CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

Studies on the commercial sex workers are not very frequent in India, even though commercial sex work is widely prevalent in metropolitan cities. Commercial sex work also has connectivity with some traditional social system like Devadasi. This study has the significance of looking into the institution of devadasi system in one of the religious centres of Tamilnadu, which also has commercial sex work associated with the religious festivals and by-passers like lorry drivers, Industrial workers and college students etc. Similar studies are rarely found in the literature of commercial sex work. This study strongly proposes to make efforts to bring out the social, economic and health aspect of the commercial sex workers, in particular and customers in general.

This study entitled: “Vulnerability of Prostitutes to HIV/AIDS and other Health Hazards- a Sociological Study in Pudukkottai District” has been conducted in Viralimalai a small panjaya coming under the jurisdiction of Pudukottai district. The rational behind choosing Viralimalai is that this village panjayat is known for commercial sex activity since Chola’s rule. This village panjayat is also listed out in the Government gazette for Commercial Sex Work as a follow up of traditional Devadasi system. The vestiges of the traditional devadasi practice is still found here and there in certain pockets of this village panjayat. Women born in ‘Isai vellalar’ community has to accept Commercial Sex work as their hereditary occupation. The boys born in to this community prefer to work as pimps, brokers or agents to this occupation. Women have no other choice except accepting Commercial Sex work as a business which has a lot of feministic implications. The radical feminists have viewed prostitution as the extension of patriarchal apportion on women, manifest in sex activities.

Study Area

Viralimalai is a tiny pilgrimage town on the Chennai Kanyakumari Highways located in the border of Pudukkottai district. Viralimalai is famous for it’s lord Muruga Temple. This temple attracts hundreds of people from neighboring districts every day. Especially on festive seasons thousands of pilgrims are thronging to this small but busy
town not only to say their vow to their faithful God but also to fulfill their desire of casual sex.

**Research Design**

This study aims to bring out the living conditions of the commercial sex workers along with their socio, economic, health aspects. Hence it is a descriptive study. There is no point of diagnosing, experimenting and or exploring about commercial sex workers. These are not applicable.

**Unit of the Analysis**

Any female commercial sex worker of any age group, practicing sex work in Viralimalai is the unit of analysis.

**Population and Sample**

There is no formal counting of the commercial sex workers. The number of commercial sex workers at Viralimalai is 320, which is made available through a survey conducted by an NGO. The study covers 50 per cent of the population by applying Systematic Random Sampling. Every alternative commercial sex worker was selected. Some of them initially did not co-operate but after serious conversation they are convinced.

**PROFILE OF COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS**

Commercial sex workers are predominantly in the age group of 26 years to 30 years. Though the reasons are many, but “family problem” is said to be the prime reason, which is supported by illiteracy and unemployment. Community wise analysis brought out the fact that many of them come from MBC (49%) section particularly from Devadasi group.

The commercial sex work is facilitated by the role of pimps and brokers. The aged women who are experienced as past commercial sex workers act as pimps where as the youth males function as brokers. This facilitates and safe guards the young women CSWs. Even otherwise the aged women and youth feel unsuitable for any other work.
The religion wise count of the commercial sex worker establishes the fact, most of them are from Hindu religion.

Those who do not have sufficient income in CSW have reported of going to other part-time work like construction workers. Considerable number of the respondents said they do not know other works than CSW and construction work. However sufficient income through sex work is reported during festival period since Viralimalai Murugan temple is popular for celebrations conducted on various actions.

**CSWs- Economic Aspect of Analysis:**

**Income**

There is no relationship between age and income. Aged and young age are equally distributed with little variations. Though the young age is an important factor which goes with seniority/aged. This all age groups are found in all income categories.

The CSWs visit private hospital for sake of privacy.

CSW like to save the money monthly once. High income groups engage pimps because pimps experience and way of approach help them to earn more money.

Those who enter between 16 to 20 years get more income because some customers like the youth.

High income groups are consulting the private Doctors because they are earning high income as well they do not have time to consult, the Government Doctors in hospital and to keep the secrecy. Hence they like to consult the private doctor and for quick remedy.

