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The role of state in Prostitution: An anthropological exploration in a frontier city of Bangladesh

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Abstract : As a worldwide phenomenon, Prostitution exists in all countries but its form and types are different. Despite the relationship between state and prostitution is inseparable, we should know the state's approach to prostitution management, which has been explored in this paper. Anthropological research methodologies – participant observation, depth interview – were research tools for primary data collection in a qualitative manner. Previous researched books, related journal, are also used as a secondary data source. As risky job, only limited number respondents are interviewed using the snowball research techniques in 2005 in Sylhet city. Although, free market economy instigates to the prostitution and state is associated with profession. So, overall woman's position has been identified in Prostitution which is a work or profession whatever we like to say it. But state role is leaning to man and against to devastating to this profession.

Keywords: Prostitution, Bangladesh, sex worker, law, Anthropology.

Introduction

As a profession or work, prostitution is perspicuous and reserved for women. Prostitution is a worldwide phenomenon. Although Richard Basam thinks that it is a constraint in urban and related to migrant male population (Basam-1978: 153). Prostitutes are those who do sex based on money'. Society knows them as ``Patita, Fallen, Deviant, Khanki, Beshya, Magi, Nasta (Bad), whore, Strumpet or something that is negative to women position''. There are different sex workers in a country such as floating and brothel-based sex workers; hotel and flat-based sex workers-are mentionable. Among them floating and brothel sex workers are available in cities and towns. Floating sex workers roam to hunt the clients but brothel sex workers live in a place and the clients come here to mitigate their sexual demand. There are

sixteen brothels in Bangladesh (Tahmina-et al- 2004; Ali: unknown published year). However, the hotel and flat- based sex workers are not possible to come for their strewed. In every town and city, hotel and flat-based prostitution are existing phenomena in the society. Although it is difficult to detect the hotel and flat based prostitution (HFBP) due to hiding their identities. Strictly they follow the code of conduct and simultaneously change their locations (HF) and agents, frequently.

1.2 Prostitution: Definition and Origin.

The word 'prostitutes' has derived from the Latin word 'prostibula' or 'prosedada'. The History of prostitution is in ancient Greek is- the house of prostitutes were allowed to be opened in the afternoon. The girl stands or sits before the entrance to entice passerby. Hence, they were called 'prostitutes or proseda' (Kumar-1997: 144). However, in our continent is different to origin and development the prostitution from western society. This profession here, derived from 'Devadasi' who had sexual relation to the priest. The widow came in the temple to pass the youth or life. Such women are Devadasi due to serve God and the priest. Devadasi's sexual relation was as devotee God and committed to the priest. In the course of time, British colonial rule and the Market-oriented economy has turned it as trade or profession. During the nineteenth century before, prostitution is found in our society. British rule has Marketized or popularized it intensively (Hossen- 2002: 73).

According to Elliot and Meril, "Prostitution is an illicit sex union on a promiscuous and mercenary basis with accompanying emotional indifference (Kumar-1997: 144)". Prostitution is promiscuous sex but Ali (publishing year is unknown) says- "in our existing social system the women who mitigate the sexual urges of men in exchange for cash are called prostitutes. This profession of the woman is called prostitution (Ali: pg-9)". To exist the prostitution is responsible for the social system Ali likes to think that. Ali also likes to say it is a profession. N. Mackegancy and M. Barnard (1996) given the notion that "society reserve a special language for those women who put a price on sex. As like - Hooker, whore, strumpet, prostitutes and harlot and in doing so signal the unique status of exchanging sex for money (Mackegancy and Barnard -1996:1). They showed that 'prostitution' is sexual intercourse for money and language do partiality to men. Male is sex buyers but they are not treated negatively in the eye of society or language. All definition indicates three features. One- sex for money; two- Female has no choice to select the clients; three- prostitution is a profession or work. In the age of the market economy, all are the commodity and are measured by money. Women and her body is such a commodity to measure by for the ravishing.

