CHAPTER V

CASE STUDIES

INDIA

In Mumbai (Bombay), I visited Falkland Road, the elite part of the Bombay red-light district. I could see many teen-aged prostitutes standing in front of the wooden huts with iron bars on the door which gave them the appearance of cages. There are many children working as prostitutes in India and among them the incident of sexually transmitted diseases is of high rate. The problem of AIDS has also arisen.

To be precise, they are raped, because sixthly of section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 clearly underlines the fact that to have sexual intercourse by a man with a girl below sixteen years of age constitutes a rape. When her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested in fear of death or hurt (thirdly of section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860) or when she was of unsound mind, or under intoxication or when on account of administration of some drug she is unable to understand the nature or consequences of her consenting to sexual intercourse (fifthly of section 375 of the Indian Penal code, 1860), it is rape to have sexual intercourse by a man.

According to the law, 63.30 percent of girls in the red light areas were raped: 2.14 percent of the girls had their first sex act before they were 11 years old and even before they attained puberty, 10 percent had their first sex from 11 to 12 years of age; 33.58 percent from 12 to 13; 19.29 percent from 13 to 14; and 4.29 percent when they were 14 to 15.

Today the entire flesh market is demanding younger girls more and more.

"According to a current study of the approximate 9,00,000 prostitutes, some 30 percent are children, and the number of girls below 14 years engaged in prostitution is increasing at the rate of 8-10 percent per annum. This is because: (a) it is easier to force them into submission with use or threat of physical violence. (b) myths that sex with virgins is a
sure cure for impotence and STD, is very strong in parts of India. (c) The fear of HIV/AIDS has raised the demand for very young girls in the mistaken belief that they present a much lower risk of infection."

Mumbai has the world's largest and cheapest red light district covering four square miles, inhabited by 50,000 prostitutes according to the police and about 20,000 make prostitutes or Hijras (eunuchs often dressed as women). In India, there has been no census for the women in prostitution carried out nor has there been any other regular study by either the State or the national Government.

The correct or nearly correct figures of the women in prostitution are not available. The figures below are approximate according to IHO (Indian Health Organization, present-day, Peoples Health Organization [India]) surveys (1988) conducted in some big cities.

**TABLE 5.1**

**APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PROSTITUTES IN BIG CITIES IN INDIA (1988)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Approximate Number of Prostitutes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mumbai (Bombay)</td>
<td>10 millions</td>
<td>100,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kolkata (Calcutta)</td>
<td>9 millions</td>
<td>80,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>7 millions</td>
<td>40,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pune</td>
<td>3 millions</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagpur</td>
<td>1.5 millions</td>
<td>13,000</td>
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*The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi edition) dated October 11, 1988 quoted the President of Bharatiya Patita Udhar Samiti (an association for the uplight of fallen women) as stating that there are fifty lakh (a hundred thousand, usually of rupees) prostitutes added to this figure every year.

In a recently published report titled "Human Bondage" (*The Times of India*...)

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Jean D'Cunha, quoting from a report by the Central Advisory Committee on Child Prostitution, estimates the number of Indian Women in prostitution at around one lakh, 15 percent of whom are less than 15 years of age and 24.5 percent between the ages of 16 and 18.

Other research on the traffic of Nepali women and girls into India points to around 5,000 – 7,000 young Nepali girls trafficked yearly into India, with their average age over the past decade falling from 14 to 16 years to 10 – 14 years. "They are sold to the brothels not only in big cities like Mumbai, Pune (Puna), Delhi, and Kolkata but also in other cities in India." They are brought in India without knowing what they have to do in India from poor families in the rural areas in Nepal by traffickers. Their poor and illiterate parents do not know what their daughters must do in India and how to protect and help them fall into the traffickers' hands. Ignorant and innocent girls follow traffickers who cheat by their honeyed words. The "trafficking business" is one requiring low investment and yields high returns. The victim can be sold and resold yielding multiple profits to the various agents who form part of a chain.

"The youngest child in prostitution that we have encountered in Kamathipura was only 9" said Dr. Farida Lambay, vice-principal, Nirmala Niketan College of Social Working Bombay (Mumbai).

Each one of these children is put through a process of seasoning. Most relent within 7 to 10 days under psychological pressure, beatings, rape, starvation, etc. says researcher, Jyoti Sanghera, in a paper on the traffic on Nepali women into India. A 14 year-old-girl once said that she had put up a resistance for three weeks within a cobra. She sat numb there for two days and finally gave in.

Because of the continued increase in the rank of prostitutes, large number of whom carry on their business clandestinely and the prostitutes are neither registered nor licensed, reliable statistics are difficult to find. They are either sold into the trade or voluntary and involuntary drifters.

According to one report 86 percent join the profession due to poverty and want; 5 percent enter the profession voluntarily; 4 percent due to bad company; and 5 percent due to ill-treatment of husbands, in laws or parents.
TABLE 5.2

METHODS OF SUBJUGATING WOMEN AND CHILDREN

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Starved</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Locked-up in a dark-room</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Beaten-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Slippered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Gaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Cut on the face with knives</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Whipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Branded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Burnt with cigarette and beedi butts</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Raped/gang raped at the point of a knife, sharp weapons</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Led to places desired by wielding of knives of pointing guns</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Bound with strings and codes along with the use of knives to demand submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Forced to drink intoxicating drinks, drugs, and herbal preparations</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Blackmailed</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Driven to commit suicide for not obliging sexually persons other than husbands</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Strangled/stabbed/killed for not trading their bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Sexual exploitation of expectant mothers/bartering for the unborn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though I visited the red light district in Bombay several times, the place where I first interviewed prostitutes was G. B. Road, the red light district of the capital in India in 1987, 1989, 1990 and 1992.

The reason why I wanted to visit and talk with the prostitutes was that I wondered if their plight summed up the problems of Indian women and not only of Indian women but also of all women as I mentioned earlier.

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Indian Prostitutes and Case Histories in G. B. Road in Delhi

[ 1 ] G. B. Road Brothels and Prostitutes

Garston Bastion Road (G. B. Road) is the center of transportation between Old Delhi and New Delhi and is lined on both sides with machine shops, hardware stores, drugstores and so on. Indian merchants gathered here from all over India. According to one report, 86 percent join the profession due to poverty and want; 5 percent enter the profession voluntarily; 4 percent due to bad company; and 5 percent due to ill-treatment of husbands, in-laws or parents.

Though I visited the red light district in Bombay several times, the place where I first interviewed prostitutes was G. B. Road, the red light district of the capital in India in 1987, 1989, 1990 and 1992.

I discovered that 80 percent of prostitutes whom I met were women who had children, divorced women or widowers. The new discovery was that many prostitutes in G. B. Road were Muslims.

They say that once prostitution was regarded as a decent profession as many of the prostitutes catered to the needs of noble men. But in fact it was singing and dancing that were held in high esteem and not the trade in flesh.

At the time of partition in 1947 Delhi had two red light areas in the walled city. Chawri Bazar and Kath Bazar. Dwellers in the former were mostly singing and dancing girls. They were respected highly. They would rarely indulge in flesh trade but as concubines of the rich. The latter Kath Bazar was primarily a market for flesh trade. The hawkers, tongawalas, vegetable vendors, sweepers, rustic drivers, menials... etc., went to this bazaar frequently. By the consequent upon the agitations launched by the other domestic residents of Chawri Bazar for the removal of prostitutes, the brothels were shifted to the outskirts of the city, that is, the present location on G. B. Road. The Delhi Improvement Trust auctioned plots here specially meant for them. Slowly the buildings came up and brothels were shifted here.

After partition when Muslims shifted to Pakistan the present-day traders occupied the shops and settled here. It is gathered that till early fifties, girls were auctioned here the railway warehouse which exists in the middle of the
shopping centre opposite to the main bazaar. The other red-light area, Kath Bazar was also cleared and now houses a market of Sadar Bazar area on Qutab Road. With the fast expansion of Delhi this area has now become a central vista and there is a persistent demand by the locals for its shifting.

[2] Muslim Prostitutes

The population (Percentage distribution excluding Assam) by religion in India is Hindus 82.6%, Muslims 11.2%, Christians 2.6%, Sikhs 1.9%, Buddhists 0.7%, Jains 0.5%, others 0.4%, total 100.0% in 1991.

