

## **Feminity and Female Genocide- Girls Trafficking to Sex Trade and Female Sex Workers: An Experience from Sex Industry/Sex Workers' Community**

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### **Abstract**

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This paper examines various roles played by females sex workers(FSWs) to keep alive their stigmatized trade. FSWs used to commit feminine genocide deliberately for their survival in their community. The study was conducted on brothel based FSWs of Bowbazar red-light area of Kolkata, India. For this purpose 220 FSWs(out of 2200) were selected randomly according to their religion, age at the time of entry, recruitment process and nature of connecting person, etc. The case studies were used to analyze qualitatively their involvement in feminine genocide. The study revealed that about 62% of FSWs entered into the trade where the females were their connecting persons. It had been seen that FSWs played their roles as acceptors, provocators and defective mothers to push the new one into their trade. It reminds us that large scale awareness and education would be provided to FSWs to prevent and control the entry of new one into the trade. Thus beside patriarchy system, female could be able to protect their feminity.

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**Keywords:** Female Sex workers, Sex trade, female as connecting persons, defective mothering

Sex as the anatomical and physiological characteristics signifies biological maleness and femaleness. Gender is socially constructed masculinity and feminity. Masculinity and feminity are defined by social, cultural and psychological attributes in a particular society at a particular time(Beauvoir, 1989).

This differentiation underpins as an impact of patriarchy, 'a system of male dominance, legitimized within the family and society through superior rights, privileges, authority and power'(Mathur, 2004). So, the gender refers sex differentiation and regulates human interaction on that basis.

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This social construction embodies the women sexuality which causes the hetero-patriarchal structure of inequality, violence and moral censure. Further, female sexuality has two aspects of the female sexual universe- that represents cohesive power, danger and fear and the realm of ecstasy, desire, intimacy, sexuality and pleasure (Vance, 1984).

Therefore, the gender or sexes in all societies is clothed in cultural values that normalize the relationship of the sexual/genetic reproduction by social reproduction. The inequality of gender relationship is culture specific. But the subordination of women by men for sexual exploitation arose at a specific stages of history of development of market and subjugation through warfare creating a 'gender specific phenomenon' (Howrad, 2003) unique to stratified society. Male's dominance in domestic market or state system is mediated by social structure. In tribal societies, the male-female relationship is more complementary than in non-tribal societies where the relationship is often unabashedly dominantly subservient in nature. The relationship between sexes is to look at it through the prism of socio-biology wherein the relationship of male's dominance is explained evolutionary in terms. But the system of prostitution, a social construction was invented by males- provided scope to males to inflict their masculinity or female sexuality. In prostitution, relationship can be had on 'strict short individual bilateral bases, without further social implication' (Meillasoux, 1986). The opposite of the prostitutes are the virgins. But they too have privileges, not the identity as a woman is broken down into several constituent pieces (Dworkin, 1994) leaving her sexualized body dangling in the market that can be ruthlessly exploited. At each of these existences of the females in prostitution market- from the point of her entry to her journey through several stages of her stigmatized existence, the males contrive a situation through which she can be subjugated and exploited for pleasure leaving for rootless and homeless.

Thus in the sex trade, the females are victims of socially constructed and sexuality controlled by hetero-patriarchal threat and disruption, and where their body is commodified as on sex objects to enjoy pleasure. The women from depressed castes and classes were initially driven off to this profession.

The poor economy, unstable marriage, high rate illegitimacy and other related factors engulf the women into the sex trade. In their 'culture of poverty', it is a way of economic alternative (Lewis, 1965).

Several studies/researches on prostitution analyzed that patriarchal politics and male's domination are the prime causes for this femicide (Das, 1991; Nag, 2000; Pradeshi & Bhattacharya, 2006; Adhikari, 2009; Sabet, Rahaman & Ahmed, 2012). This is an outcome of patriarchal order intent on destroying females or securing their conformity through the threat and use of violence (Radford, 1992). This process is undoubtedly a long run. But after a longstanding effort and movements towards women's equality and justice as well as women human rights, the social awareness towards girls care, education and work participation yields a good impact in women life in general.

But the violence against women and trafficking to the sex trade, in fact, are rampant because perhaps in our patriarchal system 'girls are not born, girls are made' (Beauvoir, 1989) - a process inculcates to shape them as sex commodity.