1.3 Prostitution: In the view of Gender.

'Prostitution' is preserved and derogatory to women and reversion to male hegemony. Because of establishing the sexual polygamy they like to practice manliness. Some sex workers are different from so-called prostitutes. There are some forms of prostitutes we cannot treat them promptly. However, they are prostitutes and do sex for money. HFBP are such type of prostitution. HFBP are hired or offered body through agencies, massage parlors, flat and hotel, etc. They use the body to stair up in the society, in camouflage. Such prostitutes avoid society to increase their honor and prestige. As a result, they do harm in society. In the daylight, they are part of civil society and prostitutes in the dark. Women play a dual role and sex business pushed her into a mental crisis and lead the life through complexity. Such psychological problems have been explored in view of them in the clue of this research.

People desire that women will deserve some essentiality. As like sexual purity, virginity, chastity, and sexual monogamy. Society imposes norms and values upon women to 'abide by the ethical rules upon women. Society implies that pre-or extramarital sexual relation is illegal in a moral context. When women violate the moral law and practice sexual polygamy for mercenary then they cause sexual endangerment consciously and unconsciously in the society. Sexual polygamy is liable for the pernicious events, for example- AIDS, STD-alarm. Bangladesh is a high-risk zone for sexual stigma due to use a lower rate of condom in sexual intercourse (Tahmina-et-al-2004). Therefore, we should know their sexual practice and attitude with the clients.

1.4 Prostitution: Economical context and Development

We should understand and consider the prostitutes in moral point and economical context. They have moved from morality but there thought is not that. When we think prostitution is raising a social problem then they show it is a way to livelihood. However, they lead life in splendid. Some associates components endanger the work. Prostitution is work and not out of risk full factors. Bangladesh is a country; here condom using rate is lower, in South Asia (Tahmina-et al-2004). Therefore, to make healthy society prostitution is a barrier due to pervasive and non-protective sexual relation. It causes STD, AIDS. Before rising a sexual epidemic, we need diagnoses the highest number of partners and the lowest rate of condom use in sexual practice (Tahmina-et all: 2004). It has no need to tell that such a statement is a threat to the human being.

The development decade (1960-70) has failed to ameliorate the women socio-economic condition. That means women are kept behind of development and turned into an underprivileged group. Prostitutes are so far away from the development goal. In the `80s, to

improve the overall woman position in society, Sex gets priority. In that time, Development policies are implemented in woman's health sector. Prostitute's health had become targeted at the end of that decade. However, HFBP is neglected to implement the development policy. Although from `90s development policy, touches HFBP, but has been failed to extricate them from development crisis.

The state enforces the law upon prostitutes to evict but unwilling to rehabilitate them. State role here is 'catch fish, avoid water- policy" Therefore, HFBDs never come to in publicly with a professional attitude. Try to avoid state and security complexity. They live in a bizarre atmosphere with a psychological crisis. Such circumstances they take drugs or do whatever which are harmful things for them.

1.5 General Objective

The goal of this study has been clarified over whole HFBD life settings with relation to state and prostitutes. Sexual attitude and practice of the prostitutes also have been depicted in this study.

2. Literature Review

To discuss prostitution, sex-oriented discussion obviously involved. However, sexual discussion does not involve prostitution. In the Bangladesh context, we get three works on the floating or brothel sex works related. However, HFBDs works not further in spite of that we may discuss the following books on the time base. Women are involved and a lot of research has been conducted upon them such, women-empower, women health, women in an occupation, etc. consecutively, the end of the 1970s more in being said about women and violence, prostitution, legal rights, inheritance circumstances and nutrition (Islam et-al.1990:145).

In 1980s study on prostitution in Bangladesh is first to describe the women position in sexual harassment and in development. The study of this time has dealt with child prostitution, children or prostitutes in a brothel and floating prostitutes. The problems of prostitutes and standard of living of prostitutes have been described. Brothel and floating based prostitutes are most of them are illiterate and are coming from the rural area also a major portion of them, they were suffering from illness. Drinking and smoking are common to them (Islam et-al.1990:146). The end of the `80s we find a pioneer anthropological work on prostitutes and prostitution. Viewing from an anthropological perspective, Khan and Arefeen (Potita Nari: A Study of prostitution in Bangladesh-1989) collected data from two brothels of Dhaka and Narayanganj and they found that the number of prostitutes is rapidly increasing due to the growth of urbanization in the country. Moreover, they noticed that the state itself protects this

institution. This book consists of nine chapters as- Introduction; The settings; Background, Economic behavior; Social organization of brothels; The state and prostitution; Health, food and rituals; Prostitutes and prostitution; and Conclusion. They interviewed 120 prostitutes during 12 weeks by eleven investigators. This book is a pioneer study about prostitution in Bangladesh. Having limitations, it has a great significance to further study on prostitution.