The CSWs have least possibilities to join in their family.

More number of respondents are earning sufficient money during festival periods, because Viralimalai is related to Lord Muruga temple. So devotees are gathering to worship Lord Muruga (Hindu supreme God Lord Shiva’s son) as well as for sex. This is time sex workers are earning the sufficient income.

**Expenditure:**

Considerable section of the respondents are spending huge amount for private hospital because they do not have satisfaction in Government treatment. They do not like to go in queue. The CSWs want to maintain the secrecy.
One-third of Sex workers are spending Rs 2500 per month for pimp, because pimp is the backbone for sex work. The pimp is having more experience and half of the CSWs are staying in pimp’s house.

Considerable number of the respondents (49.4%) are paying Rs 5000/- as bribe (Mamul) to police on every month, otherwise police send them to court or put them in jail. To avoid these problems they are giving the money to police.

One third of Commercial sex workers are spending for alcohol (Maximum Rs 5000) per year.

CSWs are spending huge amount for Food, Gifts, Medical, Jewels, Dress, Parents, Pimp and police.

List of Diseases:

Many Sex Workers said they have been infected by more diseases like STD (16.3%), Chickunkuniya (6%), Fever (1.3%), Skin& itching (2.5%), Abdominal pain (1.6%) and Ulcer (6%). But they were cured after consulting the Doctor. HIV/AIDS (1.9%) is not cured.

According to CSWs, 62 customers are infected by T.B, 706 customers are identified as skin diseased, 399 customers are infected by itching, 318 customers are identified as STD patients, 49 customers are identified as HIV/AIDS victims and 21 customers are identified in syphilis and Sexually infected disease.

Considerable section of CSWs, want separate hospital to heal their diseases because in general hospitals Doctors scold and ill-treat them.

More number of Commercial Sex Workers like to test their blood regularly because they have more chance to get the diseases from their customers.

One third of CSWs (30) are affected by skin diseases because it is spread through customers.

Entertainment:

The considerable section of Commercial Sex workers (54.4%) have said that they are going picnic with the help of their customers because to avoid the unnecessary expenditure.
More number of Commercial sex workers (77) are staying with their friends because they do not like to see their relatives and they like to live a free life.

Entertainment are found as going to see the movie, Watching street play, Drama, Shopping, visiting the historical places and Worshiping God in temple.

Apart from spending their time for picnic etc, they have also enjoyed listening to devotional song because they get peace towards listening devotional songs.

CSWs are expecting the GO/NGO help to rear their children and to give the good education.

Most of them are willing to get rid of this profession, since they feel to lead a normal life like others.

They like to live as normal people but no one ready to help them so they unable to find the solution. They are expecting help of Go/NGO, to rehabilitate their life.

Considerable per cent (40%) of the respondents are willing to lead this profession because of easy money and free life.

They like to go temple for offering to god and they like to participate in marriage function if CSWs are invited by others.

**EDUCATIONAL STATUS:**

Considerable section of educational groups and illiterates engage pimps.

Many have entered in the profession at the age of 16 to 20 years. The others entered after 21 years, merely due to problems in their family life. (Death of husband, cheated by others, divorce etc.)

Most of the High School group and Higher secondary group are also found affected by diseases. Even NGO/ Go are giving more training and showing more advertisement but they are unable to escape from the sexual Transmitted Diseases.

Between 16 to 20 years, the number of unmarried women is very high who entered early than other groups. Married, divorced, deserted and widow women enter after 21 due to their family situation.

Few married and deserted are unwilling to rejoin their family.
Few respondents have said that they did not want it to the next generation because in their life they faced more problems like without money and antisocial elements so they avoid bearing the child.

**Analysis of CSW and Customers**

When the CSWs age increases, the number of customer decreases. Because most of the customers like the young CSWs as well as they can attract more customers with beauty and youth.

Most of the CSWs are engaging pimps belong to MBC category because few of the pimps were becoming as devadasis as well as they have more experience. Devadasis were particularly more in MBC category.