Nevertheless, prostitution speaks the degree of participation of women in genocide and the violence and cruelty prostitutes exhibit, run closely parallel to their male counterpart. It seems to be a valid *prima facie* that they are involved in gendercide. The range of cultural and policy mechanism in the sex trade allow or more frequently, inhibit the expression of women's aggressive and genocidal potential which lure other women into the sex trade ( Jones, 2007)

In present study, roles of FSWs had been explored to know critically their involvement for this genocide act which was certainly the cause of trafficking of women/girls into the sex trade and its continuation in human society.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from Bowbazar red-light area, a century long brothel of Kolkata, only metro city of eastern India.

A complete census enumeration of all households of FSWs was made, which revealed a total of 2220 households of female sex workers in the area. Out of these, 220 FSWs (10% of 2200) were purposively selected. They differed in the manner of recruitment to the trade, castes & races, status as sex workers (ranking in their trade).

## Procedure

220 FSWs were interviewed through a semi-structured interview schedules and participatory observation was about various aspects of their life and trade for a period of 3 years. In addition to the above, case studies, life history, gender role of connecting persons and role of other association linked to the trade and their experiences during joining to the trade were sought in order to explore female genocide.

## Result

### Social, Religious and Educational Background of the Fsws

At present study, the FSWs were mainly driven off into the sex trade from different districts of West Bengal. Obviously, these districts were dominated by socio-economically poor and backward population. In these districts, the rate of education was poor, specially girls' education was neglected and girls/females were victims of gender discrimination. By the way, their representation was highest (about 68%) from Murshidabad, a district bordered by Indo-Bangladesh boarder. The population was dominated by Muslim minority.

The study revealed (table 1) that poverty influenced 123 women to become sex workers, even when they were minor (36 no) within the age of 10-15 years. In such case, the girls of Muslim community were highest. We find that 14 girls were victims of child marriage/underage marriage. Secondly, 48 of them were victims of torture committed by their husband and in-laws and it was equal for both Hindu and Muslim. The false sense of security by their paramours lured them (22 no) into the trade. The cultural milieu of the sex workers' community had pushed 15 girls into the trade. And 12 girls were there due to their broken family and all of them were from Muslim community.

**Table 1: Causes Responsible for Drawing Women into the Trade by Religion and Age (In Years) & Marital Status at the Time of Entering Into the Trade**

Reason for	Religion												Total
	Hindu						Muslim						
	10-15		15-20		Above 20		10-15		15-20		Above 20		
	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married	Unmarried	Married	
Acute Poverty	10 (4.5%)	6 (2.7%)	9 (4%)	18 (8.1%)	2 (0.9%)	20 (9%)	12 (5.4%)	8 (3.6%)	8 (3.6%)	14 (6.3%)	-	16 (7.2%)	123 (55.9%)
Torture committed	-	4 (1.8%)	-	12 (5.4%)	-	8 (3.6%)	-	5 (2.2%)	-	7 (3.1%)	-	12 (5.4%)	48 (21.8%)
Victim of love	4 (1.8%)	2 (0.9%)	6 (2.7%)	-	2 (0.9%)	-	-	-	6 (2.7%)	-	2 (0.9%)	-	22 (10%)
Broken family	-	-	4 (1.8%)	-	-	-	4 (1.8%)	-	4 (1.8%)	-	-	-	12 (5.4%)
Up-bringing	-	-	1 (0.45%)	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.9%)	-	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.9%)	1 (0.45%)	1 (0.45%)	2 (0.9%)	15 (6.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 (6.3%)</b>	<b>12 (5.4%)</b>	<b>20 (9%)</b>	<b>32 (14.5%)</b>	<b>6 (2.7%)</b>	<b>30 (13.6%)</b>	<b>16 (7.2%)</b>	<b>15 (6.8%)</b>	<b>20 (9%)</b>	<b>22 (10%)</b>	<b>3 (1.3%)</b>	<b>30 (13.6%)</b>	<b>220 (100%)</b>

Source : Field Work

**Table 2: Educational Status of FSWs**

Age(in y)	Education status								Total
	Illiterate		Lettered		Primary		High School		
	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	
10-15	4(1.8%)	7(3.1%)	10(4.5%)	9(4%)	8(3.6%)	14(6.3%)	4(1.8%)	1(0.45%)	57 (25.9%)
15-20	8(3.6%)	12(5.4%)	12(5.4%)	15(6.8%)	24(10.9%)	12(5.4%)	8(3.6%)	3(1.3%)	94 (42.7%)
Above 20	6(2.7%)	8(3.6%)	15(6.8%)	12(5.4%)	12(5.4%)	10(4.5%)	3(1.3%)	3(1.3%)	69 (31.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18(8.1%)</b>	<b>27(12.2%)</b>	<b>37(16.8%)</b>	<b>36(16.3%)</b>	<b>44(20%)</b>	<b>36(16.3%)</b>	<b>15(6.8%)</b>	<b>7(3.1%)</b>	<b>220 (100%)</b>

