A STUDY ON

“THE ROLE OF NGOs IN MAINSTREAMING THE COMMERCIALLY SEXUALLY EXPLOITED WOMEN IN SOUTH INDIA”

“It is a matter of bitter shame and sorrow and deep humiliation that a number of women have to sell their chastity for men’s lust. Man, the lawgiver, will have to pay a dreadful penalty for the degradation he has imposed upon the so-called weaker section. When women freed from man’s snares rise to her full height and rebels against man’s legislation and institution designed by him, her rebellion, no doubt, non-violent, will be nevertheless effective”

-- Mahatma Gandhi

Human beings are animals called Homo Sapiens, who are the most civilized species, bestowed with Nature’s unique gift of sixth sense. Inherent instincts, such as rational thinking, non-nomadic urban way of life and existence bereft of barbaric instincts – the wont of jungle life, which includes having discriminate sex with any person of the species he/she chances upon, serve as authentic factors corroborating human predominance. A human being has certain basic needs, which are biological and psychological in nature; these needs are nothing but his general wants or desires and every human being has to strive for the satisfaction of his basic needs in order to maintain and improve himself in society. The number of needs varies from individual to individual. Under biological needs of the human being, satisfaction of sexual urges stands as an important one, after the need for food, water, rest and protection. The sex motive, although not as essential for an individual’s survival as food and water, constitutes a highly powerful psycho-social motive by resulting in the feeling of immense happiness and well-being of the individual. This motive is purely physical in non-human beings, but in human beings, it is governed by both physiological and psychological factors. Therefore, sex in human beings has to be a proper blend of innate as well as acquired tendencies. The biological motive acts as an innate factor here and the very process of socialization helps in acquiring social tendencies, thus, having sex is not a sinful act, but a biological urge, one of man’s fundamental dispositions, requiring fulfillment. Unfulfilled, sexual urges could trigger a spate of crimes. When these biological needs turn into the business known as prostitution and take the shape of violence, known as
commercial sexual exploitation, the need arises for intervention to protect the human beings from this violence. When we look into the transition from satisfaction of sexual urge to abuse, we can understand that there is a long history for this change. To better understand this transition we can look at the societal setup of the Stone Age which helps us unearth several revealing and startling facts regarding the position of women within society and also explores the contributory factors for prostitution.

Prostitution is often referred to as the oldest profession in the world and is grounded in deep patriarchal values, involving moral, religious and health issues. Prostitution is morally intolerable as it treats women merely as a means to men’s physical pleasure. Today, it has taken up the face of violence and become an issue of human rights.

Prostitution as a commercialized vice has existed in the world from time immemorial, although it has never been recognized by society as an institution. As the world’s oldest profession, prostitution has undoubtedly existed in some form, as long as society has attempted to regulate and control sexual relationships through the institution of marriage and family. It is the worst form of exploitation of women and, as an institution, it speaks of man’s tolerance of this exploitation on an organised level in society; here women are looked upon solely as an object and as an outlet for man’s basic instincts. Society has not recognized prostitution because it not only causes the personal disorganization of the person concerned, but also affects the organization of the family and community life at large. Prostitution clearly violates fundamental rights/human rights like the right to a life of dignity, the right to health and health care, to the liberty and security of a person and the right to freedom from torture, violence, cruelty or degrading treatment, the right to a home and family, the right to education and proper employment and everything that makes for a life with dignity. In the case of minors in prostitution, it violates their rights to education, employment and self determination.

What is Prostitution?

Prostitution is the practice of indulging in promiscuous sexual relations for money and, as such, is comprised of three important elements: (1) promiscuous sexual intercourse (2) monitory basis and (3) lack of affection or emotional involvement. Thus, a prostitute provides her sexual favors not on an affection basis, but on a mercenary basis.
Social anthropologists’ explanation for prostitution is that it has been in existence in some form or the other for as long as society has attempted to regulate and control relationships through the institution of marriage. Promiscuity or sexual communism receded marriage and sex was shared by all without marriage, particularly in societies which lay great emphasis on the chastity of its women.

In the early days, prostitution was treated as a necessary evil because prostituted women helped to retain the chastity of women in society and hence, performed a social function, but the condition is not the same today. Prostitution is no longer tolerated because of its violent nature and society is more concerned about the consequences of its violation and the issue of human rights; prostitution is now seen as a crime.

In what appears as a contradiction or social hypocrisy on the face of it, women in Indian society have been the victims of humiliation, torture and exploitation from time immemorial, even as they were edified and placed in exalted positions as goddesses and worshipped. In fact, from the days of yore, commercial sexual exploitation has been permitted in one form or the other and with religious sanction too. It basically started by lowering the status of women.

The Vedas and the two great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, are replete with references to the sex trade, which had a special place in ancient urban societies. Commercial sex was conveniently seen as another face of aesthetics and culture and the women in prostitution, known by the name “Nitya Sumangalis”, who were lavished with gifts and monetary allurements in the prime of their youth, enjoyed more honour and a more significant place on the social ladder than did housewives. Simultaneously, however, women were also depicted as week-minded and unworthy of being trusted; they were regarded merely as tools and the means of satisfying the physical and sexual desires of men, to serve them and to secure for them progeny.

As per Manusmriti, ves 366, Ch.Viii, “A man having sex with a woman without her consent was not considered as a crime against that women, but violation of the property rights of her father, brother or husband by the person who committed such sexual act, i.e., rape. Women were considered only as a piece of property to which damage was caused.
The punishment, therefore, was for the damaged property, i.e. the rapist had to pay compensation to the women and / or marry her.

During this time, tradition served as a token of hospitality. “Athiti bhava devo’ – “A guest should be treated as a God”, so goes a Sanskrit saying of the past. Even when a guest desires to have the wife of the host, she should be presented to the guest, without any hesitation by the host.

During the Vedic, Post Vedic and Epic periods, the social status of women can be ascertained from the extent of the freedom they enjoyed. Women never observed ‘purdha’, they enjoyed freedom in selecting their mates, they could educate themselves and widows were permitted to remarry. In the economic fields too they enjoyed freedom. In the household, they enjoyed complete freedom and were treated as ‘Ardhanginis’ (better half). In fact, the performance of religious ceremonies was considered invalid without the wife joining her husband as his full partner.

In the Pauranic Period, the status of women was lowered. Pre-puberty marriages came to be practiced, widow re-marriage was prohibited and husbands were given the status of God, for a woman. Education was totally denied to women. The custom of ‘Sati’ became increasingly prevalent and the ‘Purdha’ system came into vogue to save the young women from sexual exploitation by the feudal lords. The practice of ‘polygamy’ came to be tolerated. In the economic arena, a woman was totally denied any share in her husband’s property by maintaining that ‘a wife and a slave cannot own property’. In the religious field, she was forbidden to offer sacrifices and prayers, and to undertake pilgrimages.

In the medieval period, for nearly 700 years, we observe a huge breakdown of social institutions, the upsetting of traditional political structures, vast migration of people, and an untold form of economic depression in the country. The facilities of education for women vanished. This not only made women accept their husbands as supreme and also gave him license to treat her as a slave with no alternative way of livelihood. The patriarchal system of society, the absence of education amongst women, and poverty can be cited as major reasons responsible for the low status of women in society at that time.
These shortcomings weakened their will and strength to protest the violence committed against them.

Certain social and religious customs have also contributed to prostitution. For instance, the Devadasi system in India is very closely connected with prostitution. This system was widespread in pre-independence and during the 9th and 10th centuries. As a practice in this system, some communities induct their daughters into prostitution and boys start pimping for family members at the age of 15. In this custom, a girl, generally from a lower caste family, was dedicated to a deity after tying “Mutthu” (the pearl) and, when she came to an age, she was offered to a rich patron, usually of the upper caste. Sex was a sacrament and the experience of intercourse was treated as Holy Communion with the gods. The prostitutes considered themselves to be in the presence of the divinity and all that they performed (sexually) was in his or her name and honor. The coitus was a pious act and an integral part of the official religious cult; they gave their body not for monetary reward, but in pious dedication. A majority of prostitutes actually dwelled within the precincts of the temple, where they served their time and were fully provided for service. Others were not attached to the shrine, so to speak, but practiced their profession independently, charging a fee for services rendered. However, they did not keep the money, but instead handed it without deduction, to the priests who thus—without blasphemous thought—could be regarded as the original pimps. Gradually, as changes took place in society, these Devadasis’ turned into commercially sexually exploited women.