In the '90s, we find several books on prostitution. Kamal Siddique (*Social formation in Dhaka City: A study in third world urban sociology - 1990*) also with the problem of prostitutes and female beggars. They have now spread all over the city. Khan and Arefeen (*Prostitutes in Bangladesh- 1991*) conducted a study on prostitution in Bangladesh covering a brothel in Dhaka city and two brothels in other towns. In that study, they also investigated the floating or street walking prostitutes of Dhaka city. However, the others noticed similar development, which they found in their earlier study on prostitution that the number of prostitutes is increasing rapidly because of urbanization in Bangladesh. In this time, Chowdhury (*prostitution-1994*) writes a book. He is not academically trained in anthropology. He also has depicted the prostitute's life from his experience. He has tried to find out the causes of prostitution, origin, and development of prostitution, state rule towards prostitutes and finally suggested eliminating it by changing the social structure. However, the 7th article of his book is silent on this question. Chowdhury (1994) said that such a profession was demarcated on destitute and illiterate women but its pattern has changed new. According to him, it is now a part-time job to educated house-wife and slovenliest woman.

Salma Ali (*Prostitution: woman, society state and law: et al.*) studied with baseline survey on some brothels as - Tanbazer, Kandua Patti, Daulodia, Marwari mandir, Baniashanta all our study field of her research. This book is based on an interview of 135 unlicensed prostitutes and 167 licensed prostitutes. Ali also interviewed 181 prostitutes who are out of the brothel. Among those prostitutes 78 are from Kamalapur Railway station, 43 Ramna Park, 26 from Motijheel Commercial Area, 34 are from Chandrima Uddyan. Ali denotes that State role is oppressive towards women. She clarified the prostitution in the eyes of prostitutes. According to prostitutes, this work is perceptive and all time they belong to the underprivileged group. They lead the life through hardship and enter into Prostitution due to enforce.

Ali referred that State gives license to do sex but evicts brothel. Therefore, they spread out the countryside and a threat to society.

McKeggy and Barnard (*Sex on street- 1996*) reveal that sex works are seriously harmful to our society. Due to their un-protective sexual intercourse. From participant and baseline survey, it has written about floating sex workers at Glasgow in the UK.

The 1st decade on 21st century

In this time, Tahmina (sex workers in Bangladesh. Livelihood: A what price-et al 2004) is a redeemable work on prostitutes and prostitution. They collected data using participant observation and baseline survey method etc. They have clarified the prostitute's life circle and sexual harassment in the eye of prostitutes. According to them nobody accepts such profession willingly view on prostitution. They (prostitutes) like to say to do some work with you". The researcher surveyed 16 brothels including floating prostitutes in Dhaka city. They interpreted the State's role in Privileged position as an alike society. As a Civil society, condemn them but not did willing to engage them in work. Not with the understanding of this book is not written on anthropological perspective, but to know the human attitude, state role and prostitute's psychology is nice to read it.

Sever writings on prostitution

J. Weeks (Sexuality defined the sex innate things of the animal. Whenever power related to sex then sexual politics grow between male and female. Male dominated with female and then 'Sex' turned in to the suffering cause of women. He depicts on his book-"Sexuality' that is a historical construction which brings together a host of different biological and mental possibilities- gender identity, bodily difference, reproductive capacities, needs, desires, and fantasies. When sex is used as tools to discriminate male and female then gender question rise to us. To understand the gender relation we should examine sex with historical context. R. Basam (1978)- defined prostitution as large urban phenomena in relation to rural to urban migration. On his book" Urban Anthropology", He has written that Destitution compels them to enter in prostitution and "impoverish" act as a push factor. According to Besam (1978), some factors are involved in prostitution those are- " family disordering, early sexual experience, male deception, economical comfort, etc". After evaluation- Journals, books, he indicates that prostitution is a large and worldwide spread out event in the city. kolyani Bandyopadhyay (Religion and woman: 1998) has argued that from the beginning- today women are suppressed in religion. Religion chained women in rules and regulations. Her writing's key theme to that women are a consumable commodity, prostitution is the best example.