The overwhelming majority in India are Hindus, so I was surprised to learn that many prostitutes told me they were Muslims. It is said that 90 percent of the prostitutes in Delhi are Muslims and 10 percent Hindus.

Most of the Muslim prostitutes whom I interviewed were divorced women. They were divorced by their husbands without knowing any reasons or while they had a quarrel with their husbands, because of the Muslim husband’s easy one-way divorce right by the Islamic religion.

If Muslim women were divorced by their husbands and they cannot be accepted back in their parents’ home, they have to face a more difficult time earning money than Hindu women. Because of Muslim "Purdah" practice, Muslim women generally do not have more chance to study than Hindu women.

Muslim prostitutes I interviewed said to me, "I never went to school. I cannot read and write. If I had education."

I have heard the same words directly from Muslim prostitutes. They were cheated and brought to the red-light district by men. They were cheated under the promise of marriage or getting good jobs in the city by men.

There were women who were cheated by fake marriages and were being exploited by men. They were women who were sold by relatives when they were children. They were women who joined this trade voluntarily after their divorces. They said that they couldn’t find another job because they had no education and their friends introduced them to this trade.
Family conditions serve as an important motive for becoming a prostitute but a large percentage are from poor families, running away from home or from troublesome families, delinquent personalities, mental disturbances of some sort, curiosity, vanity etc. Mostly they belong to relatively younger age group. They are victims of forced intercources and fraudulent marriages. In liberal sex atomosphere in the bigger cities, some enter freely into a sex relationship with a new acquaintance who lured to jobs and other promises.

It is an unspoken conviction that employers do demand particular pound of female flesh for her right to work and she do not really have anything else to offer. She responds by submitting and if once a man had a woman sexually she is less than him. A woman who permits one intimacy seldom know where to stop or what to refuse.

Polygamy leads to prostitution. Religious fundamentalists and primates have always held woman in low esteem and inferior, a sexual object available to male for casual gratification.

According to a survey report prepared by the Tata School of Social Work, it is reliably learnt, about 90 percent prostitutes in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh are Muslim women. It also refers to an increase in number of Muslim women being taken to the Middle East as menial labour and later being compelled to prostitution there.

I interviewed prostitutes who were working in G.B. Road. In these days I have read the book in which the author writes G.B. Road is very dangerous and fearful place, But I did not need to feel much fear to them. They were very kind to me and brought drinks and snacks. I was surprised that they were very gentle, kind and pure. I greatly appreciate for Mr. Bhola’s kindness. He introduced me to mesdames of kothas. I will talk about Mr. Bhola in the latter part of this section. I think that I could make a success of my interviews in G.B. Road because prostitutes and mesdames had much confidence in Mr. Khairati Lal Bohla, president of the Bharatiya Patita Udhar Sabha—an organization dedicated to the upliftment of prostitutes,
Though I wrote about him in INTRODUCTION, he has been dedicated to the upliftment of prostitutes of G.B.Road. And on March 25, the Supreme court, on a civil writ petition filed by Mr. Bhola on behalf of the Bhartiya Patita Udhar Sabha, issued notice to the Union of India, the Delhi Administration and the principal of an administration-run school in which could well be the prelude to a landmark judgement for women in India.

He initiated the process of “adoption” of the children from redlight area, G.B. Road by the Directorate of Social Welfare, Delhi Administration. While no legal documents have been signed, the Directorate of Social Welfare, Delhi Administration, has decided to look after these children until they are grown up to fend for themselves.

Today women in prostitution who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking are identified and targeting as the major carriers of the HIV/AIDS virus. It must always be remembered that these women and girls in prostitution indulge in high risk behaviour under circumstantial compulsions. Their lives and health are under direct control of the brothel keeper/pimp. Dr. I. S. Gilada is a doctor and secretary general of PHO (Peoples Health Organization [India]), (formerly honorary secretary of IHO [Indian Health Organization]). As he is my old friend. Whenever I go to Mumbai, I pay a visit at his clinic to do honor to him and get recent information about his work. He has devotedly been treating HIV/AIDS patients for more than twenty years.

He was the first to rescue a Nepali girl (Tulasa Thapa) from brothels in Bombay in 1982. It has being indicated that the high rate to be infected with AIDS in India is one of serious social problems since in the mid 1980s. But the Indian government did not take effective measures to stop HIV/AIDS in India. He was courageous enough to start the preventive strategies such as awareness programmes to women, clients, and brothel owners and distribution of a free condom to women in red-light districts in Mumbai. Many did not know even a condom. He has continued this strategies and medical treatment to HIV/AIDS patients for more than twenty years. The number of patients who are infected with AIDS is more than 5 million in India now.

It was quite right that women and brothel owners had much confidence in his awareness programmes, I owe my success to interview women in Falkland
Road and Kamathipura in Mumbai to Dr. I.S. Gilada.

"India announced that it had 3.97 million HIV-positive cases, making it the country with the second highest number of people with the infection in the world. The National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) produced the figures after conducting a three-month survey across the country in 2001. "The estimated number of adults living with HIV in the country for 1998, 1999 and 2000 was 3.5 million, 3.7 million and 3.8 million, respectively." NACO said, "In 2001, the total number of HIV infections was estimated at 3.97 million." Unofficial estimates put the figure at closer to 5 million." 121

1. Mala

Hometown: Bangalore

"My name is Mala. I have been here for 10 to 12 years. I am 35 years old. I want to go back to my house but these people (Malikin – owners of the floor) do not allow me to go out of here. They have kept me here as a prisoner. My husband had left me."

"I have a father, brothers and sisters in my village. My mother has expired. My one daughter has also expired in the village. I have one son living in the village."

"I was told by someone that I would be given necklace, gold earrings, a car...and would be married with him. But I was not given anything and was sold in the Market. By this false promise of someone, I came to Delhi. I always hope to go back to my home but these people never allow me to go out of this house. That's why I am crying. I do not have any freedom."

"My rates had been Rs. 6 and after sometime it rose to Rs. 12 and Rs. 20 per person. And now Rs. 25. But whatever money I earn from the

customers, these people (Malikins) snatch all money from me."

"Sometimes customers come but sometimes no customers come. Usually from two to four customers come in a day. Sometimes up to Rs.100 or Rs.125 are charged to the customer. But I do not get even a single paisa."

"We usually use condoms to prevent pregnancy but still if we become Pregnant, we will go to hospital to abort."

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- The rate charges are anything between Rs.2/- and Rs.1500/- and upward depending upon service,need and occasion.

- Poligamy, poverty, illiteracy, etc. An average woman is ignorant of the law.

- The police are not cooperate and reluctant for organizing raids and the rescue of girls, minor or detained illegally under threats by brothel owners.

2 **Maina** Hometown: Bangalore

"My name is Maina. I am 35 years old. I joined here around 14 years before. I do not have a husband and I do not have any child, either. My parents are no more. I have three sisters. After the marriage all the three sisters are with their husbands in Mysore and Bangalore. But I do not know about them and I do not care for them. I do not have brothers to take care of me."

"I came here by myself. I came here to do housework. I was not aware of the work before coming here. After some time I came to know about the prostitution work of this place. I do not do the prostitution work. I take care of the house and management work."

"We have five girls on this floor. This is the Kotha (House) of Ms. Nimmi"
Bai. There are around 30 to 35 girls downstairs. Today Nimmi Bai, the owner of this floor has gone to the court for some house problems."

"By escaping from the police eyes only a few people came here in a day. The police sometimes stand at the main gate and do not allow any customers to come upstairs and the police sometimes snatch the money from the customers and threaten them. Nowadays this business is not going well. That's why lots of the girls who have the children have gone back to their homes."

"Now we have exposed our prostitution business to the government and told that this was the only means for us to earn the cost of our living. So the government coming to know it, the police will not disturb us much and the police will only stand at the gate of the house."

"I like men. A long time ago there used to be dancers in this room. But in these days, Dancers are not going on."

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- Generally the girls operate from different places in different towns. not only they changes the place of operation but also their names to hoodwink the police and the people alike.

- The police are band in glove with the institution of prostitution. But for their connivance for monetary gains the illegal part of it could be lawfully contained.

3 Mumtaz Hometown: Bangalore

"I am 30 years old. I came here by myself. I was married, but divorced. My husband did not want to have divorce but I myself wanted it. I have delivered one daughter here. But her father is not known."