Another similar kind of religious practice is Basavi which can be found among the lower caste in Northern parts of Karnataka state. In this system, the parents of good looking girls among the lower caste take them at a very young age to a temple on a special day and tie “Taali” (a small golden dish indicating wifehood) in the presence of the deity and dedicate them as Basavi. When they grow up, they are not bound to marry, but are free to lead a life of liberty.

Prostitution has also been practiced as a traditional occupation among certain castes in Uttar Pradesh, where women are the traditional bread winners and the men folk of the community have to marry girls from other communities as the women from their own
community take part in prostitution. Certain other castes practice prostitution as a tradition. In such castes, it is found that, due to very loose marriage ties in which adultery is scarcely regarded as an offence encourages prostitution, wherein women may go and live openly with other men and her husband accepts her back. Women of such lower castes earn money and support themselves through prostitution, which is carried on at a weekly bazaar or fair. These religious beliefs and pseudo statuses have paved the way for women to become prostitutes.

As a result, women’s social and domestic life was full of sufferings and they had come to occupy a position of inferiority both at home and in society. This inferiority was due to a lack of knowledge, education, social systems etc., which used all of her energy, leaving none with which to protest the violence against her. The patriarchal society of India uses inferiority status of women as an excuse to treat her as a recreational body. Such sexual exploitation is often carried out by the feudal lords on women of weaker sections.

The Muslim conquest of India added a new dimension to the sex trade. The Mughal emperors maintained large “harems” consisting of a large number of beautiful young women of different ages who would visit the emperors every night. Upon the death of the emperors, the harems were abandoned and these women became soft targets for commercial sexual exploitation. After the Mughals, the Rajas, Nawabs, Talukadars and Zamindars inflicted similar treatment on women with the ways of the emperors percolating down through the power structure to the lower level.

During the British rule of 200 years, from the 18th century to the first half of the 20th century, action was taken to eliminate inequalities between men and women in education, employment, social rights and so forth. Important elements contributing to these progressive efforts are: (1) industrialization (2) the spread of education (3) the weakening of the caste system (4) social movements initiated by some enlightened leaders (5) the growth of women’s organisations and (6) the enactment of social legislation etc. However, despite these efforts to raise the status of women under law and through other means, in practice, they were being treated as second rate citizens and the commercial sexual exploitation of women continued. Women largely remained objects of men’s
pleasure and pastime, with no say in matters concerning either society or themselves, except for the odd exceptions.

With the dawn of Independence, the resultant partition and the bloody migration, a large destitute population came to India from Pakistan. Women without any support became easy targets for commercial sexual exploitation, left as they were with no other means of livelihood. During the years that followed, rapid industrialization, poverty covertly aggravated the evil and, along with urbanization, drew a large number of women into prostitution. The wide sex disparities in the big cities were due to the male migrant workers who had to leave their families behind in the villages, mainly for economic reasons, and became customers for the prostitutes in the cities. Summarily, it may be observed that though sex trade existed in the prevedic age styled as promiscuity, it was followed later on by semi-promiscuity, and that when the institution of marriage became legalized and sanctified, sex trade became clearly demarcated. Since then, sex trade has been in existence in one commercial form or the other.

Through the passage of time and crucial circumstantial changes, prostitution as a profession turned into commercial sexual exploitation and has emerged as a global sex trade. Efforts were made to legalize the sex trade by naming it as “Sex Work” in the hope of turning prostitution into an institution in society and giving full legal rights to prostitutes by extending the provision of registration, licensing and compulsory medical check-ups. People who supported prostitution in society argued that prostitution was no longer present in its original shape, but had taken on the shape of a profession and, therefore, must be considered as a profession. As a result, the business of prostitution could not remain merely a matter between the prostitute and her paramour and thus, the middlemen gradually appeared on the scene to exploit these women. In addition to the sexual exploitation and the exploiter-paramour, called Dallal, there were brokers, pimps or middlemen and sex traffickers appearing on the scene to exploit the lives of these women.
Definitions for Prostitution:

The Suppression of the Immoral Traffic Act 1956 (SITA), amended to The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) 1986, was passed following the ratification of the International Convention on the Suppression of Immoral Traffic and Exploitation of Prostitution of Others in 1950 by India. According to the SITA, prostitution is defined as the act of a female offering her body for promiscuous sexual intercourse for returns either in money or in kind. In 1986, the act was revised and became the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act (PITA) and the definition of prostitution was changed to “any person” offering sexual service. Other sources define prostitution as follows:

1. “A woman who sells her sexual favor indiscriminately to her clients (customers) for the sake of money with no psychic involvement”. And as “an inevitable option accepting to have sex with many for money or other considerations using one’s own body as capital”.

2. Indian Cr. P.C. (Criminal Procedure Code) puts sex trade under the Immoral Traffic Act. The act defines a sex worker as “a person who intentionally sells his/her body to anybody for any consideration”.

3. Section 2(f) of ITPA defines prostitution as the sexual exploitation or abuse of persons for commercial purpose, & the expression ‘prostitute’ shall be construed accordingly.

4. Commercial sexual exploitation is using a woman for sexual satisfaction by hiring her body, by a man with / without her consent.

5. A prostitute is one who has accepted to have sex with many for money or other considerations using her own body as capital.

Thus, if a person is sexually exploited or abused and a second person gains from the exploitations/abuse commercially, then the first person is considered prostituted. The Section does not limit the place of prostitution to a brothel alone.

In Summary –

• Prostitution has been very clearly defined as sexual exploitation in the Indian law.

• It can also be abuse of a person for commercial purpose, the consent of the victim is irrelevant to her/his exploitation according to ITPA.
• The definition very clearly focuses the crime on the abuser/exploiter and not on the victims.
• There is no blame or stigma attached to the prostituted person under such definitions.

**Different Forms of Prostitution:**

Today, prostitution occurs in different forms in our society. In the present scenario, the sex trade can informally be classified into three classes: Class – I, Class – II and Class-III. This classification is based on the earnings and social standards of involved women and their exploiter-paramour. Physical outlook, age, socio-economic background and health act as criteria for Class – I & II women and for Class – III category the criteria is women who are commercially sexually exploited victims and continue such a life just for their daily bread and nothing else. Most of these women reach this third stage after they are found incompetent to meet the needs of the customers of Class I and II prostitutes. Dictated by the needs of the trade and the increasing number of girls who are commercially sexually exploited every day and pushed into the sex trade, the older ones are forced to form the Class-III prostitution i.e., street prostitution.

Prostitution today occurs in various settings. Some of the different types are:

1. Street prostitution in which the sex buyers solicit women and girls at street corners or walking alongside a street.
2. Prostitution occurs in some massage parlours and in some barber shops that are fronts for sexual activities/exploitation.
3. Prostitution is more in the open, solicitation occurs at bars, even open-air bars. Thailand is famous worldwide for these establishments.
4. Brothels are establishments specifically dedicated to prostitution.
5. In escort or out-call prostitution, the act takes place in the buyer’s place of residence or, more commonly, in a hotel room. While escort agencies never claim to practice sexual activities, no escort service offers only social companionship. Even where this prostitution is legal, the euphemistic term “escort service” is common. Rarely, an escort may work independently of an agency and place advertisements on the internet or in newspapers and magazines, communicating with buyers of prostitution directly and setting up appointments on his/her own.
6. In sex tourism, travelers from rich countries travel to poorer countries, such as Thailand, India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia in search of prostitution and sexual exploitation, where their currency can buy more. Other popular sex tourism destinations are Cuba, Costa Rica and former Eastern Block countries.