Source: Field Work

From table 2, we get that 20.3% of them was illiterate and 12.2% them was from Muslim community. Secondly almost equal percentage (16%) of them of both communities was lettered. But 36.3% of them had experienced with primary level of education and it was about 4% more among Hindu. Only 9.9% of them had high school education and it was almost double in case of Hindu.

### Recruitment Process and Gender Role

Table 3 gravitated that FSWs, in our study were entered into the trade through different ways where there was a gender role played by their connecting person. It had been seen that only 7.2% of them was entered without any connected person. It was significant that 62.1% of them were come to the trade by females in different relations; even their mothers were taken an important part in this regard. Their husband or paramour was responsible for 11.8%. Their relatives(28.1%) were played an active role to push them into the stigmatized profession and among them 22.7% was by their female relatives. Simultaneously, their female neighbor brought them (30.4%) into the trade. And 9% of them were connected by their mothers as FSWs.

**Table 3: Recruitment Process to the Trade**

Connecting person and the		Age (in years) at the time of entering into t			Total
		10-15	15-20	Above 20	
<b>Self</b>		-	4(1.8%)	12(5.4%)	<b>16(7.2%)</b>
<b>Husband/Lover</b>		6(2.7%)	12(5.4%)	8(3.6%)	<b>26(11.8%)</b>
<b>Relatives</b>	<b>Male</b>	2(0.9%)	4(1.8%)	6(2.7%)	<b>12(5.4%)</b>
	<b>Female</b>	14(6.3%)	18(8.1%)	18(8.1%)	<b>50(22.7%)</b>
<b>Mother</b>		2(0.9%)	8(3.6%)	10(4.5%)	<b>20(9%)</b>
<b>Neighbour</b>	<b>Male</b>	10(4.5%)	15(6.8%)	4(1.8%)	<b>29(13.1%)</b>
	<b>Female</b>	23(10.4%)	33(15%)	11(5%)	<b>67(30.4%)</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>57(25.9%)</b>	<b>94(42.7%)</b>	<b>69(31.3%)</b>	<b>220(100%)</b>

Source: Field Work

FSWs of the area are ranked according to their condition of their situations in the trade. Three such categories of social ranking exist in the area. Within the category are those who offer themselves of sexual pleasure and earn money in lieu of it; FSWs who have become brothel owners and have become operators of the trade by renting out their rooms of their houses and in the process control at least a significant aspects of their FSWs lives; and the FSWs who have retired from the trade(Adhikari, 2007). There is trend/expectation among them to reach the upper hierarchy. We observe that they have a competition to become a brothel owner which raises their social and economic status in their community. We find that after entering into the trade the FSWs loose their connection with their natal place initially.

But after few years in their journey of sex workers' lives they rebuild their connection with their natal/in-laws families and they use to visit and provide support to their family. They also use it as tactics to bring new girl/women to their trade of their neighborhood area. It brings advantages in their profession. Firstly they get added advantages from their brothel owner and secondly it is a process to raise their social situation in their community to make them as brothel owner.

**Table 4: Fsws' Relationship with Natal/In-Laws/Relatives after Entering Into the Trade According to Their Background in the Trade**

FWSs' background in the trade	Relational pattern			Total
	Regular with supportive nature	Very frequent/often	No connection	
<b>FSW</b>	62(28.1%)	12(5.4%)	66(30%)	140(63.3%)
<b>Malkin(brothel owner)</b>	26(11.8%)	9(4%)	18(8.1%)	53(24%)
<b>Withdrawal/retired from the trade</b>	6(2.7%)	4(1.8%)	17(7.7%)	27(12.2%)
<b>Total</b>	94(42.7%)	25(11.3%)	101(45.9%)	220(100%)

Source: Field Work

We find from table 4 that out 63.3% of the FSWs, 28.1% had regular contact with their natal/in-laws/relatives families and 5.4% had frequent contact. Among the malkin, 11.8% had regular and 4% had frequent contact. In case of third category(retired/withdrawal FSWs), it was 2.7% as regular and 1.8% used to visit frequently.