"I got married at the age of 12 years. I like to do this prostitution work. Two, three, or four customers come in a day. I charge Rs.50, Rs.60,
Rs.100 or upto Rs.150 per person. It depends upon how much the customers can pay me. Rich, poor and middle–class, all types of customers come here. Now the police do not cause much troubles."

"For the family planning I do not use a condom. If customers ask, we give them condoms to use. My daughter is studying at Dehra Dun. I take pills not to have a baby. If I become pregnant, and if I like, I will keep the baby. Otherwise I will have the abortion. I have never had the abortion till now."

"I came here for my own interest. I belong to Bangalore. My relatives and parents do not know about what I do. My mother is old and I do not know even whether she is alive or not. I have never returned home and even never tried to do it. I keep on sending the money for education of my daughter."

"After I work for six or seven months, I will go to see my daughter. I will stay for four–five days at the hotel and spend the full time with my child. I will take my child for a picnic. Then I will come back here. I live here for my own interest and happiness."

"Whatever the income may be that I get here from the customers, I spend it on myself and save for the future. I do not give anything to the owner of this floor. I sometimes sing and dance. I do not have a license."

"I have an interest in money. So for me any type of a customer is welcome. I do not select the customers. I attend everyone. If a customer is poor, he gives me Rs.20. At least I can save these twenty rupees. Whatever money a customer gives me, I always accept it with happiness."

"We are afraid of sexual diseases. If we have some problems, we take medicine. We go to hospital for check–up. I feel a pain in joints and in the back. It is better to deliver a child than the abortion. Those who dare the abortion, even in their old age, they realize their faults for doing the abortion."
"I will work for one or two more years. As long as I am healthy and alive, I shall take care of my child and her education. I know many people. I have also saved money and I will try to increase this money. So I do not worry about myself when getting old. If I spend a lot of money on my food today, then how can I save money? I sometimes eat a chapatti with only sauce and chilli."

"I am illiterate. I had an interest in a dance. But nowadays I am short of breath when I perform the dance. There was the times when people are pleased with my dance performance they used to give me Rs.1000 or Rs.2000."

"In my life there has been no one I do like. When the customer says "I like you. I love you." I never believe these words. If this work is banned (stopped) by the government, I will feel happy."

"May I know why you are making researches into the prostitution?"

"In my room all the girls live for their own interest and happiness. There are around 20 girls in this room. All the girls here wear good clothes and eat well. Here both Hindu and Muslim girls are mixed."

"Even if I say yes in my heart, I do not like to be taken my photograph by you."

When I was interviewing Mumtaz, I saw men (customers) in her room. I also interviewed two of them.

4 Customer with Mumtaz

"I am an Indian student and am reading for a degree in electronics at a certain university. I have made one sister (Mumtaz) here. I come here to meet her. I bring my friends here to have sex with these girls."

5 Another customer
"We come here for the entertainment. I spend here more than five thousand rupees every month to present gifts to the girls or pay money for sex with different girls."

"I am doing my own auto parts business. I have one friend whom I love here. I will marry her even if my parents do not allow me to marry her."

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- Red-light areas are most unhygienic, dirty and stinking and the dwellers are huddled together in improvised cubicles like sheep and goats. In fact women were keeping a goat in one kotha. Same premises are utilized for sexual entertainments or otherwise sleeping, cooking, etc. Their small children were with them.

- Mumtaz told me that she was afraid of sexual diseases. The full-time prostitutes are not now obliged to undergo any medical check-ups as was once prevalent in Delhi. Thus those suffering from venereal diseases do not visit hospitals where specialized treatments are available, to avoid public notice and identification but patronize quacks. Thus they become the cause of spreading sexual diseases like Syphilis, Gonorrihea, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), etc. AIDS has added a frightening dimension with its virus in the blood. Even the infected donors infect hundreds, thousands or even millions of people. These most communicable diseases, in due course, infect the homes and children.

6 Guddhi  Hometown: Bengal

She is a Muslim. Though she is very charming and looks very young. She said that she was more than 25 years old. As soon as she finished her work, she accepted my interviewee. She was sweating. Her customer was beside her.

"My husband died. I have delivered three children. I have two sons at home. One daughter expired and I am carrying one now. (She was pregnant.) I shall deliver the child in the hospital. Though my mother expired, I have a foster father."
"My rate is Rs.25. But it depends on me to decide how much rate I demand the customer. From this customer with whom I have just finished working, I earned Rs.50. I give 50% of my income to the owner of this floor."

"I attend daily to four or five customers a day. I do not like this work but my circumstances and problems force me to do this work. I used to go to hospital for check-up and bring medicine to prevent any venereal disease. I am above 25 and came here by my own. I had being done this work in my village. I have worked for the last nine years or so. I do not know how long more I will work."

"I will do something. Because no one will take care for me at that phase of life."

"I am a Muslim. This signs what you see in my hand. I have burnt it. I choose my customers and I do not work with whom I do like. One of my village girls had told me about this place. She also works here. When I had visited her, she told me about this place."

"When customers say they like me or love me, I sense the hollowness of their words. In this life I do not have anyone whom I like. What will I get from the man even if I like him? He will only ask for money from me. I do this work for my children. I have no problems from the police. Policemen also come here for enjoyment. I am giving education to my children."

"I dream of filthy experiences because of the filthy surroundings and business. I am anxious for neat and pious surroundings. I am not happy. After two or three years, I will quit this profession. My foster father does not take care of me. After delivering this baby, I will get operated for myself."

"I used to use the pill to prevent pregnancy, but I am pregnant now. I also use the condoms. I have never had an abortion."
"I have studied up to the fifth standard. I can also do other work and everyone recognizes me but now I am in this line."

"I sometimes visit the village to see my children. I have told the villagers that I am freshly married to someone in Delhi and am staying with him. Basically I do not like sex with men. All types of men come here. My two sons are 3 and 3 and a half years old and my daughter expired about five months ago. I am pregnant now. I was not divorced. My husband expired."

"My younger sister is fourteen and is studying in school. I will arrange her marriage and for this purpose. I am collecting jewelry, clothes, etc..."

"If I desire to stop the prostitution, I can do so without facing any problems. I have the freedom. The police know that I stay here by my own wish. I also charge the police when they have sex with me. I do not give them any discount."

Guddhi told me that she used to go to hospital for check-up and bring medicine to prevent any venereal disease. According to one of WHO reports of 1981, out of every four venereal disease patients one is in India.

7 Shaera

She was wearing beautiful orange color kameez; she was thirty or thirty-one years old. She was an illiterate Muslim. She was a newcomer. When I had visited her kotha two years ago, she was not there. She came from Maharashtra.

Her mother was alive. She had two children. Her eight-year daughter was in the Adopted School of the Delhi Government (a system which the Delhi Government adopted in August 1988). (See the latter part [7] Prostitutes' Income and Children)

Her eleven-year son was in the government school out of station. They do
not know her work. She was worrying about their future. She and her husband disliked each other. She was divorced by her husband easily. She tried to find a job, but she could not find it. As her friend was working in the G.B. Road, she came to the same place. She wanted prostitution to be legalized. She hated the policemen most. They came to her as customers, but last Friday they arrested one girl.


In G.B. Brothels, Hindu prostitutes whom I interviewed were those who had dowry problems or widows. They were ill-treated by their husbands and in-laws and left their husbands' home. But they were not accepted by their parents who were greatly concerned about appearances. They did not have any place to go and were cheated by men, sold, and entered the prostitution world.

In India, the status of divorced women or widows is very low. Among high castes, there prevailed a customary rite involving the "cremation of the living wife with the dead husband." People detest a widow as if she were "unlucky" or a woman who killed her husband. Her relatives forced her to follow her dead husband to his grave to their honor. They drugged her and pushed her into flames or forced her to become "Sati" by putting her in chains so she could not escape. But widows who became prostitutes were saved from "Sati." Men have controlled women according to double standard. Rajah Ram Mohan Roy pressured Lord Bentinck to abolish the Hindu practice of burning widows alive, or the sati rite, and it was abolished by regulation XVII of 1829. Even now there are some widows who want to perform "Sati."

The most recent "Sati (it means an honest woman)" was accused in 1987. An eighteen years-old wife, a Rajput woman Roop Kanwar was burned alive on her husband's funeral pyre before a crowd of several thousand people, predominantly men.