**Pimping:** Pimping is one way in which young women and girls are recruited into prostitution. A pimp is a person who lives off the proceeds of one to several prostitutes, will provide financial and emotional support, acting as a boyfriend/friend, but will eventually ask the young woman to perform sex acts for money. The relationship is volatile and dangerous to the young women or girl. Pimps will make business contacts for the prostitutes, acting as her guide, friend or philosopher, but will take her earnings for himself. Female prostitutes, especially street prostitutes, may be subject to violence when under the control of a pimp.

Pimps and traffickers exploit the socio-economic, cultural and personal contexts to attract, coerce, intimidate or abduct women and girls for trafficking. They do so through systematic and repetitive infliction of psychological trauma by employing techniques of dis-empowerment, inducing fear by various means, threatening family and others, and convincing the victim that they are omnipotent and thus, they effectively destroy the victim’s sense of autonomy.

**Trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation:**

Trafficking is the worst form of crime against women. After illegal trafficking in drugs and weapon, human trafficking is the third largest international money making crime. Income generated by trafficking is comparable to the money generated through trafficking in arms and drugs. It is not confined only to flesh trade in brothels, but also includes the selling and reselling of women through fake marriages and the abuse of women through the lure of jobs or a better living. This illegal trade yields a margin of about 90%, the highest return from all forms of trade/business. The International Organization for Migration estimates that the global trafficking industry generates anywhere from US $ 8-10 billion every year. Unlike other trades, trafficking does not
require a large investment or long gestation period for assured return. Instead, it ensures quick gains without involving too many employees.

 Trafficking is also an organised crime involving several dramatic personae who are directly or indirectly linked to its various processes. The crime of trafficking manifests itself through the following: (i) displacement of the trafficked person from her/his community, at least for a short period, (ii) exploitation that could be physical, sexual, emotional, etc., (iii) commodification of the trafficked person who is sold, purchased or bartered like any non-living object, and (iv) the traffickers and other vested interests benefit, usually monetarily, from the exploitation of the trafficked person. The underlying feature of trafficking in women and children is the exploitation of their vulnerable situation.

 The UN Protocol stresses to Prevent and Punish Trafficking in Person, especially women and children. India is a signatory to the Protocol, Article 3 of which states:

 a. “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments, or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

 Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

 b. The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

 c. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set for the in subparagraph (a) of this article

 d. “Child” shall mean any person less than eighteen years of age.
In recognizing the wide and inclusive scope of the definition of trafficking, as well as the close relationship between prostitution and sex trafficking, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Aspects of the Victims of Trafficking in Person, especially women and children has found that: “Prostitution as practiced in the world usually satisfies the elements of trafficking. It is rare that one finds a case in which the path to prostitution and/or a person’s experiences within prostitution does not involve, at the very least, an abuse of power and/or an abuse of vulnerability. Power and vulnerability in this context must be understood to include power disparities based on gender, race, ethnicity and poverty. Put simply, the road to prostitution and the life within ‘the life’ is rarely one marked by empowerment or adequate options”.

Based on the definition, human trafficking can be said as below:

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Sex trafficking is driven by a demand for the bodies of women and children in the sex industry, fuelled by a supply of women who are denied equal rights and opportunities for education and economic advancement and perpetuated by traffickers who are able to exploit human misfortunes with near impunity.

Usually the recruitment places of trafficking for prostitution are cinema halls, bus stops, railway stations, airports, streets, cafes, restaurants, beauty contests and beauty parlours, state and national highways, and quarry and construction work sites. Targeted women are those who are facing rough times or those are in difficult periods, either before the harvesting season or during a drought. The usual methods adopted for recruitment by the traffickers are violence (drugging, kidnapping), fake job offers, false marriage, etc.
Profile of Traffickers:
Trafficickers in society are in disguise, they are intermediaries who often enter the business with links to the world of commercial sexual exploitation. Substantial numbers of them are those who have themselves been victims of commercial sexual exploitation or brokers or pimps or brothel owners. Quite often, trafficickers are the primary abusers of those whom they traffic.

Trafficickers are usually young men and middle-aged women who are significantly older than the young women/children they recruit. Some are natives who have links with the villages to which the victims belong. Procurers, on an average, are reportedly substance abusers or gamblers. Many of the trafficickers are older women who are either former prostitutes or are themselves forced into prostitution and are trying to escape abuse and bondage by attaining an alternative means of income. Often, trafficickers speak several languages and play multiple roles in society.

Trafficicking networks may involve the police, doctors, teachers, advocates, visa/passport officials, railway/bus authorities and employees, taxi/auto rickshaw drivers or rickshaw pullers, financiers or investors, procurers or recruiters, organizers, document forgers, corrupt public officials or protectors, brothel operators and the owners and managers of sex establishments, escorts, guides or travel companions and crew members.

Linkages between Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution:

Trafficicking is a process in which prostitution is both, one of its causes and one of its results. Other outcomes of trafficicking are domestic servitude, child labour, organ trade and early marriage. The UN Protocol acknowledges that most trafficicking is for prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation. The Protocol also follows previous international UN human rights instruments that do not separate trafficicking and prostitution, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the abolitionist 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.
Indian laws also acknowledge the link between trafficking and prostitution by the very fact that most of the Indian laws dealing with trafficking define the purpose of trafficking as commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution, abuse or rape. Research studies also reveal that trafficked women and children were either prostituted or sexually exploited along with being forced to provide cheap labour.

**Causes and Consequences for Women in Prostitution:**

In India, prostitution is intensified by the erosion of social stability, a process through which the worth of a human being is devalued. This instability is caused by deep seated poverty and the low social status of women. While poverty is a predisposing factor, the tactics used by traffickers and other exploiters is what exacerbates the situation and acts as a trigger. Women from poor households are often coerced into prostitution by false promises of economic prosperity, marriage, employment and promises of freedom from their prevailing situation of bondage. Those that lure them away are often relatives, family people, criminal gangs, returnees from prostitution and those with power and/or a vested interest in prostitution. Coercion occurs when there is the lack of economic capacity and choice, social and economic vulnerability, bondage, aspiration for opportunity, caste and class, threats of social ostracism, and the breakdown of social capital. Clearly, poverty by itself is not a cause that drives one into prostitution; economic poverty alone does not explain why some women and children are particularly at risk. An understanding of the non-economic elements of poverty, such as lack of human and social capital and gender discrimination also contribute to number of women in prostitution. Other intensifying factors include illiteracy, child marriage, widow remarriage, hostile political environments, unsafe migration, the marginalization of certain communities or ethnic groups (castes, tribes, or minority religion), natural disasters like draught, flood etc., and human made disasters such as conflicts, wars, disability, etc. There are also the unexpected consequences of infrastructure projects (e.g., big dam projects) when planners do not consider the socio-economic impact and the subsequent vulnerability of internally displaced people. A number of secondary factors, such as relative disparities, increased commodification of women, increased demand for prostituted women and children, internal displacement, crime syndicates, efficient “supply” chain, myths about curing HIV/AIDS epidemic, and transition within countries, all create conditions for a vast number of girls being driven into prostitution. Some global
factors that drive women into prostitution are gender inequality, globalization, racism, unsafe migration, and the collapse of women’s economic stability.

A range of policies and environmental circumstances also influence the incidence of poverty and vulnerability of migrants to trafficking, as well as the demand factors for trafficked women. For example, the impacts of globalization which are both push (changes in traditional livelihoods, employment loss through economic restructuring) and pull (spread of modernization and new technologies such as TV, Internet, etc) factors, conflicts and disasters, and migration policies. Similarly, income disparities between regions/countries or job opportunities encourage migration, but do not alone explain why some poor people do not take up these opportunities.