This report is interesting to know the provocative factors, which are important to sexual morals. Albeit, this study does not involve in prostitution directly. However, we may consider some of the oppressive contexts. Prostitutes take money but here not view to unintelligible that the children were oppressed by his/her nearing king. This report's limitation is that all case studies are taken from the victim's memory. However, recalled memory always

exaggerated details in speaking to others. In spite of this does work to know to understand prostitution.

Nandolal Sengupta (1984) on his book said that male and female sexual nature is polygamous. Social norms and values abstained and women from sexual desire. This book highlights the moral corruption as like Prostitution. He said that urban housewife, girls, and any other female sell their sex in a hide. He referred My case studies support to strewed sex business. According to him, strewed sex workers are not an isolated class from civil society. We cannot suspect easily for prostitution. This book is enough to know the hide prostitution but data not collected in a proper way. To know prostitution and strewed prostitution, this book is interesting to read.

Writing on sex and sexuality

"Coming of age in Samoa" (Mead, 1928) is consisting of fourteen chapters. To develop the notion of sex and personality is a milestone work to us. She has described as the inter-woven relation among sex, personality, and culture. According to her- birth, death, sex, etc are not hiding to the Samoa child. Pre-marital sex is also moral the expression of life. In this context of culture, develop their personality as the expectation of society. R. Benedict also refused her statement. Saying that personality influences culture. The children learn about sex from society. Sex is open here so there has no prostitution (Mead,1928:53) except guest prostitution in Samoa. When set to be free discussing matter and sexual monogamy is obsolete, then Prostitution may not exist what Mead has told on her writings.

In Bangladesh has limited researched on prostitution but although in different newspapers, weekly and weekend, monthlies we get something which was written on journalistic view. Therefore, this is not desired as academic references. All writings on prostitution are not capable to represent HFBP. So methodological confinement leads to writing upon strewed prostitution and its relationship with the State.

3.1. Researched stages and time

This study is composed of two stages. Although, it is a result of consecutive thinking for a long time. People were studied from 1st May 2005 to 10th May 2005 then frequently the field (Sylhet city) has been visited in different locations and people until to write up the report on 15th September 2005.

3.2. Sampling and study unit

There have been many hotels of different size. Almost hotels are involved in the sex trade. If also some flats are engaged in the sex business. Here purposive sampling has been used. Twenty HFbps and five clients are in the study unit. This study has successfully completed

with the collaboration of a local NGO, which is working for the prostitutes. So the individual is the study unit and the entire sample unit interviewed as with their whim, purposively.

3.3. Overview of the Sylhet city

Sylhet is the spiritual capital of Bangladesh. It has 29.50 sq. km. area with population 2,45,308 (census 2011). The male and female rate is 54.32% and 45.32% respectively. Town base literacy rate is 66.9%. Many people live in abroad and they come and back in due time. Sylhet is also a tourist zone. Many tourists come here to enjoy her natural beauty and visit the intercessor - Hazrat Shahjalal and Shahparan Mazer and tea gardens near to Sylhet city.

Sylhet is a northeastern divisional city of Bangladesh. It situated on the bank of Surma. Meghalaya and Assam are the Indian provinces have vicinity with Sylhet. Many high rising building and shopping cities are available here. Devanagari is their own dialectical letter but not use now. They have segregation culture, language that similar to Assam's people.

3.4. Overview of the respondents

The sample size is twenty-five to depict the researched arena. Five are male and the rest of our female respondents. All are involved in sex trade either sellers or buyers. Most of all is outsider and young. All prostitutes wear a veil whenever they go out or meet with a customer in the assigned place. The cell phone is a confidential communication system for them. As like password name is needed to talk about sex with them by cell phone otherwise they rebuke or oppose the offer.