In India the husband should have exclusive and total control over his wife's sexuality. Pre-pubertal marriage was the surest way to make certain of it. Pre-pubertal marriage also transferred the responsibility for safeguarding the
girl's sexuality from her male kin in her natal family to her husband and his agnates. Once married, total faithfulness was expected of the wife, and this was to be assured by the deification of the husband. Total control over her sexuality was not only for the duration of the marriage.

Virginity in brides was ensured pre-pubertal, and frequently, child marriages, while celibacy was required of the widow. She was disfigured by having her head shaved, and by forbidding to her the symbols of the happy and auspicious state with the husband alive, and her activities were restricted to the kitchen and to the ritual. She became a symbol of inauspiciousness and ill-luck. The death of her husband was attributed to the sins she had committed in a previous incarnation. In reality, it is very difficult even now for a widow as well as for the divorced woman to re-marry.

Many women leave their homes after repeated incidents of abuse by their spouses, rape, incest and desertion.

Women elderly and young slip into prostitution due to lack of housing, unemployment, deinstitutionalization, domestic violence and abuse.

In such circumstances, the age of prostitutes in G. B. Road was rather higher, about 30.


8 Lakshmi 
Hometown: Sitamari village
Dharbhanga Dist., Bihar

"I am 30 years old now. My parents died when I was young. My marriage was arranged by them. My husband did not like me and left me. I was not divorced. I married again to a man on my own wish. After sometime he also left me. I came to Delhi on my own wish. In Delhi I was told by a man that he would take me to my parents' house but instead he brought me here."

226
"I have delivered children here in this business. I have one son and one daughter but the father of these children is not known. I was pregnant five times here. I never took any medicine. I have caused the abortion three times. I have only two children. I do not take any medicine to prevent pregnancy."

It depends upon the girls to use medicines. If they like to deliver the baby, they do not take medicines. Nimmi Bai, the owner of one brothel in G. B. Road also says that it is not compulsory for girls to take medicine.

"I charge Rs.20 per customer and out of Rs.20, I have to give Rs.10 to the owner of my floor. So 50% of my income goes to the owner of the floor."

"I do not like this work but because of my circumstances and problems I have to do it. I am unable to save any money for the future. Through my income, I have to take care of my two children and myself. So I am not left with any money to save."

"I do not know whether I was sold or not. Somebody told me that he would take me to my parents' place but instead he deceived me and brought me here. I was in Kotha No. 57 before. Now I live in Kotha No. 51."

"I will not deliver the child anymore. I cannot afford any education to my children because I do not have money and I cannot save money. I do not have parents. I have a married younger sister. I have uncles and aunts. They do not take care of me. They are not able to take care of their family, so how will they take care of me?"

"I have some man whom I like or love in my present life. Once I have experienced to love a man, so I do not want to have another chance to love someone."

"I do not like to have sex with men. But we have sex not because of our enjoyment but because of our problem. I delivered my two babies in the
hospital,"

"I charge Rs.20 from each customer. No customer gives me more than Rs.20. How can I save money? I have to feed and clothe myself and my two children. If I ask the customers to pay more, they fight and lodge a complaint against us to the police."

"The police cooperate with the customers and enforce them to declare that the girls were demanding Rs.300 and snatch money from them. And under Sec.107 and Sec.151 of Goonda (hoodlum) Act, the police will arrest the girls."

"Some problems are always here. Sometimes curfew or sometimes not much business. Sometimes only one customer or someday only two customers. Agents also take a commission."

• Indifference of police to moral and social values result in extinction of public confidence in them.

9 Shakuntala

"Since we associated with Mr. Bhola, the police have not given much trouble. Because Bhola took action, entire police staff of this area have been changed."

"Nimmi Bai charges the girls 25% of their income. She has also instructed other Madams to charge only 25% instead of 50%. In this 25% of our income we pay the house rent, house tax, water, electricity, etc. When we went to hospital for the medical check-up for the prostitutes before, hospital people used to scold us saying why we produced the child and we don’t need to come to hospital. But now we have also had the sanction of the Medical Superintendent for some special doctor recommended by Mr. Bhola."
I have heard that an Inspector of Police who was running a brothel and indulging in immoral trafficking of women was arrested from a house in a house in Jahangirpuri, Delhi. This inspector allegedly had been in Delhi Police for over twenty years and had earlier been in the vigilance Department of Delhi Police, posted at Palam. The rate of girls available in this brothel varied from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 1500/-. Places of action were Badkar Lake and Ashok Yatri Niwas, etc.

10 Indian prostitutes whom Mr. Bhola related through his activities

I interviewed Mr. Bhola whom Shakuntala mentioned. He was trusted by Nimmi Bai, other Madams and many prostitutes in G.B. Road.

Mr. Bhola has a business of bike and automobile parts and a small shop in New Delhi. He said to me:

"The prostitution must be continued. Otherwise young girls and housewives will be raped on the road by unsocial elements and goondas (rascals). I am fighting for the benefits of prostitutes...".

Some prostitutes whom I interviewed also said to me:

"If it were not for the prostitutes, young girls and housewives would be raped."

They had an awareness of their duty.

Mr. Bhola's statement helps me understand Indian prostitutes.

"From 1837, British period, the prostitutes used to have a license from the British government. Up to 1947 British government used to take care of their children and regular medical check-up. After medical check-up, government was giving the fitness certificate to the prostitute."
"In 1954 the government formed the committee and had the survey in 84 cities. The committee gave the report to the government not to stop the prostitution, otherwise young girls and housewives will be raped on the road by unsocial elements and goondas."

"I fight for prostitutes because they are the part of the society. If they did not exist, our entire national structure would become unbalanced."

"I served for the country as a freedom fighter. When I once passed through G. B. Road, I saw one customer fighting with the prostitute. I stood there. At that time the fee was Rs.12. The customer had only Rs.2 and had given Rs.2 to the prostitute. He had to give her Rs.10 more. Then I gave her Rs.10."

"The prostitutes are the neglected part of the society. They preserve the prostitution which dated back to the ancient times. Many countries in the world have allowed the prostitution. But if our government allowed it, people would say, "Shame. Shameful."

"No MP (Member of Parliament) or Minister raises this point in Parliament. In the darkness at night, they also use the prostitutes."

"90 percent of the prostitutes are Muslims. Because Muslim husbands marry 4 wives and divorce easily."

"There are 557139 villages all over India. Government should basically pay attention to the villages and should start small scale industries to overcome poverty. Five planning of Indian Government should start from villages."

"We have challenged the SITA made by the government."

"There are 86 kothas (brothels) in G. B. Road. The police take money from Malikins and earn Rs.450,000 a month."

Mr. Bhola reports the number of the prostitutes as the below.
TABLE 5.3

THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PROSTITUTES IN SOME STATES IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Estimated Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>380,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras (Tamil Nadu)</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>130,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>127,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>72,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Bhola informed me of the fact that the number of the prostitutes increases 3 lakh (300,000) every year.

- "Legalisation will legitimize an exploitative set up"

"Legalisation will legitimize an exploitative set up where the system of licensing and health check ups will further strengthen the hands of pimps and traffickers. This will also encourage trafficking as guardians will justify their act of selling their wives and daughters saying that they have joined a legitimate vocation. Moreover it will lead to further neglect of the girl child among socially & economically backward classes. An International campaign has been launched to prevent legalization of prostitution.”

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For Legalization

What the advocates of legalization are demanding today is recognition of prostitution as "sex work" and the use of the term "commercial sex worker." This is based on the conviction that many women choose prostitution as a work option and therefore giving them worker’s rights would rid their ‘profession’ of the stigma that that society attaches to them. They are in favour of establishment of self regulatory boards constituted solely by ‘sex workers’ that would monitor the inflow of new entrants with respect to their age and health. They also feel that this will help to control the spread of HIV/AIDS through ‘sex workers.’