**Gender based Socialization:** In India, female children are commonly seen as overwhelming burdens to their families. The unholy alliance between tradition (son complex) and technology has created havoc in Indian society; some families see it as more desirable to spend a few thousand rupees on pre-natal sex determination tests and sex selective abortions, than to spend hundreds of thousands of rupees on a dowry later on. Women are socialized from childhood to be submissive, servile and even obedient to men. Cultural definitions and understandings of the female associate her with the ‘inside’ or home. By contrast, men belong to the ‘outside’, where livelihoods are earned and political and economic power is exercised. Such attitudes make it very difficult for women to exercise control over their lives and make independent decisions. Traditionally, families socialize girls with the sole goal of marriage: the marriage of a daughter is perceived as a huge responsibility for a family. In addition to this is the dowry demanded by the prospective groom’s family, compensation for this burden to be taken on by them. As indicated above, many families are choosing to abort girl fetuses rather than take on the burden of marrying them and paying dowry later in life. All these factors play into the hands of traffickers, allowing them to control and exploit young women more easily.

**Caste and Tribal systems:** Another form of social exclusion is inequality rooted in the belief and enforcement of caste differentiation in tribal systems. These systems can be seen as cultural and structural social inequalities perpetuated by tradition, leaving female
members of the caste or tribal group particularly vulnerable to increasing poverty as well as prostitution.

As a result, commercial sexual exploitation in India exploits and perpetuates patriarchal attitudes and behaviours which, in turn, undermine efforts to promote gender equality and eradicate discrimination against women and children. Individual potential is lost through exploitation and abuse, not only to each survivor, but also their families and communities. The women folk have received secondary status in the society which led to commodification of women. This becomes a serious contributory factor for trafficking in women for commercial sexual exploitation. During commercial sexual exploitation, victims may be exposed to isolation, fear, sexual abuse, rape and other forms of physical and psychological abuse. Apart from this, victims of commercial sexual exploitation have often faced extreme psychological stress which, in turn, leads to trauma, depression and in some cases suicide. Emotional stress is compounded by constant fear of arrest and public stigmatizing which make the thought of returning home fearful. The enormous impact of post traumatic stress influences the capacity of a woman to care for her family or negotiate through future emotional challenges once the original harm has stopped. Victims of trafficking also face a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related diseases. Mobile populations generally face greater risks of contracting STDs as their family and community lives are disrupted.

A study reveals that the highest source areas for prostitution in Southern India are the areas that are prone to drought or other natural disasters, situated on less productive agro-climatic zones and where large numbers of families live below the poverty line i.e., those who earn low wages, are functionally landless, have poor literacy and no alternatives for lean season employment. A study reveals that one third of women and girls in commercial sexual exploitation in metropolitan cities were from drought prone areas, clearly supporting the links between powerlessness and vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation. Such conditions/situation of the community are used by the mediators/traffickers/pimps for the trafficking the girls for commercial sexual exploitation, in disguise.
Structural Economic Changes also act as a contributory factor for women being in prostitution. Commercialization of Agriculture - Macro-economic reforms have resulted in an increasing commercialization of agriculture throughout India, resulting in:

- Capital-intensive systems replacing labour intensive cropping patterns, particularly in the coastal districts
- A shift to cash crops from paddy production. As a result, many women have been forced to work as day labourers on farms where wage differentials between male and female workers are high
- An increasing demand for occupational skills, leading to an institutionalization of gender bias in agricultural and natural resource industries and leaving little opportunity for unskilled labours.

The impact of structural-economic change in the agricultural sector seems to have increased the proportion of casual workers, thereby demanding flexibility and mobility from the labour force. For women, the casualization of female labour increases vulnerability to commercial sexual exploitation.

Livelihood Loss: Livelihood loss directly affects women’s vulnerability to CSE. There has been substantial livelihood loss in the fishing, weaving, tobacco, and cotton sectors in India, which has contributed to increased susceptibility to trafficking due to increased poverty. In the fishing sector, the depletion of resources and the non-implementation of the Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1986 and Aquaculture Bill have facilitated conglomerate takeovers in the industry, forcing many men to seek wage labour on the roads and women to seek income from whatever means available.

In Kerala, the impact of WTO trade regulations and international fluctuations in market prices on rubber, coconut and coir industries has led to a deepening economic crisis. The move from paddy cultivation to cash crops and decreasing cash crop wage earnings also contributed to this situation. Women from landless and marginal farming families, most of whom struggle to make sufficient wages through cash crop labour, have been particularly at risk for trafficking.
The loss of land or pauperization is a major cause of livelihood loss. Throughout much of southern Indian, aqua-culture companies have bought small pieces of land from marginal and poor households in need, providing advances to the male heads of these households enabling them to meet immediate needs, but not sustain the livelihood of the family. Loss of land makes food security an immediate issue and often forces men and women to seek wage employment elsewhere. Source area employment and income are critical for the livelihoods of the poor and poor women in particular since land and livelihood loss lead to increased numbers of women migrating for temporary manual work, a situation which puts them at greater risk of being trafficked for prostitution.

Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have seen an increase in the number of suicides associated with the failure of crops and loss of livelihoods. This has been particularly so among middle caste families: men have turned to suicide as a way of maintaining social norms and protecting women from increased mobility and, therefore, vulnerability to trafficking. The loss of livelihood also often results in a lack of alternate sources of employment, food and income – livelihood options – for the poor. This has led to forced migration under highly variable and exploitative conditions and made many migrants increasingly vulnerable to trafficking for prostitution. Some lower caste, poor households have already accepted the use of child labour as a coping mechanism to augment family income during periods of shocks or crisis.

Insufficient or inadequate laws, poor enforcement, ineffective penalties, minimal chances of prosecution, the relatively low involvement risk, corruption and complacency, invisibility of the issue, and the failure of governments to implement policies and provide adequate services for victims all play a role in perpetuating trafficking.

Economic loss to communities and governments are enormous if considered in terms of lost returns on human or social capital investments. The cost of countering criminal commercial sexual exploitation activities puts an additional strain on already limited government resources for law enforcement.
Current Situation of the field:

Even after 61 years of independence and 26 years of uninterrupted democratic rule in India, there is hardly any scope for complacency regarding an amelioration of the status of women. However, there are a few indicators that point towards slow but steady progress in certain areas, such as the increase in literacy rates and the sex ratio. The percentage of employed women has increased from 11.2 (1991) to 18.1 (2001). However, upon a careful analysis, some obvious concerns arise. For example, in Kolkata, as per the 2001 census, the ratio of males to females among children from 0 to 6 years was 1000:923. This figure was much lower than the national average and lower than the ratio projected in the 1991 census. This decrease may be attributed to an increase in sex determination tests and female feticide. Similarly, a careful observation reveals that the projected increase in the employment of women was in the marginal sector only and not in the mainstream.

Most women in India receive little or no acknowledgement of their work because they are engaged in domestic labour without wages, even though these unrecognized contributions ensure the survival of a poor family. Perhaps it is the non-recognition of women’s financial contributions that is the limiting factor in their participation in the process of decision-making. Other factors contributing for women in commercial sexual exploitation could be growing urbanization which leads to the migration of the population to neighbouring areas in search of employment. In addition, both the variety and rate of crimes against women have also been steadily increasing; there is a positive correlation between the growth in incidence of crimes and the population of the country. The types of crimes reported during the last decade are murder, rape, kidnapping and abduction of women and girls, dacoity, cheating, dowry death, molestation, sexual harassment, cruelty by husband and relatives, torture, child marriage, etc. Out of these series of crimes, sexual harassment has become the manifestation of the worst form of violence against women as well as a global phenomenon.

Every day, about 200 girls and women in India enter prostitution, 80% of them against their will. Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are the high-supply zones for women in prostitution. Belgaum, Bijapur, and Kolhapur are
some common districts from which women migrate to cities either through an organized trafficking network, or due to socioeconomic forces.

About 30 percent of the total population of prostituted women is below the age of 20 and a majority of them are illiterate. Families of prostitutes are mostly unemployed or engaged in unskilled labour (74%) and the prostitutes generally have one or two children.