4. Role of State

The role of the state is dual and always shows partiality to man (Hussain:2001). I have attempted to clarify the women's position in prostitution and the role of the state to intervene in prostitution. In the feminist perspective, I should continue to examine the women's exploitation and subordination by the state through her agencies. Therefore, state position is not associated with the female position but fueling to the subordination and exploitation of women. Prostitution is a detrain and derogatory to women status but state role here is ambiguous. Therefore, the discussion framework here is to expose the state position according to the eye of the constitution and intervention agencies. The state is an intervention agent to lead the people life and guide through the constitution. The role of the state is may categorize in three-

- a) Law provider
- b) As an oppressor
- c) As an intervention

4.1. As a law provider

The state enforces the laws and deserves the capabilities of providing the rules and regulation. State providing law about prostitution is insufficient and obscured. In her constitution has not recognized them as a professional. The constitution of Bangladesh says, "The State will adopt effective measures to prevent prostitution and gambling (Bangladesh Constitution)" This statement clears her position by giving license to the brothel-based sex workers and formulating and their laws.

According to the suppression of immoral traffic act (1993) " brothel is a house that part of the house where two women are engaged in prostitution and where one or more girl under 18 years of age who are kept for the purpose of using her/them in immoral activities". By this law, prostitution is promiscuous sexual intercourse in exchange for each or other benefits. Section 4(1) of the same law says- using/renting out one's own house for a brothel is a punishable offense.

Section 11 says- anyone abducting a below 18 (the legal age of maturity) girl for using her in commercial sex work, anyone forcing or putting such a girl into such work will be penalized.

Section 8 of the suppression of immoral traffic act-1993 says any person, 18 or more years of age, will be punished if he or she knowingly depends for his/ her livelihood, totally or partially on the income of a person engaged in prostitution. By this law- likes to discharge the prostitution.

Reviewing the various existing laws related to prostitution, it could be said that, anyone can choose prostitution as their profession who are over 18 years old. However, they should never out the business in public or residential areas. The laws and constitution not clearly mentioned which are public and residential areas. The state also restricted to entering the prostitution that is over 18 years ages and has to consent.

4.2. As an oppressor

State dominant and constrain to women. As a prostitute, she cast her vote but Cannot take necessary steps for sexual harassment on her. The state has subordinated to women in many sorts of society. The state does this through its supporting institutions like police, NGOs administration, etc. In this term, the state is not an alien body interfering in prostitution. State agents or institutions are involved to implement the rules.

State oppressed the women to form a subordinate class. This class is derived class (Kuhn-et-al 1987: 223). This class deprived of all getting convenience from the state, due to their class position. In a family, the woman holds second-hand status and women have less economic involvement. Such women position is indicating the Sexual division of labor. Women confiding in private practices and her works are evaluated by state. In this sense, a strewed

sex worker role is dual. Firstly, she is a member of a family then I consider her as a professional on sex. The first position is exposing to all but the second position is hiding of state enforcing law they sell their sex in the hiding. State agents as like police tour-tired them while sex selling.

Women such as underclass because they are sexually disqualified from primary jobs in the labor market as a result of prejudice and interruptions on labor availability due to marriage and childbirth (Kuhn-et-al-1978:230). This situation tends them to entering secondary jobs, those that have low labor but return more. Prostitution is one of the secondary jobs. Economic return here much and some times including also limited security they would have utilized their body within full professional attitude. Therefore, here state oppressor because of lack of security and convenience for making underclass.

4.3. As an intervention

Here I will attempt the role of NGOs activities those workings are permitted by State. NGOs intervention activities are HIV/AIDS prevention, promotion the reproductive technologies, etc. To observe my field, that many NGOs are working to promote prostitutes life settings. They provide free condom, arise sexual awareness, STI/STDs treatment, etc. The NGOs supported and founded their providing activities. Here state role is associated to keep the prostitution in the healthy environment yet the state making the law to prohibit sex selling. One hand state supports the NGOs interventions in sex and sexually related programs, other hand state providing rules and regulation to stop sex business. Therefore, state rule is dual to prostitution and dualism role is not proper to ameliorate the women situations.

Sylhet Jubo Academy (SJA is local NGO) is one intervention partner of GoB. Therefore, GoB promotes the prostitutes' life indirectly. Therefore, they sell condom, contraceptive another technology and take necessary steps to ameliorate their health situation through agencies.

5. Male hegemony is in the state.

State disseminates the male dominant ideology and compels her people to cope with such boundaries. Although the constitution says- man and women are segregation but equal. Such constitution law, in fact, had not been effective.