Against Legalization

Those opposing such legalization have based their arguments on the ground that in the brothel system of prostitution that exists in India, every woman is a victim of commercial sexual exploitation. They argue:

- There is no element of voluntarism involved in ‘work’ that starts with violence and sexual abuse, and which is totally devoid of any dignity of labour.
- Can work be associated with child rape and repeated sexual assaults?
- A woman consents to join or is forced into prostitution under a situation of total lack of options before her – how can this be called work?
- Why is it then that most of these ‘sex workers’ do not want their daughters to join their profession and remove them from the brothel environment? 123

Wife selling in India

The representative of the Association for Social Health in India shocked the congress of the International Abolitionist Federation at Vienna by alleging the some Indian men sold their wives in order to get other women. Ms. Jyotsna Chatterjee of Joint Women’s Programme Publication said, "During our study, we were able to identify local people and the police who were involved in the sale of girls in Bombay." She said in India, wholesale markets for women and girls were in Bombay, Calcutta, Agra and

123 Joint Women’s Programme and Caritas India (support). Human Trafficking, p.17.
Hyderabad. From their prostitutes were distributed to small cities all over money to pay dowries for their future husbands. She also charged the parents, brothers or husbands involved themselves in conspiracies to sell women through a legal jugglery in which divorce papers were used as a device."

The Vienna Declaration of 1993 at the World Conference on Human Rights against women in public and private life, the elimination of all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation and trafficking in women.

• A Wife to be sold

"Born in a poor Bengali Muslim family in Murshidabad, Salma worked with her parents who were landless labourers, instead of going to school. The family was poor and parents were worried about the future of their four daughters. Salma was married off at the age of 13 to a person known to the family who worked in Delhi. 'Even though I was young I was happy to be married as I saw it as a way out of my hopeless situation at home,' she says.

After the Nikah she came to Delhi with him with hopes of a better life. Six months after her arrival in Delhi her husband took her to visit his "sister" and told her that as he was going out of town she could stay with his "didi" (sister) and he would pick her up when he returned.

Little did Salma know that didi's house was a brothel and that her husband whom she trusted so much had sold her for a sum of ten thousand rupees. Her first encounter with a client left her bruised and bleeding. No doctor was called. One failed attempt to run away was met with severe beatings. Whenever the police conducted a raid in the brothels for rescuing minors under the law, children like Salma were hidden in the attic or under the bed. If any were discovered, the brothels' keeper liberally greased the palms of the raiding party to suppress the matter.

The girls were taught to say "I am 24" to anyone who asked about their age. "With time I became quite indifferent about my future. I did not care about where I was going or what I was doing," she says. At 27, Salma seems to have lived an entire lifetime."

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124 Ibid., p. 4.
11 Nimmi Bai who stood for Parliament

She is a Madam, the owner of a kotha. She succeeded as a prostitute. But she does not know where she was born and who her parents were. When she was a small child, she entered this world. She was kidnapped and sold into the brothel by someone.

When she worked as a prostitute, she came to love a customer and she delivered his son. He was a rich man and became her patron. And she could become a Madam. Her patron died and her son is studying in the boarding school far from Delhi. She keeps quite a few prostitutes in her kotha now.

I hear that she has her own good house out of G. B. Road.

When I first met her in 1987, she was fighting on account of the prostitutes and their children with Mr. Bhola.

Later I heard she stood for Parliament, but she was not elected. In 1992, I heard that she was arrested and she was in a prison because she was involved a murder case.

The rich brothel mistresses provide public school education to their children and keep them away in hostels. Such children are often free to choose their careers. Others study in government run schools.

Nimmi Bai was kidnapped and entered into prostitution. Some girls involved in the flesh trade are either lured or voluntary.

But the study of the mode of entry into prostitution, the process of victimization prior to initiation into the fresh-trade and the amount paid for women and children in India reveal that most prostitutes were so made by forceful, violent means.

According to the survey of 1100 prostitutes, 753 of them (67%) have been forced into prostitution. 124 (11%) were lured and 241 were not known or irrelevant.
TABLE 5.4

MODE OF ENTRY INTO PROSTITUTION IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Entry</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Forms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Abducted/kidnapped/auctioned/sold and resold</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Deceived and sold</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sold and resold repeatedly</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Raped/gang raped and sold</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fake marriage/raped/deserted/forced</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conditioned by religious custom (Basavi/Devadasi etc.)</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[6] A Buddhist prostitute from Bhutan

12 Vina

I met a prostitute from Bhutan in G.B.Road. She was a Buddhist.

"I came here by my wish and have worked as a prostitute for two years and a half. I studied up to the seventh grade. I am twenty-six years old and do not have a child. My husband was a drug addict, As my friend was

working here, I came here.
I can move freely. I am happy here more than outside."

[ 7 ] Prostitutes' Income and Children

The Delhi government introduced a system to adopt the prostitutes' children and give them an education in August 1989 and the problem of Children's fathers' names

Mala in G. B. Road was sold and entered the prostitution world. Such a girl can hardly get money. But a girl who became a prostitute by her own will can earn money though the amount is a little.

I asked Mina her income amount. She is about 30 years old. She has three or four clients a day. One client usually pays 25 rupees. She sometimes works for as little as 2 rupees. After she earned 25 rupees from one client, she pay 5 rupees to a pimp, 5 rupees to her madam for the rent, 7 rupees 50 paisa to the policeman as a bribe and 7 rupees 50 paisa becomes her income. She and the girls are very cheap! She sends money to her two sons living in their village.

Lakshmi earns usually 20 rupees per man. Half of her earnings is her income. She has two children. She deplores that she cannot earn enough money to give her children and for their education. It is all she can do to feed her children and herself.

Through my interview I knew that Indian prostitutes had children whose fathers were unknown. They want to have children, so they do not practice birth control. They become pregnant; they deliver their children. Some prostitutes do not practice birth control at all. They say, "I will have an abortion if I become pregnant." They say that 80% of the prostitutes are suffering from venereal diseases or AIDS. But the campaign against AIDS is not being conducted in G. B. Road yet though it is active in Bombay. In India there are people who urge the legalization of prostitution, giving the
prostitutes medical check-ups regularly, and at the same time there are people who are against such legalization. I think that the legalization will not help the prostitutions and will promote their exploitation.

**The Delhi government introduced a system to adopt the prostitutes' children in August 1989**

In August 1989, the Delhi government introduced a system to adopt the prostitutes' children and give them an education. Of course, mothers welcomed this system because they did not want their children to grow up in the unhealthy circumstances and were eager to give an education to their children. Mr. Bhola and they requested the Delhi government to help their children. Mothers told me that they would endure even if they could not see their children so often. They wanted a good future for their children. They said that they wanted their children to be good Indian citizens. I also felt happy to have seen their happiness.

But in spring in 1990, I learned that mothers were not always happy to see their children adopted by the Delhi Government. Some prostitutes wanted their children back. Because they felt lonely without them and started to worry about the days when they became old, feeling their children would not support their mothers in the future.

**The Problem of Children's fathers' names**

I know that the things were not so easy as I had imagined. At that time, some prostitutes deplored the fact that there was space on the certificate of their children, in which they have to write children's fathers' name. They wanted it to be improved, with only the mothers' name required.

As for fathers' name, I wonder, because we, Japanese also have to write fathers' name when we apply to Indian Embassy for a visa to go to India regardless of our age or anything. Then I am some how repulsed, really feel that India is the patriarchy society.
Case Studies of Prostitutes and the Devadasis in Falkland Road and Kamathipura in Mumbai

[8] Prostitution in Bombay (Mumbai)

In India, the most talked about the centre of metropolitan prostitution is Mumbai the city of coexisting contrasts between acute poverty and extreme opulence. Mumbai (Bombay) city has a population of 9926000 (1991 census) in an area of 603 square kilometers. Over and above, a few lakh of floating population visit the city by trains, buses, cars and by air every day. Red-light areas are spread over in different parts of the city and the highest concentration is in Falkland Road, Foras Road, Kamathipura, Colaba, Bandra, Ghatkopar, Bhandup Sonapur, Mulund Sonapur, Nagpada, etc.

Location of factories, docks, multistoried apartments, growth of markets, slums, etc. accounts for the rapid spread of brothels. Mumbai is one of the largest seaports in India where there is constant flow of sailors. The nearest to the seaports accounts for much immortality and prostitution.

Savdhan, a voluntary organization takes keen interest in the rescuing of women from brothels and in their rehabilitation. It had rescued over 900 girls belonging to the State of Tamil Nadu who were lured into prostitution in Bombay brothels. Savdhan informed two lakh, or 200,000 prostitutes had crossed by the end of 1994 but the correct figure can not be assessed. SAVDHNAN reported that about 30-40 percent of the total number are child prostitutes between 12 and 17 years of age. Thousands of women and girls from Nepal and Bangladesh operate as prostitutes in Bombay brothels besides migrants from different parts of India.