**Present condition of Commercially Sexually Exploited Women:**

The condition of sex workers in India is appalling. They are caught in the chain of pimps, gundas and other antisocial elements in the society with the police on the other side. Classified as criminals, these women find it difficult to raise their voices against basic human rights violation. Victims of human trafficking and sex work are paying a horrible price; psychological and physical harm, including disease and stunted growth, often have permanent effects. In many cases, the exploitation of trafficking victims is progressive: a child trafficked into one form of labour may be passed on to and abused by another form of labour. It is a brutal reality of the modern-day slave trade that its victims are frequently bought and sold many times, initially by family members. Victims forced into sex slavery are often subdued with drugs and subjected to extreme violence; they undergo physical and emotional damage from violent sexual activity, forced substance abuse, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, food deprivation and psychological torture. Some victims suffer permanent damage to their reproductive organs and many victims die as a result of all of these atrocities. When a victim is trafficked to a location where he or she cannot speak or understand the language, the psychological damage caused by isolation and domination by traffickers is further compounded.

Often, the various physical and mental health consequences of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation faced by Commercially Sexually Exploited Women include injuries from rape and sexual assault, injuries from physical assault (beatings, burning from cigarette butts), repeated abortions, drug and/or alcohol dependency, jaundice, HIV/AIDS, skin diseases, depression, psycho-social trauma, suicide attempts, TB, STDs, malnourishment, insomnia, etc. Women are often in debt bondage because
money is withheld from the victims as payback for the purchase price. They have little money for sustenance and most trafficked women live off the tips they receive from customers which leads to the victims’ dependence on traffickers for money, food, clothes and other necessities. The resulting emotional and physical manipulation ensures that the traffickers’ activities are kept secret, allowing them to maintain control over the victim. Rescued trafficked women fear reprisals by the traffickers to whom they are indebted.

Fundamental rights of commercially sexually exploited women are violated and most of them are trafficked in different disguises. The social, physical, psychological and moral consequences of commercially sexually exploited women are serious, can last a lifetime, and are many times life threatening.

Many of these sex workers and their children are on the street and, thus these children are also subjected to all the brutalities suffered by their mothers. Most women who work as prostitutes support not only themselves, although barely, but also their dependents, pimps, police, family, etc., with the money they earn. They are in utterly helpless conditions, caught up in the stronghold of organized criminal networks with enormous economic turnover involving a variety of operators starting from pimps, house owners, brothel keepers, taxi drivers, hotel managements, lawyers, parlours and the local police.

In many circumstances, the commercially sexually exploited women are forced to entertain 4 – 24 clients a day. To help them more easily cope up with the situation, the women often turn to sedatives. During their monthly periods and even during pregnancy, when a woman needs to be relaxed, the delicate physical state of commercially sexually exploited women is ignored and she is still expected to entertain the usual number of clients

Various research studies and media reports have recently shown that women have become more subject to violence and crime with trafficking manifesting itself as the worst form of violence against women.

Rozario (1998) reports that up to 18 forms of violence are faced by women trafficked for prostitution. They may be starved, locked up in a dark room, beaten, burnt with cigarette
butts, bound, forced to drink, strangled, stabbed or killed for not trading their bodies. The women may face threats of torture and physical abuse (even their families may not be spared), and they may be murdered if they do not co-operate. Attempts are made to create a dependency on drugs and alcohol among the victims and most ‘…children relent within seven to ten days under psychological pressure’ (Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work 2003).

When violence against women is considered, prostitution is often disregarded. However, a consideration of the dire health consequences of prostitution and its influence on society demonstrates that prostitution not only gravely impairs women’s mental and physical health, but also firmly belongs in the category of violence against women; it is the violence against women and a violation of human rights.

The physical act of sex itself is harmful to women in prostitution, among whom the rate of STDs (including HIV/AIDS, chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, human papilloma virus, and syphilis) is alarmingly high, with only 15% of the women in the field avoiding such diseases.

The emotional health consequences of prostitution include severe trauma, stress, depression, anxiety, self-medication through alcohol and drug abuse; and eating disorders. Almost all the women in sex work categorized themselves as chemically-addicted. Crack, cocaine and alcohol were used most frequently. Ultimately, women in prostitution are also at special risk for self-mutilation, suicide and homicide. 46% of the women in a Minneapolis/St. Paul study had attempted suicide and 19% had tried to harm themselves physically in other ways.

Apart from all these, commercial sexual exploitation is an untouchable activity in society. Mainstreaming victims of trafficking denotes the ultimate social welfare of the commercially sexually exploited women. In any hierarchy of needs, after the basic needs have been satisfied, the next most important is the need for security. The security in this situation may be social acceptance which leads to the psychological security of the commercially sexually exploited women’s and allows them to feel comfortable with social acceptance.
Need for Mainstreaming:

Gender asymmetry is a universal phenomenon. This gender inequality is reflected in the famous formulation of the U.N. Decade for women: ‘While women account for half of the world’s population, perform two thirds of its work, receive one-tenth of the world’s income and own less than one hundredth of the world’s property’. According to the Human Development Report 1995, “Poverty has a women’s face. Of 1.3 billion people in poverty, 70% are women”. Such shocking statistics show the conditions of the women and the importance of their roles in the development of the nation. It is in the best interest of the nation to empower its women.

India is a country strongly based on social norms, traditions and customs. None in society believe in commercial prostitution or accept it directly as an institution. Generally, the commercially sexually exploited women are treated by Indian society as though they are untouchables. Though in early times, the prostitutes were given a prominent place in society, the present situation is not the same. Today, prostitutes often adopt an attitude of shame in regards to their work. Since there is a strong non-acceptance of commercial sex work and as it has taken on a violent form, most of the time commercially sexually exploited women try to keep their identities a secret, to the extent, even their neighbours and relatives would not have been exposed to this secret identity.

The women in sex trade are the most oppressed group and have been kept far from the mainstream people. All the rules and laws are against to these women and they neither have the power nor the necessary means to change their lifestyles or rise in society. Because women in the flesh trade are not in the position to enjoy basic human and civil rights, they are frequently the targets of inhuman violence. Thus, there exists a strong need to empower these women in order that they may lead a simple human life to which they are entitled. Today, with the contribution of religious institutions, people are aware of the conditions and impacts of sex work and are willing to discourage the practice.
In this context, the word ‘mainstreaming’ communicates both organizing an alternative earning/caring/curing mechanism (an institutional or a non-institutional activity) for the disturbed life style of the needy, as well as focusing on them to bring them back to a regular social life where they are accepted by the people around as a member of society without biases or with less discrimination. Although it is challenging, it is not impossible. The mainstreaming of commercially sexually exploited women through institutional rehabilitation activities would not only provide them with alternative means for earning a living, but also would give them the confidence to face reality and lead a guilt free life.

Once they start living in the community independently (without the direct support of the NGOs by either getting a job, through marriage or reintegration with the family with complete acceptance) and start feeling confident about social and psychological security, the need of the sexually exploited women is fulfilled. For any level of social life, this type of confidence is very essential.

Mainstreaming essentially involves a transition process that challenges an organization’s capacity to adjust and improve its performance. Essential factors for a sustained and effective process include: ongoing commitment from leadership and involvement of all levels, adequate technical support to facilitate the process and develop capacity, on-going learning, and mobilization of additional resources, including funding. Using these factors as a means of assessment, the present study intends to examine the efforts put forth by NGOs to mainstream the commercially sexually exploited women.

**Government Intervention:**

Welfare of the citizens is the prime responsibility of the government of any country. India has been an independent democratic country for 51 years and cannot be a silent spectator of prostitution as it not only involves the welfare of its people, especially women and children, but also encourages the youth to earn quick money through immoral means and affects the members of society at large with various diseases. Hence, various initiatives were enacted by the government of India to eliminate, eradicate and prohibit this heinous practice. A Central Advisory Committee has been set up to deal with the problem of children of the commercial sexual exploitation as a preventive measure. This committee has made several recommendations that have been forwarded to the concerned
central ministries and administrations in the states and the Union Territories in an effort to take appropriate action. As directed by the Supreme Court, the Committee on Prostitution, Child Prostitutes and Children of Prostitutes, headed by the Secretary, DWCD, made an in-depth study of the problems of trafficking, commercially exploited women and children, and of the children of trafficked victims in order to formulate suitable corrective/prevention schemes that are consistent with the directions given by the Supreme Court.