Because State role is her as like an oppressor. State likes to dominate the women kindly and suppressed, oppressed and depressed them like a second-class citizen. State interfere with the women's personal, economical, Sexual educational thoughts, even belief, and morals, etc. matters are the entire impediment to establish human equality. Therefore, state view on

women is male hegemonic and oppressor them by providing laws or other intervention activities.

State view on prostitution is like "Catch fish, avoid water". To improve the population life standard should have a clear position of the state. The state encouraged the women to sell their body providing necessary supports but discouraging to implement the making rule on prostitution.

6. Sex: Means of dominant

Sex is a natural organism to determine gender identification. So gender is culturally constructed to distinguish between male and female are oppressed, suppressed and victim of gender discriminations. Such we impose negative meaning upon them who sell sex. However, the sex buyers are the angel to the eye of society. Both are responsible also in this trade but we disdain the women only. Because we are not free from patriarchal society and manliness attitude. Patriarchal and manliness are an important component of women subordination and sexual harassment. Normally, women are a victim due to they are sexual sensitive. Therefore, sex turned into dominant means over women.

7. Prostitutes corresponding to a human being

All are component to constitute a society. Therefore, the prostitute is a component to forming a society and they are existing because of their having function. Malinowski's functional theory is applicable here to depict their position- whatever. They are not different, isolated and segregation to people. Chapter-2 discloses this socio-economic profile as like having with feeling, emotion, education family life and other necessary entitle. According to Merton's theory-, what they do that is a crime because their earning money source is not socially recognized. However, they are not perverse rather smoothing handling the business. In this context, strewed sex worker are corresponding to civil society but morally deviant too.

8. Effervescent in prostitution

Analyzing the study people, nine factors are observed to coming in the profession. All are secondary reasons for involvement in the sex trade. If also we think that destitute impinged the women to sell the sex. However, here, I have not found the same cause. Only six women sell the body to maintain the family. They could choose another way than sex working. So, we may say to come to this profession is self-motivated and not imposed by society.

8. Sex dealings with systematic ways

In the sex journey, have a confidential system. It is difficult to enter this system without corresponding. They follow the means to sell their body and like to confine the system due to the dignity, status, and honor in the society, i.e. they want to earn money systematic way in

disguisedly. Such economic behavior denotes the underground economy. People earn money but the source is either hidden or illicit. Prostitution is a systematic work, which is active in the underground economy.

9. Coping with danger: No care

They have no care and precaution of life. Their thinking way is to live with dignity. So to be earned money. The prostitutes' practice unprotected and unsafe sexual intercourse even anal intercourse. Such sexual attitude makes their lives vulnerable. In spite of that, they are not conscious about sexually transmitted diseases or any other harmful germ that may enter while confluence.

10. State and prostitution: Conflict and cooperation

Women are an important part of a country. The state controls her population with the help of the constitution. Human rights and opportunity are preserved in the Constitution.

When the state shows her partiality to men, then women turn into a vulnerable group. Prostitution is such a vulnerable group. State one hand lines to stop prostitution. On the other side, fueling the prostitution NGOs intervention agents. Such circumstances-the prostitute's lives are miserable and perspective. Therefore, they carry on the sex-trade system in hiding. State intervention activates hopes them to standard livings but state interferes directly compel them to stop sex business. Not even to prostitutes but also to women are a victim of such state's dualism. The state should clear her position to extricate the women.

11. Conclusion: an overview consideration

The prostitutes who are SS belongs to a group in a marginal position. The state cannot interfere with them due to their shrewdness. That is why they are deprived of any state-providing privileged. Their survival and dealings system has the priority to discuss prostitutes and prostitution. In this context, I have considered the GP and behavioral theory on criminal. In the light of Merton's theory, I have wanted to expose the prostitute's behavior and using GP, my aim was to explain strategies in prostitution or politics in sex.

Let me summarize in the conclusion where overview discussion has considered understanding the whole matter in a draught. So summarized the discussed entities are-

- A. Prostitution is a process where involved many factors.
- B. Prostitutes belong in a group but not isolated rather in hidden and coping with pernicious factors.
- C. State likes to oppress them again fueling through other agents.
- D. Sex workers are not a different part of our life rather no question will arise if we consider as part of civil society.

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