In marital status, divorced and deserted CSWs are largely engage pimps, because they do not know how to do the other works so they are surrendering to pimps.

The post Graduate respondent attended minimum number of customers because she does not have much experience and do not want to be like other CSWs. So she likes to contact the decent and wealthy customers.

The lower monthly income groups are aged and illiterate and they have to earn for food and day today activities, with the compulsion CSWs have sex with the customers for low income. The high income groups are getting high amount from customers.

The lower the monthly income gets more customers for a year. Higher the monthly income gets less customers for a year.

One third (26) of CSWs are infected by STD, it is spread through customers like...Lorry drivers, industrial workers and antisocial elements.

Considerable numbers of customers are affected by HIV/ AIDS so the CSWs afraid because they have more chance to get this disease to them.

Few Commercial sex Workers reported that they are scolded by a set of customers, who are drunkards, rowdies and antisocial elements. The Politicians are helping them to get bail from court. Considerable section of Commercial Sex Workers said they have become as Commercial Sex Workers with the help of pimps.
The NGOs role is very vital among the CSWs, Maximum CSWs have said customers are approaching sympathetically, kindly, friendly and few of them have said that customers approach cruelly, Neglecting etc.

**General Analysis**

On the whole, this study reveals the fact that women in Viralimalai are still found to be Commercial Sex Worker but without being licentiated activity. The women of this village panjayat is noted for this activity inspite of the State and Central Government’s effort to rescue the women of this region from prostitution. The obstacles in preventing Commercial Sex activity still remains unknown, not only to the Government but also NGOs working in the region. NGOs could only propagate against HIV/AIDS preventive measures but could not stop the commercial sex activity of women in Viralimali. Out of 160 respondents, all being commercial sex workers, have openly confessed the inevitability of Commercial sex Work in their community. They do have justify their work referring to family, poverty, sudden family crisis, deceived by male lovers and so on. These social causes though referred by the respondents, there is hidden fact regarding patriarchy, capitalism and women’s status. To probe feministically, this issue is understood that women respondents do not hesitate in revealing that fact as Commercial Sex Workers.

There was communal support to this activity in this region. Women entered in to this occupation through socially accepted and culturally approved custom namely ‘Pottukkatuthal’ which was a customary practice here that soon after a girl attained menarche (first Puberty) she was taken to a temple during the festival time and the priest tied sacred thread consisting of a small golden dot at the centre. This was symbolic mark that she is open for Commercial Sex Work. Such a free male and restricted female relationship is institutionalized in the name of customs that opens the way for commercial sex work in the region.

There are two kinds of Commercials Sex work activity found in the region. The study has brought out two categories of women commercial sex workers. Those women
belong to Isai Vellalar (MBC) community and those women belong to other communities who have migrated to this region. The later have found this region safer to run their Commercial Sex Work.

Among the reasons for becoming Commercial Sex Workers, the later category also overlaps with the reasons of traditional Commercial Sex workers. Though there is not much difference in the factors influencing Commercial Sex Workers, the major difference lies in the fact that the formers are inhabitants while the later are migrants to this region.

This difference is reflected in the benefit of the Commercial Sex Workers to be specific in the case of traditional Commercial Sex Workers there is a clear-cut contract/agreement executed between the seller and customer. This agreement guarantees monetary benefits such as creation of permanent assets like house, jewels, deposits, lands etc. Once again the choice to extend the contract is left with customer alone. Where as in the case of migrant Commercial Sex Workers there is no such agreement. As a result there is no monetary benefit except the timely payment made to the seller. As a consequence the second category of commercial sex workers are more vulnerable to variable diseases ranging from mild physical ailment to serious HIV/AIDS problems. These women get infected of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) mainly because they entertained too many persons in a day, which is not the case of the traditional Sex Workers. This indicates the plight of women commercial sex workers in this region suffer from similar problems and not same. Any Government and Non Government agency should look at this issue in a different dimension as women centred one.