As a result, the Committee on Prostitution, Child Prostitution and Children of Prostitutes drew up a National Plan of Action (NPA) to combat the trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of women and children, which was approved by the then Prime Minister in 1998. Besides combating trafficking, the rescue and rehabilitation of the victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation were also given priority in the NPA, in which legal and law enforcement systems were activated to strengthen the implementation of the ITPA. The DWCD issued guidelines to the states/Union Territories for the effective implementation of the NPA. A three-tier monitoring mechanism was established to oversee its implementation from the district level to the central level. At the central level was the Central Advisory Committee on Child Prostitution and at the state level was a State Advisory Committee constituted under the chairmanship of the chief secretary/additional chief secretary implements the NPA.

Protective homes have been established by the government under Section 21 of ITPA for girls/women detained under this Act and also for those who seek protection from being forced into commercial sexual exploitation. The government of India also runs an extensive network of more than 351 short stay homes (assisted by the DWCD) and juvenile homes set up under the JJ Act. In some red-light areas, the government of India has sanctioned projects for starting centers under the Integrated Child Development Service Scheme (ICDS); however, the government has still not established these protective homes.

Since the incidence of commercial sexual exploitation is also related to the low status of women in South Asia, the government is implementing various programmes to better women’s position in society. These include, (i) training-cum-income generating activities
such as NORAD, STEP, CCEVT, SEP and DWCRA to empower women economically. Forty percent reservation for women has been provided under the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), (ii) as a special measure of affirmative action, the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh has been set up to provide micro-credit for poor women in the informal sector with low transaction costs, through partner NGOs, (iii) support services such as working women’s hostels, short stay homes, crèches, family counseling centers, etc., and (iv) awareness generation programmes for women about their rights.

One approach is aimed at sensitizing the major stakeholders to the process of combating trafficking and the other is oriented towards sensitizing society in general. The major stakeholders are identified as government officials of the concerned departments, police, judiciary, social workers, medical officers, women’s commissions and media persons.

In December 2001, the government launched Swadhar, a scheme for the recovery and reintegration of victims of trafficking and women in difficult circumstances. The scheme intends to provide food, shelter, clothing, counseling, social and economic rehabilitation through education, medical and legal support, help lines, etc. The DWCD has also formulated a model grant-in-aid scheme, providing assistance to NGOs to combat trafficking in source, transit and destination areas through prevention, rescue and rehabilitation. The emphasis here is on counseling, non-formal education and vocational training.

During May 2005, Ujwala scheme was introduced by the government which is a comprehensive scheme for Prevention of Trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation. It mainly focuses on women and children who are vulnerable to trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and women and children who are victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. The scheme comprises five components such as prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation.
Ministry of Home Affairs:

In December 2002, India became a signatory to the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), which includes the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

Other Initiatives:
In Pondicherry, according to Sec. 4 of ITPA, SPOs (Special Police Officers) were appointed for different regions, with the superintendent of police of the CID having power throughout the state. The Pondicherry government took several measures to ensure the economic empowerment of women as well as for the rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked victims. The National Institute of Social Defence and the Aambagan Institute, both of which are run by the Voluntary Organization of Social Health in India, are also involved in rescue and rehabilitation efforts.

In Tamil Nadu, a general notification was issued, authorizing all inspectors as SPOs. The Anti-Vice Squad, specially established by the director general of police, was duly ratified by the state government as an exclusive wing to investigate trafficking cases. The squad busted several trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation rackets, including those functioning under the cover of so-called ‘friendship clubs’. They also initiated stringent action against traffickers and brokers. A state-level co-ordination committee, headed by the state chief secretary and comprised of district advisory committees, district collector, village-level watchdog committees, women help lines, and help booths runs protective homes, vigilance homes and after care organisations in Chennai, Salem, Coimbatore, Trichy, Madurai and Vellore, providing shelter, counseling and vocational training to commercial sexual exploitation victims. The government also runs a Crisis Intervention Centre through the Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW), Chennai, for dealing with child abuse and neglect. A halfway home providing shelter and vocational training for girls and women living in vulnerable situations is located in Ullundurpet. An after care organization is being run in Vellore for the discharged residents of children’s homes who need further rehabilitation.
The Andhra Pradesh government introduced a specific policy for combating the trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, on 31 January, 2003. Specific steps were laid down for prevention, rescue, legal reforms, rehabilitation, economic empowerment, health care, education and anti-trafficking measures.

In April 2003, an Anti-Trafficking Campaign was launched by the Department of Women Development and Child Welfare (WD&CW), Government of Andhra Pradesh. The campaign, which was carried out at the district level in the state, was organised under the leadership of district collectors, with active involvement of local elected representatives, educational institutions, NGOs, local bodies, self-help groups and adolescent girls. The campaign was marked by rallies and sensitization workshops and was successful in mobilizing public opinion against trafficking and creating awareness about the need for the economic empowerment and rehabilitation of victims. Adolescent girls were sensitized and given information about who should be contacted in times of need.

The Andhra Pradesh government initiated the process of setting up a ‘Swadhar’ shelter home at Hyderabad and allocated land free of cost and agreed to share the cost of the construction of the building; the government of India sanctioned the required funds. The Women Development & Child Welfare Department began steps to set up ‘Temporary Shelter Homes’ in six regions of the state. In February 2004, the Andhra Pradesh government informed the High Court of Delhi of its willingness to provide video conferencing facilities for the trial of traffickers who had trafficked girls from Andhra Pradesh to Delhi so that the victims would not need to travel to Delhi courts to provide evidence and testimony. This was a landmark initiative in the best interests of the rescued victims. The government also constituted a relief fund for the victims of commercial sexual exploitation and special rehabilitation measures were initiated for Devadasi, which included an economic support package. The government’s initiatives towards developing an effective working partnership between governmental systems and NGOs resulted in a remarkable improvement in the counter-trafficking situation.

In Karnataka, the state advisory committee was activated in 1993. A Devadasi Rehabilitation Scheme was set up, and self-help groups of Devadasi were also formed. In districts where the Devadasi system was prevalent, residential schools were set up to
admit the children of Devadasi and others. The special rehabilitation package included vocational training as well as social and moral education; NGOs like Odanadi Seva Samsthe have been given facilities for their anti-trafficking activities to take place.

The governments of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh have taken steps to involve the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI) in the prevention of trafficking. The Tamil Nadu example, of setting up ‘village defense committees’ and empowering them with awareness and the mandate to address trafficking, has been widely appreciated. PRIs can have a tremendous impact on the issues of missing children and on dealing with the vulnerability of women and children, thereby preventing trafficking. It is, therefore, essential that government agencies and NGOs recognize their potential and become more involved in anti-trafficking activities.

The Government services in general implementation:

1. Protective homes established by the government under section 21 of the ITPA, provide custodial care, education, vocational training, etc. Presently, the number of such protective home is estimated to be about 80.
2. Short Stay Homes assisted by the DWCD.
3. The CSWB provided financial assistance to NGOs to run a Development and Care Centre for the children of victims of prostitution. These centres, situated in identified red light areas, are facilities of crèche and day-care where educational support programmes, supplementary nutrition, health care, counselling, excursions, etc., have been provided.
4. Ministry of Welfare provided financial assistance to NGOs for the rehabilitation of children of prostitutes.
5. Voluntary agencies undertaking independent programmes in the care and rehabilitation of victims of commercial sexual exploitation, including minors, and the advocacy of their problems.
6. Projects for rehabilitation of Devadasis, Jogins, women victims, etc. are also taken up under various schemes for training and development of women like Support for Training and Employment Programme (STEP) (setting up of Training/ Employment/ production Units -NORAD), and by Janshikshan Sansthans assisted by the Central Government.
7. Since the incidence of prostitution is also related to the low status of women in society, the government is implementing various programmes aimed at: (a) training cum income generating activities (b) supportive services such as working women’s hostels, short stay homes, crèches, family counseling centers, etc., and (c) Awareness generation programmes for women and the dissemination of information regarding their rights.