According to Dr. I.S. Gilada, honoray secretary, Indian Health Organization (IHO)," almost all the suburbs in Bombay have some areas which are frequented by the locals. Migrants in the city account for 90 percent of the total population prostitutes. Dr. Gilada says that most of them "have been either abducted, sold by their parents and husbands or have been victims of rape and incest." Almost 25 percent of all prostitutes were
abducted from their villages or home towns either forcibly or lured with promises of jobs in the city or marriage, by a procurer, normally a woman. There are nearly 15,000 children plying the trade in one area of the city, most of whom have been forced into the business through kidnapping, rape or incest by their own relatives.

What makes the children prostitutes more popular with customers is firstly the superstitious belief that coitus with a virgin cures venereal diseases, and secondly, the feeling that they are less likely to suffer from sexually transmitted diseases as compared to older prostitutes. Dr. Gilada says that about 90 percent of women living in inferior type of brothels suffer from sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, scabies, chronic pelvis infection, and majority of them are treated by quacks who inject colored water into the vagina for treatment.

Brothels keepers and pimps do not allow them to go out to the doctor for treatment for fear that they may escape; brothel keepers do not allow them to move out until they have succeeded, in recovering 100 percent profit on their investment. There are no provisions in the government side to provide free treatment with the inmates of the brothels. They, however, get free treatment in governmental hospitals like any other citizens.

It is said that prostitutes in Bombay are divided into several classes and operate not only in brothels in red-light areas but also in private apartments, some richly furnished, air-conditioned, decorated and equipped with telephone, T.V., blue films and pornographic books, various kinds of alcoholic drinks and drugs. There are also call girls. They operate in hotels and private apartments and are available on telephone calls. Clients from affluent segments of society also frequent them. They are in great demand (especially in Mumbai) by foreign tourists including clients from the Gulf countries.

Social worker, Pteeti Patkar of Prerana, a project of the Nirmala Niketan Institute of social work which operates in the Kamathipura area of Mumbai, one of the largest red-light areas where many prostitutes live says that women are driven to this profession by the acute poverty in their homes. She added that hundreds are disillusioned film aspirants from middle class families and many married women become estranged from their husbands due to their ill-treatment and cruelty. Whenever there is a drought there is
migration of women and girls from villages to the city in search for employment and they are seduced by procurers and end up in brothels.

The surroundings are filthy. Many of them take their food from roadside restaurants or their brothels. The sellers used to come there. They don’t need to go out. But everything is available and sold in these brothels at higher prices than in the market. Each prostitute is forced to take 4 to 6 customers per night, mostly alcoholic, drug addicts and suffering from venereal diseases.

A prostitute generally pays 50% of all her earnings to the brothel keepers; 30% goes to pimps, money lenders, the police...; she is left barely with 20% to maintain herself in these filthy surroundings being left uncared for. Many children are born here and die without medical treatment or are strangled or poisoned to death by their mothers. They say that the cases of infanticide are very high in brothels and most of them are not reported. And besides abortions are high and in many cases women die due to their mishandling by quacks.

Most of the women do not use condoms because of the client’s opposition who insist on sexual intercourse without condoms. This is the same as in G. B. Road in Delhi. It is also said that the woman often keeps working till the last day of her pregnancy and she does have little rest even she is ill or in measles.

Babies in brothels are generally kept under the cots, on which their mothers carry on their "business" and are fed with opium so that they do not cry and disturb the customers. (I have heard the same in G. B. Road in Delhi).

Preeti Pai of Prerana working in the Kamathipura red-light area in Bombay had implemented the plan to provide an all-night crèche so that the children could be kept away between 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. when they are not likely to get any maternal attention.

Children grow up in the anti-social elements of pimps, liquor vendors, drug peddlers, gamblers... Very few of these children go to schools. Most of their mothers are illiterate. Some of mothers are not interested in their children's education. Even if others want to give the education to their children in reality they cannot do it. Mothers get up very late in the morning after a hard night's work and they can't feed and dress their children, and moreover, they are in
no position to get the children off to schools.

If prostitutes belong to higher class they send their children to schools. But they are teased by the children from the normal families. They are taunted for their mothers' profession and their illegitimate births throughout their lives, even if they are able to receive higher education.

Sanjiv Madan, a High Court lawyer had filed a petition on behalf of the Patila Udhar Samiti (Women's organization) in the High court demanding among other things, an amendment of existing regulation so that "in all educational institutions and government offices, it is the name of the mother and not the father is accepted as a proof of parentage. Parentage is a matter of opinion, while maternity is a matter of fact" argued the lawyer.

Concerning sexually transmitted diseases (STD), the red-light areas in Bombay is notorious. The Indian Health Organization (IHO) has reported that on any given day the affected population of Bombay is estimated at 36,000.IHO which has been advocating free medical treatment for prostitutes had come up with some astounding figures. I testified that if each of the 10,000 prostitutes in the Kamathipura and Falkland Road area, where 90 percent of them suffer from VD had an average offour customers a day,36,000people could beinfected STD from them every day. Dermatologist, Chandrakant K.Jagaykar of Bombay (Mumbai) found that in the majority of cases the victims ranged in age from 12 to 25. He says, "What we find particularly alarming today is the apparent increase of VD patients in the younger and even teenagers."

[ 9 ]   Case Studies in Falkland Road and Kamathipura

I interviewed prostitutes in Falkland Road and Kamathipura (the largest area of prostitution in Bombay) several times mainly in 1992.

According to the staff of IHO, Bombay (Mumbai) has 40% of the country's full-blown AIDS and 35% of HIV (the Human Immunodeficiency Virus) carriers. Other cities such as Madras (Chennai), Madurai, Surat and Imphal have recorded a significant number of HIV carriers. The situation could be
equally bad in Lucknow, Kanpur, Hyderabad, Pune, Patna, Visakhapatnam and Calcutta (Kolkata). The first case reported in Bombay. She was a 32 years old former "Devadasi" turned prostitute. She died of multiple infections with Tuberculosis and Candida in 1987.

According to the analysis of the data of over 800 women conducted by IHO based in Bombay (about 15 percent of them were below the age of 18 years) about 15 percent of the women entered prostitution through the "Devadasi" system, a system of dedicating the girls in the name of a goddess and later pushing them into prostitution. The Devadasi system is mainly practiced among untouchable castes (schedule castes).

Two-thirds of the prostitutes whom I interviewed in Mumbai were from devadasis. They did not have any education and were very poor. They are selling themselves for a lower price than that of a glass of juice (Rs.35, Seasonal Fresh Juice, Orange or Sweet lime by Room Service, Rs.25, Canned Juice, Rs.14, Tea or coffee) in Hotel Hotel Ambassador in Bombay which I stayed when I interviewed prostitutes in 1992.

Their conditions are almost the same as those of the prostitutes in G. B. Road. I can say that Indian red-light district prostitutes are forced to sell themselves because of poverty or by force. Majority of the victims of trafficking belong to socially and economically marginalized classes.

13 Rasnin

Her age is 26. She came from the state of Karnataka. She had been chosen as a devadasi before she was born. Her fate was seated before she was born. After several rites, she came to Bombay to work as a prostitute. She has worked for twelve years in Bombay.

There are three devadasis in the Kotha in which Rasnin lives and works. Her madam was also a devadasi. Rasnin had two children whose fathers were unknown, but the children were dead. She has two or three customers a day. Her rate is Rs.20 or Rs.25. She pays Madam Rs.10 every day for her rental fee. She is afraid of having venereal diseases, so that she used to use a condom. She does not have any wish to marry. She told me that she did not become pregnant, even if she did not use a condom. She does not know the reason.
14  **Manimaya**

She is 19 years old and cheerful with a beautiful smile. She is from Bombay. Her parents expired, but she has her sisters and brothers. She was misled by her friend and entered into prostitution. She has worked for four years as a prostitute. According to her feeling, she has three or four customers a day. Her rate depends on her customer, but is usually Rs.50. She spends fifteen minutes on one customer. She can choose her customer, but she says that her aim is only the money. She is illiterate. She is free to go anywhere, but she does not have any place to escape to. She says that her Kotha is the sweet house. She sometimes works for the activities of IHO (Indian Health Organization) to teach prostitutes about AIDS and distribute a condom to them.