## Discussion

### Fsws' Role as Acceptors to New Comers and Ruling Control over Them

Loving making is a common phenomenon in human beings. The scope of free mixing brings girls close to boys through which they establish their emotional tie up. It is not only a biological needs, it fulfills their psychological needs also. Marriage as basic institution is a cultural practice by which a new family builds up.

But till in our society, love-marriage does not prefer by the seniors of the family. It thinks that love marriage of girl would hamper the parental status of girl or it is a gossip to neighbor. Sometimes it is a cause of social boycott.

Case- 1

Anita(36) was a love victim. When she was in class-IX, she got involved with a boy of her nearby locality. She was from a conservative Hindu family. She was also only girl child of her parents, out of 4 children. She passed secondary education with good performance. Then she took admission for higher secondary (10+2) from another school. One day her relationship with that boy was come into her family and they objected it. In the meantime the boy(lover) and she decided to get marry and they would be settled at Kolkata where her lover was already in some work for earning. So, to make their plan success she left her parents and came into a rented house at Bowbazar. They ceremonized their marriage at a temple. Her lover introduced with a senior lady who was introduced as his maternal aunt and owner of the house. Thus they enjoyed their marital life for 3 days only. Thereafter her love left the place and told her that he was gone to his work and he would be returned at evening. After that Anita shared, ' I was waiting for him and was very much worried. Then the lady told me, he had a work load and he would not return at night. Thus I passed another 4 days. After that the lady introduced a man who wanted to involve with me sexually forcefully. I protested and cried for help. Then the lady came and told me that my husband would return never. I was sold to her. So, I was her slave and she would use me according to her will. I resisted it. But she started to torture and she stopped her assistance to provide basic needs. Even she kept me under lock and key with posting security outside the room. Sometimes she used to meet me and tried to convince me with various threats and violence. She convinced me that I had nothing to do. I would not be returned to my home and my family would not accept me. I became a nasty girl. While if I would obey her words, I would be able to lead a healthy life style. Due to hunger and social and economical threats I agreed with per proposal and become a sexual entertainer. Now I have a son and I am a malkin(brothel owner)'. So, if that day she was rescued by that lady, she was not in the place. But her mother figure pushed her to the trade.

Anyway, the love making between boys and girls and notion of building up an own independent family causes harm to the girls when the particular boys play a deceived role. We find that a number of girls lured into the trade by a false sense of security of their paramour selling them to FSWs.



The FSWs did not protest it and she did not protect the girls from her entry to the trade, while they welcome to accept them to the trade. In that case, they used to act violently with physical and mental torture. They did not take any step to rescue them. Here female as brothel operator used to involve in homicide to run their vicious cycle. They did not consider the betterment of their own gender. They used to commit harm of their own with a system for which once she was victim.

#### FSWs' Role as Provocator

After entering into the trade, a woman/girl shapes herself according to the need and demand of their particular community. Her behavior, physical gesture and body language are beyond the gender role-relation because she uses to dole her sex for money. The regular struggle with fellow workers, customers and brothel owner is a common phenomenon for her survival. The stigmatized life changes her emotional aspects. She only learns her business. She learns how to earn more and it depends on how many customers she would entertain daily with what amount of money. Her earning is not for her solely. She has to share it to her brothel owner for shelter and trade because brothel owner plays a key role for smooth operation of the trade. The influence of the brothel owner protects her from any unexpected heckled/tortured by customers/local leaders/police. From her earning, she maintains herself and her household consisting babu(male partner), child(ren) and sometimes she provides support to her parents, siblings and other relatives. Simply she has no other alternative to raise her earning(Adhikari, 2007). But a scope is there if she could be capable to bring other girls/women into the trade. It would help to get added benefits from her brothel owner and it is also process to upgrade her status from FWSs to brothel owner. Through this, she would be capable to give shelter other girls/women after letting or subletting a house/floor for the trade(Adhikari, 2009).

That's why she keeps contact with her natal place and visits to there time to time. When she visits her malkin/brothel owner share gold ornaments and cash in advance by which her family and neighbor could feel that she is in well-off position. By this time, her support to her family changes their lifestyle while they were once poor in their poor and backward community.

When a FSW reaches at her place, girls of their community shows their jealousy and they interact with her for a job like her by which they would be able to bring change in their life without any sufficient knowledge and information regarding her involvement. This technique helps to bring another one into the trade.