**Interventions of NGOs:**

An organisation is a group of individuals working together co-operatively, under authority, to achieve goals and objectives that mutually benefit the participants and the organisation. When two or more persons work together voluntarily for social welfare, they require a defined system through which they can relate to each other and co-ordinate their efforts to meet the demands of the organisation. These types of organisations of people are called voluntary organisations.

The origin of voluntary organisations is very old in the history of the country. Individuals as well as groups have been offering their services with a philanthropic spirit, but the organisations that work with a group approach, rather than an individual approach, are considered as voluntary agencies. The term voluntarism is derived from the Latin word “Voluntas’, which means ‘will’ or ‘freedom’. The will assumes various forms of impulses, passions, appetites or desires. The assumption of voluntarism in an Indian context is based on the following hymn of social welfare. It says –

“may all humanity be happy
may all be without disease
May all witness auspicious sights
May none have to undergo suffering”

The term “volunteer” is normally used to denote someone who offers unpaid services to a good cause. The sociological concept of “Voluntary Association” applies to NGOs in developing countries. In general, any type of services oriented or production-related organisations are clearly non-governmental. Voluntarism, in association, is a key organisational characteristic of all NGOs. By origin, activity, and content, the NGOs have been categorized as ‘developmental’, ‘environmental’, ‘philanthropic’, ‘vocational
training’, ‘research’, ‘advocacy’, or ‘emergency aid’. Deliberate social change may be greatly facilitated by community organisations. In the performance of many services and control functions, governments cannot deal effectively with unorganized individuals. Thus, it is important that the community be organised so that it can effectively relate to the administrative institutions performing services associated with nation-building and development programmes. This voluntary social action has become imperative in the process of obtaining developmental goals.

In India, NGOs formed by individuals, communities, and organizations have existed since ancient times. India has developed a unique tradition of social work through its built-in system of providing security to one another through the joint family system, kinship, and other supporting social structures. The role of the state has varied in the past, ranging from indifference to benevolent interest, depending upon the interest of individual rulers. Community support, rather than state benevolence, was the mainstay of voluntary agencies throughout the centuries preceding independence. Whether the case was an individual in distress or an emergency caused by a famine or flood, the volunteer agencies were the first to initiate social services.

Voluntarism played a significant role in ancient and medieval India. Even in Mughal periods, a lot of voluntary efforts in different areas were made, although in those days, such areas were confined by religious philosophy. During the British period, many philanthropists and charity organisations established agencies to provide welfare service to the poor, orphaned, sick, suppressed, handicapped etc. Working for these types of people in a collective way is quite traditional. According to the Encyclopedia of Special Science, promotion of voluntary action is a time-honored tradition of all democratic societies that value citizen participation. It also defined a voluntary association as an unincorporated group of persons organized for some common purpose. Voluntary associations may be established for profit or for social, charitable, or other non-commercial ends. In the post-independence period, the government became committed to promoting social welfare. Planning was adopted as the mechanism to explore the socio-economic resources. In such a scheme of planning, expectation was to organize the people to safeguard their own interests. But as India is a big country, government efforts alone were felt insufficient to meet these social needs of its large population.
There were always some missing links found in the long chain of community reconstruction. Hence, involvement of voluntary organizations that are in touch with grassroots realities became not only a welcoming factor, but essential and desirable. The Voluntary agencies started representing the organized expression of public opinion and social action. The five year plans have been giving special incentives to the voluntary agencies. In the fields of social welfare, they are playing a significant role in the promotion of social welfare, the creation of awareness among people about the various measures to prevent sickness, and the provision of welfare for the victims of different types of disease.

Since the beginning of the First Plan there has been a co-operative venture between the State and NGOs. The Planners in India have emphasized all along the role of voluntary agencies and have recognized the services rendered by them. The First Plan said: “A major responsibility for organizing activities in different fields of social welfare like the welfare of the women and children, social education, community organization etc., falls naturally on NGOs. These agencies have long been working in their own humble way and without adequate aid for the achievement of their objectives with their own leadership, organization and resources. Public Cooperation through Voluntary Social Service Organizations is capable of yielding valuable results in channeling private efforts for the promotion of social welfare.”

The growth of NGOs in the developing world has been the most remarkable feature in recent years. NGOs are present in both developed and developing countries, and have been involved in mobilizing support for the specific, basic need goals. The main focus of NGOs is to work according to the needs of the people due to the governments’ inability to reach a large number of people, especially in a developing country like India. Voluntary organisations have become the eyes and ears of the beneficiaries of the weaker section of the society who have been left out of mainstream development benefits. This work is significant in emphasizing the independent role to be played in the development of the country. No doubt many NGOs are of different types and with different nomenclatures.
NGO’s generally tend to have a more flexible and adaptive approach in contrast to the typical bureaucratic model, which is framed with strict rules and regulations. The decision making is as close to the ground as possible and the operational autonomy given to employees allows for innovation and response to the external environment with flexibility. The recruitment, training, and motivational aspects and systems of rewards and controls are given a special importance. These, in turn, result in a good worker-client relationship, facilitating the delivery of high quality services. Continuous monitoring of performance, setting up self-appraisal, and evaluation of performance enables identification and rectification of weaknesses. This approach also provides scope for mid-term corrections. In contrast, this feature is absent in government departments. The most important aspect of management practice adopted by NGOs is to ensure a low-cost delivery system to key administrative and operational costs, a practice which is quite contrary to the government programmes where a large portion of the budget goes towards cost-intensive buildings and other facilities.

There are two types of organisations: Formal and Informal (Koontz & Donnel, 1982). The formal organisation pertains to the structure of roles in an enterprise which clearly indicate the degree of delegation of authority, the span of control, supervision, specialization and the communication channels. An informal organisation, on the other hand, grows out of interpersonal relationships. Here, the members do not have any conscious purpose; rather, the relationship may contribute to collective results.

Formal organisations can be further categorized as:

- Curative Organisations
- Rehabilitative Organisations
- Preventive Organisations
- Developmental Organisations

The role of NGOs in different fields of social work has evoked great interest in recent years among planners, administrators, political leaders, industrial or trading corporate companies, etc. and this interest has created different type of voluntary organisations.

Recognizing the role of voluntary organizations, the planners of our country, after independence, introduced many projects with the aim of initiating community
participation. The Community Development programme, initiated on October 2, 1952, was the first in this field and represented a new step in the first five year plan in the area of social welfare.

We can observe the NGOs fulfilling one or more of four broad functions:
1. Providing services to people or undertaking other activities for a wider benefit.
2. Serving as a channel for self-help or shared help among people who have a common experience, problem or interest.
3. Campaigning to change the circumstances that cause a social problem.
4. Raising money so that some one else can do or change something.

Generally, NGOs are regulated under the Societies Regulation Act (1980), the Indian Trust Act (1882), the Cooperative Societies Act (1904), or the Joint Stock Companies Act (1959) depending on the nature and scope of its activities, to give it a legal status. An NGO also has definite aims, objectives, and programmes for the fulfillment and achievement of its purposes and possess a proper administrative structure and a duly constituted management and executive committee. It is an organisation initiated and governed by its own members on democratic principles, without any external control. It raises funds for its activities partly from the exchequer in the form of grants-in-aid and partly in the form of contributions or subscriptions from the members of the local community and/or the beneficiaries of the programmes.

The Roles of NGOs in the community are:
1. Upholding the national character of the programme through a non-sectarian, non-political approach to keep it above political party lines or community and religious biases.
2. Participating in the framing of government policies and programmes and acting as a pressure group when necessary.
3. Complementing and supplementing government programmes and setting standards for them to emulate.
4. Undertaking many types of sensitive activities which the government does not, or will not take up, at least for the time being (eg. sex education, programmes of family life)
5. Carrying out experimental projects and innovations where valuable lessons may be learned, but which run a risk of failure the government may not be in a position to take.