15  **Kamla**

Kamla does not know her age. She entered into prostitution twenty years ago. Now she is a Madam and the owner of the brothel. Four girls working her Kotha. Her father died of asthma. She has 6 sisters and 6 brothers and she is the eldest. She was in the financial difficulties and visited her relative in Bombay. She got into debt of Rs.1000. She could not find a job and she had to become a prostitute to support her family and pay back her debt. She has two or three customers. She says that they are lower middle class men and earns Rs.50 or Rs.100 a day. She underwent a sterilization operation. If she found a good job, she would stop selling herself.

16  **Lakshmi**

She does not know her age. Eight or ten years have passed since she became Devadasi. She thinks she married a god. Devadasi must earn for herself. She was farming in her native village. She could not eat by farming, so she came to Bombay. In Bombay she could not find a job. She returned her native place, but she could not earn and came back to Bombay again to practice prostitution.

She tells me that she dislikes "Devadasi System" now. She did not know AIDS. She knew AIDS by people of IHO. Now she enforced her customer to use a condom.
17  **Rata**

She was Devadasi in Andhra Pradesh. She has sold herself for three years in Bombay. She has one daughter who lives with her parents in her native place. She wants her daughter to send her to the boarding school. She wants to give her good educations.

She told me that she could not have even one customer the previous night. She was sitting on the charpai (string bed) in front of her Kotha and waiting for her customer. She wreathed a jasmine garland and gave it to me.

18  **Larita**

She graduated from high school. She has one sister and three brothers. She is the eldest daughter. Her parents had an accident and had money problems. She came to Kamathipura Lane 1 by her own will for her family. She earns Rs.30–40 per customer.

19  **Manisha**

She does not know her age. She looks like a girl in her teens. She came from Karnataka. She was Devadasi. She was farming. As there was no rain, she came to Bombay last year. She has two or three men a day. She earns Rs.20 or 30 per man. The price of her saree which she was wearing was Rs.300.

20  **One of customers from Gujarat**

One of customers whom I interviewed said that he used to visit one prostitute regularly. He came from Gujarat. His job is to record the wedding ceremony on video tape. He has his wife and three children. His favorite prostitute also delivered his two children, who live in Goa. He said to me about her:

"I want her to bring back to his house, but the society will not accept it. After a few years, I will lend the house somewhere for her."

21  **Nepali girls**

In Bombay I saw more Nepali girls than in Delhi. I saw one Nepali mother and her small pretty daughter in the morning on a Nagarapanchami day in
Falkland Road. The daughter was dressed up with a pink sari and a silver belt.

As I heard that Nagarapanchami was a festival to pray women's happiness, I as well as her mother also prayed happiness for the small girl's future. I could not help praying happiness for her future.

IHO reports there are about 20000 Nepali women in Bombay's flesh trade. They are illiterate. About 20 percent of them are married and five percent are minors. Almost half the girls were deceived by other villagers or relatives and sold to the brothels. Others are responsible for selling the girls into prostitution are parents and procurer from Bombay when they return to their villages on festivals.

IHO reports about Tulasa Thapa who was rescued from the brothels in Bombay in 1982. She was 13 years old and her body was broken by three venereal diseases and three tuberculosis. After treatment she was sent back home to Nepal. Even now she is wheelchair bound. Thousands of other girls have met with a similar destiny.

22 Tulasa - a Nepali girl

A family friend named Kancha told her he would take her to her mother who was not feeling well. Tulasa, at that time, was in the market place. She was forced into a bus and at Birganj they were joined by three others who snatched away her gold ornaments and threatened her with torture and death if she raised a cry. They arrived by train at the Victoria Terminus station in Bombay and took a taxi to Kamathipura.

Tulasa was broken in a sustained manner in a brothel housing 20 girls, managed by a madam named Gauri. After 12 days Tulasa was asked to have sex with a customer, this demand was unacceptable for the child who hadn't even experienced her first menstrual cycle. After then Tulasa was forced to entertain a customer for a measly Rs. 35. Sleeping with a minimum of three customers everyday became a way of her life. She was also sent to various city hotels to entertain Arab customers for Rs. 180 the whole night.

Though her longest stay was at Gauri's brothel, she was sold to two other brothels of Kamathipura. She was first sold to Thuli, another brothel owner, for Rs. 5000. After a month Tulas sold her to Ritha, another madam,
for Rs. 7000.

After six months she was sold to Gauri for Rs. 7000 and a token Rs. 500 was given to the police who have not a little been willing partners in crime. Most of Tulasa's customers were Arabs. She said that most of them were her father's age. Rescued from the brothels by Dr. Gilada of IHO, Tulasa went back to Nepal. But she is not happy. Her mother died of the great shock that her daughter was abducted. Her father married another woman. Tulasa lives in the Home. Her stepmother is not willing to see her. And her father also does not want to meet her to keep the peace of the household.126

Though Tulasa was sold to the red light areas in Bombay by her family friend, St. M. Rita Rozario analyses "persons responsible for the sexual exploitation of women and children in India." as the following.

TABLE 5.5

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN INDIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person responsible</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Kith and Kin</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Friends and Acquaintances</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Strangers and Benefactors</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Persons involved in flesh-trade</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Persons at the service of society</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Information not available/not applicable</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

127 Rozario M. Rita and assist. by Javed Rasool and Pradeep Kesari. Trafficking in
The highest number of persons responsible for the sexual exploitation of women and children is "Kith and Kin."

"These are the "loved" persons on whom the women and children depended trustingly for their survival. A more specific break up of this group of persons under Kith and Kin shows that they are: aunt[1], brother[2], brother-in-law[6], brother and purchaser[1], elders, i.e. parents and guardians[213], eldersister[1], father[19], in-laws[1], husband[47], "husband"[4], husband, his two brothers and his mother[4], grand-mother[3], maternal uncle[1], andsisters[2], parents[19], stepmother[1], uncle[2], "uncle"[3], mother[23].

One often presumes that women and children are sexually exploited only through an organized net-work of gangs, etc., at distant places. It is surprising to see how close and near are persons who sexually exploited our women and children in India."^126

23 Babanma – the Former Devadasi

Every year thousands of girls are dedicated to Goddess "Yellamma" or "Renuka." After a short period of their concubinage, they become prostitutes in the city. The Devadasi System contributes up to 20 percent of the child prostitution. This system continues by myths, misconceptions and superstitions. Any illness in the family, skin infection, white patches (vitiligo) or leprosy patches are attributed to Goddess Yellama as "divine" signs. The matting of the hair is the most common divine sign for dedicating the girls to the Goddess, though the matting hair is just due to the bad hair maintenance. The system banned by law in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka after independence but still continues surreptitiously.

I met a former Devadasi in Tokyo. She came to attend the women's human rights conference held in Tokyo in 1994. I asked her why she became

^126 Ibid., pp. 117-118.
Devadasi.

She was born in Bombay. Her family belonged to scheduled castes. When she was three years old, her family moved to Karnataka. Her father died when she was seven years old. She is an only child. Her mother, a day laborer, did not want her daughter to marry someone and leave her. She decided to dedicate her daughter to Goddess Yellamma as Devadasi.

Babanma's first man was a Muslim driver. He came to her house twice a week and she delivered his three children. But his family knew the relationship with Babanma and him, pushed him to marry another woman. His wife started to fight him because of the existence of Babanma. Then he stopped to visit her house. When he used to come, he bought clothes for her and their children once a month. And she was given Rs.20-30 a month or sometimes a week. He came very late evening and returned around 12 at night.

After the Muslim driver had been dead in an traffic accident, she had relation with her uncle on her mother's side. Bu he also died. The police suspected the cause of his death and she was arrested by the police.

She was saved by two Catholic nuns and she was found innocent. After then every man stopped visiting her house. By the women's organization run by Catholic nuns who had saved her from the prison, she was given rehabilitation to stop continuing her past life and earn her daily bread for herself. She realized the evil of Devadasi system. She has a dream to work for improving the level of lives of other Devadasis.

This women's organization is "Joint Women's Programme." And Sr. M. Rita Rozario , the author " Trafficking in Women and Children in India" also belong to this organization.

