to boast only their petty achievements.

Unfortunately these kinds of NGOs/Organizations consider that going to pubs, movies, roaming around in the market, no objection from their parents on their deeds, wearing less or no clothes are the only criteria of women's empowerment. These organizations rarely or never talk about empowerment through modern education, providing them equal or rightful benefits.

## RESULTS:

1. Based on the above discussions it had been found that Boast of Women's Empowerment Has Encouraged the Growth Prostitution in the form of Massage Parlours.
2. Based on the discussions it can be said that prostitution is being considered as a part of women empowerment.

## CONCLUSIONS:

After going through the discussions and results it can be concluded that:

1. Apart from providing modern education to girls, job generation by the state or central government providing them the equal and rightful benefits should be done.
2. Those NGOs/Organizations which are good for nothing should be closed after proper monitoring and enquiry.

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