Another area of injustice done to Commercial Sex Workers in this region is related to the way they are handled by the police officials and the brokers. The patriarchal attitude is so strongly evidenced in this aspect because it is a horrible situation when women as individuals or as a group is caught hold red handedly during the raids. Generally what happened is the police will catch hold of the women Commercial Sex Workers labeling as prostitutes. The chare-sheet is prepared on these women based on the
compliant received from the male customer. In the case of (VIP) male customers the police will create a binami and compliant will be lodged through him.

General injustice in this aspect is great because the men customers are not caught hold as a part of the crime; they are neither penalized nor even imprisoned. From the general social point of view, the culprits of the prostitution are only women and the male customers are freed from even minor punishment.

By paying the penalty the women commercial sex workers are pulled in to indebtedness to the brokers’ life long. There is no exit for these women to come out of this occupation under any circumstances.

The women Commercial Sex Workers are both categories however felt and feel for social stigma attached to them. They have openly expressed their feeling of being bad as the society around them look down upon and many times this women become objects of ridicule, mocking and muck racking. Such as social stigma is till attached with women commercial sex workers still and not with the male customers. Gender discrimination especially the double standards of moral behaviour is still in favor of men alone and thus women becomes the victims of gender discrimination, because the immoral behaviour of male customers appears to be in acceptable behavioral phenomenon where as the same in women is highly condemned one. The pleasure seeking behavior of men is tolerated accepted and justified in a patriarchal social structure. Viralimalai is not an exception to this phenomenon.

1. To view this commercial sex work of women from the feministic perspective, it is concluded in this study that women commercial sex workers of both categories become the victims of both sexual and economic exploitation.
2. Women are forced to sell their flesh as a marketable commodity. Under capitalism the demand for such a commodity is heavy.
3. Commercial sex work / Prostitution is still viewed as an institutionalized practice of men and always women alone being socially stigmatized. Thus there is double standards of morality prevails. In which the same behaviour in
men is justifiable and in women it is condemned. Law also is in favor of such double standards.

4. Capitalistic structure endorsed patriarchal values continue, as long as they go together, the prostitution will continue to be practiced and it will not be prohibited by any means.

Suggestions

This study brings out the pathetic conditions of commercial sex workers. They are highly exploited, physically by the customers, economically by brokers, which results in psychological disorder and infectious diseases. Hence it is very important to focus on them for welfare programmes by educating and training them for alternative employment opportunities. This requires concentrated work by sociologists and economic assistance by government, which simultaneously improve their socio economic conditions. Systematically the help of broad minded health practitioners to counsel and treat the CSWs sympathetically has to be organized by NGOs.

Highly concentrated Self Help Group techniques may be applied. Special training programmes may be offered e.g., PCO, Computer operations, Beauty parlor, Screen printing, Flex board making, horticulture, Interior technician etc. Prohibitory strategies

I. The prevention of immoral traffic act PIT should be amended in such a way as to punish simultaneously both the female seller and the male customer.

II. Patriarchy designed the law itself so as not viewing the male customers as the culprits of the same crime/ sin. Serious efforts must be made by the law makers as well as by the women commissions like the National Commission for Women and the State Commission for Women to review the act with general lens and to make necessary amendments to include all males involved in connection with commercial sex work of prostitution i.e male customers, male pimps, male brokers, male intermediaries, male house owners and male lodge owners etc. Cases should be filed simultaneously against all these males along with female seller.

III. The police officials should be gender sensitized through special training programmes about how to be gender neutral in handling PIT cases.
IV. Women commercial sex workers also be given awareness programmes.

V. Magistrate and advocate at all levels ranging from sub magistrate to supreme court should also be sensitized about discriminatory aspect of PIT act and the gender neutral way to such cases.

**NGOs**

NGOs working in the field of commercial sex workers, Transgender and HIV/AIDS should also be trained in the need for gender bias free approach to women.

Gender awareness about Commercial Sex Workers trade, its patriarchal association and the prevailing double standards morality as well as the social stigma attached with Commercial Sex Work should be given to public.

Special health care services should be provided to women Commercial Sex Workers.

Special health insurance scheme should be introduced exclusively for women Commercial Sex Workers.