In red-light areas there are two types of victims. Those who were brought and sold to the brothel owners by the professional girl runners are one type. These girls are brought from villages to cities with promises of jobs or marriage. Those who are not directly sold to the brothel owners are the other type. Some girls leave their family and run away in search for better life. Their adventure lands them in a brothel in the end. Some girls run away with their
lovers, who desert them. The girls dare not return to their family nor has any other means to survive and enter an immoral living in exchange for her shelter and food.

[10] **Indian Prostitution and law**

In India, prostitution is regulated under the special law, the PITA (Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act) and it is neither legal nor illegal. In other words, if a woman chooses to voluntarily indulge in commercial sex it is not an offence under the law of the land. However, the law prohibits various activities that are associated with organized prostitution of an exploitative nature such as pimping, brothel keeping, living off the earning of a prostitute, etc. Prostitution is therefore tolerated and regulated under the Indian law.

As per the PITA as well as the “Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act” (SITA), prostitution per se is not an illegal activity. It is the exploitation of the prostitution which is illegal and crime.

Prostitution is defined in Section (Annexure – A) 2 (1) of “PITA” (enacted since January, 1987) which now means “sexual exploitation or abuse of persons for commercial purposes.” The old definition of Prostitution in the SITA (1956) was “an act of a female offering her body for promiscuous sexual intercourse …” has been completely discarded.

This definition was introduced by a major amendment to the Act carried out in 1987 (by Act 44) which, for the first time also substituted the word "persons " for "females" and thereby brought under the legal ambit, both female and male prostitution. The Act makes the following offences punishable (1) keeping a brothel or allowing premises to be kept as a brothel; (2) living on the earnings of prostitution; (3) procuring, inducting or taking persons for the purposes of prostitution; (4) detaining persons in premises where prostitution is carried on; (5) prostitution in a Public place or in the vicinity of public places; (6) seducing or soliciting from a public place; and (7) seduction of a person in custody.

The Act does not forbid, abolish, prohibit or ban prostitution. The Act is designed to punish those who profit by exploiting others, both males and
females, and making them victims of the flesh trade. However, within the specific parameters laid down in the Act, a prostitute plying his or her trade within vicinity of public places is also punishable. The Act treats specific instances of immoral conduct on the part of a prostitute such as soliciting, seducing, etc. in public places as offences. In the case of other offences laid down, it is the exploiter, namely be it brothel keeper, the procurer, the landlord, the flesh trader, the pimp or the middle man, who is sought to be punished and not prostitution nor the client.

India is a signatory to the 1949 International Convention for the Suppression of Immoral Traffic. It enacted the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act in 1956 in pursuance of her having signed the International Convention. Under this Act, as well as its later amendments, the commercial exploitation of prostitution was made punishable. But prostitution per se, which was not "open" prostitution, was not deemed to be an offence. This aspect of the law came in for increasingly much criticism. It has been held that the female prostitute is punished in spite of the provisions and general direction of the Act than those elements of society who exploit the females for commercial profit by making their brothels run. Those who run brothels are rarely punished, but the female prostitutes are arrested in raids conducted by the police. The client, without whom the act of prostitution cannot be committed gets away, too.

The Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls' Act (SITA) was enacted by Parliament in 1956 and came into operation with effect from 1958. Jean D'Cunha mentions (in "The Times of India" (Review), January 22, 1995) that the Act was not the outcome of an independent, sustained, consolidated mass movement in India but the result of India being a signatory to the United Nations International Convention 1949 for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and of the exploitation of others. Even this Convention did not forbid or ban prostitution. The law in India is biased against prostitutes while the racketeers and clients get free. Jean D'Cunha reveals that Bombay has over 50,000 brothels with over one lakh of prostitutes. But between 1981 and 1987, only 535 brothels were raided under the Bombay Act. In fact the number of brothels is on the increase. He says that out of 409 brothels keepers arrested between 1981 and 1985 in Bombay, only 2 were convicted. One was fined Rs.150 or one day's rigorous imprisonment. The other was fined only Rs.10. By contrast, the average fine for a prostitute in 1980 was
Rs.60 and the average imprisonment was for seven days. Jean D' Cunha mentions that bail is liberally granted to brothel keepers and procures. During 1980–87 in Bombay, all brothel keepers and procurers who were arrested were released on bail. The brothel prostitutes are bailed out by the brothel keepers, but the street prostitutes have none to finance them or set them up in business, rarely find contacts to bail them out. It is said that, as brothel keeping is a lucrative business, corrupt politicians, the police, brothel keepers and their mafia participate this business in the nexus of bribes and corruptions.


Dr. Gilada (IHO) mentions that Devadasi system is a blot on the humanity and it must abolished completely within the shortest possible span of time. No religion or religious sentiments should be permitted to exploit humanity. The persons involved in such heinous crimes should be publicly humiliated, legally tried and thus discouraged from perpetuating the system. He suggests 5 points to abolish Devadasi system.

1. Education
   To give the education of the children of Devadasis and families following this system. Education based on scientific knowledge, clearing myths and misconceptions amongst the Devadasis and the families following this system in the devadasi affected areas. The new development of a type that elder devadasis now seem to criticize the system and prefer to discontinue it, would have a specific impact on the traditional behaviour

2. Child Sponsorship.

3. Health Care
   Proper health care can reduce the medical sufferings which are the indications for dedication. Thus exploitation can be reduced to a great extent by countering the religious superstitions and blind hope.
4. Legislation and Implementation of Laws

Necessary legislation should be passed to check the pernicious system and the laws should be strictly implemented. Person or persons involved in the dedication ceremonies should be punished with the charge of abetment of rape.

5. Resocialisation

Society should accept these girls who wish to give up the system as well the prostitution. They should be given vocational training aiming at their economic independence.

[ 12 ] Devadasi Rehabilitation Program in Karnataka

The Karnataka State Women’s Development Corporation is entrusted with the work of rehabilitation of Devadasis by the State Government in Belgaum, Bijapur and Bagalkot districts only. The Karnataka SC/ST Development Corporation is implementing the same programme in the Districts of Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri, Gulbarga, Raichur, and Bellary.

The Government of Karnataka surveyed the number of Devadasis in the above districts in 1986.

TABLE 5.6

THE NUMBER OF DEVADASIS IN KARNATAKA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No of Devadasis (1986)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Belgaum</td>
<td>3737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bijapur (including Bagalkot)</td>
<td>5503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Dharwad</td>
<td>2503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gulbarga</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Raichur (including Koppal)</td>
<td>7374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bellary</td>
<td>1635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to resurvey of the Devadasis in Belgaum District was conducted by the project team during 1991–1992, the number of Devadasis in Belgaum was 2984.753 Devadasis were decreased because many migrated to other places(for example, the red light areas) and some are dead.

The Bijapur and Bagalkot District resurveyed in 1994. The number of Devadasis was 6746. Because the devadasis in some villages were not included in the survey during 1986.

**Handloom Weaving Training**

The Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation devadasi women have been trained in weaving. After the training, looms are supplied at 50% subsidy and individual living cum worksheds. Under this programme the training is completely free. The produce which former devadasi made is locally marketed through panchayat and other local markets. But the number of Devadasi covered were not many. In Belgaum District the government paid Rs. 698569 and covered 126 devadasis. In Bijapur 70 devadasis were covered by using Rs. 530400.

**Awareness Program**

As it would be impossible to eradicate Devadasi system merely through economic programs, social reform programs have been started and one of them is the awareness program regarding the superstitious practices of the system. It is said that the village panchayats, village leaders, Youth organization and religious leaders are involved in the awareness campaigns. Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation in association with Myrada and Vimochana has been implementing Awareness Programs in the Belgaum project area.

The following results are reported:
- Bangle breaking: reduced by 80%
- Forced drinking and vulgar dancing: reduced by 75%
- Begging: Reduced by 50%
- Rituals: Reduced by 50%
- Matted Hair: reduced by 5%
Health Camps

Health checkups are being organized with the help of Health Department and NGOs. Awareness on AIDS and other related diseases and prevention is one of the important components of the health awareness programs and health camps. The District Health Department and the Devi Myrada Project are actively associated in creating awareness about AIDS etc.

There is the scheme called Financial Assistance for Children in difficult circumstances from 1994–95. The assistance provided under the scheme is Rs. 100/month and more.

. . . . .

Devadasi system is said to be an age old practices which is deeply rooted in the religion. But this is just the evil system which sells girls and women of lower caste for prostitution by using the name of religion and ignorance at least in modern India.