6. Working out different ways of providing education and services to help the programmes move faster and reach greater numbers.

7. Exemplifying community action and also being the catalysts to extend it to the grassroots level.

8. Bringing to bear a more personalized, flexible and sensitive approach which also safeguards human rights.

**Government contribution to NGOs:**

1. To contact, inform, and enthuse as many agencies as possible concerning the promotion of welfare, as well as developmental and environmental activities for all sections of society.

2. To formulate prototype programmes of varying kinds and offer them as examples of what agencies can undertake.

3. To help agencies to pool resources and obtain technical aid.

4. To arrange for counseling and the exchange of information and experience and to get feedback on a counting basis.

5. To make suitable arrangements for the training of personnel and for preparing projects, budgeting, recording, monitoring and evaluation.

6. To help NGOs in sensitizing personnel and bringing emotional fabric, solidarity, and harmony.

Unlike government organisations which must operate within a rigid periphery and whose work is restrictive in nature, NGOs operate from a source of desire and inclination towards their work which allows them to become close with those they are helping and play a substantial role in assisting them.

The NGOs, since they are not part of the government machinery, can undertake and execute the social and welfare agenda of the government in a more effective manner because of their commitment and dedication to a particular cause and also because of their personal and specialized out-reach. Those NGOs which are specially associated
with combating trafficking in women and children and sex work have much more responsibility and focused dedication and are more service-oriented to the target groups than any other general NGOs, because the former have to interact directly with persons affected with STDs, HIV/AIDS.

The following includes the various responsibilities of the NGOs involved in this particular field:

1. Dedicating themselves to the cause of social service with non-profit motive.
2. Being compassionate and stepping into the shoes of the victims of sex work in order to understand the difficulties of the victims and treat them with empathy.
3. Fundraising and raising awareness through advertisement and publicity.
4. Keeping the action simple and transparent.
5. Maintaining rapport with government departments to ensure the smooth functioning of projects and the education and training of the children of the victims.
6. Coordinating with police and monitoring the progress of the cases.
7. Coordinating with the medical authorities.
8. Organising social support and practical assistance from the society.
9. Conducting workshops and seminars to raise awareness of the issue among various segments of the society.
10. Working towards increased political intervention at national, regional and international levels and organising grassroots level efforts with women activists.

Throughout the world, the NGOs working for the mainstreaming of prostitutes are very small in number, as is the case in India. Only 15% of the total NGOs in the nation work with the issues related to women. Out of those 15%, the number of NGOs working for mainstreaming of commercially sexually exploited women is too small. The reasons for such small numbers may be various; it may be social, political, economic, or cultural. With all these problems in south India, a good number of NGOs are showing interest in implementing programmes for mainstreaming. While some NGOs are working very hard for mainstreaming, others are just ‘trying their best to rehabilitate them’. In this deep or surface level journey, the areas of intervention are:
1. **Rescue**: It means to safeguard the victims from the exploitative situation and brings them out to a safer place where their human rights are protected and their dignity is felt and expressed. The important issues to be focused on while rescuing the victims are (a) conformity with the law (b) protected identity (c) services where safety of the victims will be protected (d) recovery of personal belongings. The rescue activities are usually carried out by NGOs in collaboration with law enforcement agencies and are in the forms of raids on brothels or similar situations where rescue is always a challenge.

2. **Rehabilitation**: After the survivor/victims of commercial sexual exploitation have been rescued, they are faced with a new set of challenges including the returning to their places of origin which is difficult, if not impossible in most of the cases. Social stigma from their families and communities is enormous and most of the survivors choose to leave. In such cases they are left with no choices for alternative livelihood. The initiatives taken to help the victims to settle down socially, economically, psychological and physically is known as rehabilitation intervention.

3. **Reintegration/Repatriation**: The return of the victim to the family, but not without adequate assessment and ensuring social acceptance and family support, is known as reintegration. Repatriation is similar to reintegration, but with one difference: while reintegration takes place within the border, repatriation takes place across the border. The organisation will ensure that repatriation is carried out depending on how safe and nurturing the family environment is for the victims. If and when the victim chooses to return to an abusive family situation, the organisation would need to intervene and keep the victim in the organisation.

4. **Developmental activities**: Building a positive self-image and confidence, developing the ability to think critically, fostering group cohesion for decision and action, ensuring active and equal participation in the process of social change, etc., are the major focus of development activities of commercially sexually exploited women after rescue. These activities also focus on making the women assertive and helping them to frame associations in which they will be the ultimate authority. Though a part of rehabilitation process, developmental activities offer strength to the exploited women to face the dual faceted society.
5. **Prosecution:** The best method of tackling the problem of trafficking is the integration of prevention and prosecution. Prosecution includes several tasks such as the identification of the traffickers, charging them, confiscating the illegal assets created out of trafficking, making the traffickers compensate for the damages and ensuring that they do not cause any further harm.

6. **Follow up activities:** Reintegration/repatriation, facilitated by the city/town/state/country of residence, involves inducting the victim into a structured follow-up programme which ensures (a) protection against re-trafficking and against commercial sexual exploitation, (b) protection against stigma and discrimination, (c) protection against any other exploitation, (d) optional link with a variety of professional support systems, (e) confidentiality, (f) reorientation, (g) restoration of rights over parental, ancestral and community property and entitlements. During the initial period, periodic follow-up meetings are required and thereafter whenever necessary, to ensure that the victim receives adequate support and does not get re-trafficked.

7. **Prevention:** A Prevention programme is initiated to “prevent” the cycle of trafficking from ever beginning. Community based poverty alleviation programmes; increasing livelihood options, increasing the income of women, forming women’s forums, etc., can play an important role in preventing commercial sexual exploitation. Apart from this, educating the community to be alert about the issue also contributes to prevention; the NGOs have different kinds of activities to approach the community in this regard.

8. **Advocacy:** Advocacy is an exclusive and mutual representation of a client or a cause in a forum in an attempt to systematically influence decision-making in an unjust or unresponsive system. It intends social change, securing social justice. The field practitioners will have more exposure in this regard than the policy makers will, as they work at the grassroots level of the field. Therefore, providing input for the policy makers and insisting they adopt the same is the prime responsibility of the practitioners for the effective mainstreaming of commercially sexually exploited
women. So, having advocacy programme at the organisation not only helps with effective mainstreaming, but also acts as evidence of the efforts the organisation puts into the field.

9. **Research:** The very field of prostitution is no longer only a social and cultural issue, but has become an issue of economic and political importance, a change which has created a demand to examine prostitution from a scientific perspective. To fulfill this need, research activities will seek the systematic facts through an objective verifiable method in order to provide knowledge and reveal the relationship among various variables. Research will also act as opportunities to redefine the problems, suggest solutions, and making scientific conclusions.

The present study looks forward to find out about other NGO intervention programmes that safeguard individuals using alternative methods.
Conclusion:
It is a well known and well documented fact that women in Indian society occupy a disadvantaged and secondary position. In all aspects of society - sexual, economical, socio-cultural, and demographic – women do not enjoy equal status with men. The problem of violence against women in the family and society is also not new; women in our society have been the victims of humiliation, torture and exploitation from time immemorial, irrespective of the fact that they were also worshipped. Family is considered as the first agency, which provides not only emotional and material support to its members, but also serves as a basic source of personal satisfaction, socialization and social control. With the consideration of family as a private domain, even abuse, exploitation, injustice, discrimination and violence are allowed in our patriarchal system.

Women’s social and domestic lives had generally suffered a radical change and women have come to occupy a position of inferiority both at home and in society. This inferiority has been built because of a lack of knowledge, education, social systems, etc. These inferiorities stole their will and strength to protest the violence against them. The patriarchal society of India is using this condition of women to treat them as recreational bodies, just as the feudal lords sexually exploited women from weaker sections.

The role that NGOs have played is a good role in the area of women’s development. The difficulties they face in trying to bring about social change are issues that need to be discussed in detail. The present study aims at understanding the different roles played by the NGOs and the problems they are facing in handling the roles.