Case 2 :

Salma(34) was in the trade for last 18 years. She was from a poor Muslim family of Murshidabad district, an Indo-Bangladesh bordering district of West Bengal. She had 6 younger siblings including two brothers. Her father was a daily labour and mother was a housewife. She attended primary education up to second standard and thereafter, she used to assist their family in domestic chores. Her father's income was not enough to arrange their basic necessities. Further, her parents were unable to arrange her marriage. By that time, Fatima(40) who was her neighbor and shifted to Kolkata for earning, visited her natal place. From her earning, she used to support her natal family and she used to manage a well-off life style. That was much attractive to others in their neighbor. She willingly interacted with Salma. As a result of this, Salma requested her to take their place for work by which she could be able to assist her parents. Initially, Fatima did not agree. But it was her tactics. Lastly, Salma accompanied her and reached at Kolkata at her work place. Thereafter, Fatima was enforced to join her in the trade. No one came to rescue her. But they started to torture physically her.

In Salma's words, 'Here there is an instruction to all by malkin(brothel owner) under whom a FSW operates the trade, if a FSW could capable to recruit a girl, she would get benefit from malkin, Nevertheless, it is process to become a malkin

#### FSWs' Defective Role as Mother

Sex trade is not a family business that would be used to promote own family members. FSWs use to face various hazards in their daily lives. But they welcome motherhood as their cultural practice. They are incapable to provide 'intensive mothering' to their children(Rich, 1983). They have no proper control and strategies like safe shelter and others for rearing up a child. Even the male partner's role as father is costless and thin/absent(Adhikari, 2012). The girls in particular in their community do not get proper attention to protect their privacy, and education as basic change agent does not foster for long. Only at their childhood, they use to attend NGO's run education centres. From their early childhood, they use to pass their time outside mother's place and they use to come contact with opposite sex at early stage of their development.

## Case – 3:

Tumpa(20) was a girl child of Rupa, a FSW of Bowbazar. Her representation in the trade was for 3<sup>rd</sup> generation. Rupa belonged to Muslim community. But after getting tied up with a Hindu male, she had changed her religion as Hindu. Even she used to practise all Hindu rituals. But that male was doubt as father of Tumpa as she shared. Her mother was a malkin (brothel owner). She was well maintained from her childhood and she also took admission in school. She was good enough in performing art and participated in various cultural programme. But she was oriented with domestic chores as cultural practice of Indian society. She was also getting orientation in the trade when she used to act as neo-malkin in absence of her mother. She came close to the opposite sex from her early childhood. Specially free mixing with boys was experienced sexually because they had no separate shelter. So up to late night, she had to pass time either at street or on the roof of house. She used to enjoy the coaching for better performance in the school and it was restricted for a limited period within their house. Gradually she was involved romantically with a boy outside their community and she left with him and got married at her age of 13 years. By that time, she was in class-VI. But that her mother with the help of police and local leader brought her and her marital relation was dismissed. She used to pass the time as usual manner and she had to confess gossip in their community. Lastly one day she left again her mother and by that time she was accompanied by a male who was regular visitor to their brothel. Then after passing few months, she reached to another red-light area and involved in the trade. It had helped her to contact with her mother and she returned to her mother. She got permission to operate the trade from her mother's place.

From their community they learn to behave sexualized manner. Secondly they get orientation to maintain their household work and on the other part, they assist their mother in trade through supplying food to clients and sometime they work as neo-malkin when their mother would be absent(Adhikari, 2008).

The social and cultural milieu helps them to involve romantically with local boys/mothers' clients and they use to get sexual experiences at early stage of their life. Even they use to get married at early. But their relation does not bring stability. So, it is clue to enter into the trade.

## **Conclusion**

Patriarchal system and patriarchy evolves with a gender practice. This social and cultural practices creates differentiation between male and female in terms of production and reproduction relation(Engels,1948). The notion of masculinity and feminity differ females in terms of sexuality. The females use to treat as sex object in our society. It orients the female as guest to their parents and they are the liability to their parents.

So, the orientation is being fostered to become a good daughter, a good wife, good mother or so on in our society(Wadley,1998).

Prostitution, oldest profession engulfs girls/women of depressed classes/castes and its origin is significant as a patriarchal politics to get sexual pleasure outside legitimate relation in exchange of money. Girls/women have to push into a 'dangerous outcast'. They have to face a rootless life in brothel. The females are victims of different males' oriented practices.

In the present study, we find that FSWs were involved to draw girls/women into the trade to keep their trade alive. They did not learn to protect their entry and even they failed to protect their own biological child(daughter).

There was large scale campaign organized for several years and till it is a continuous process to prevent and control HIV/AIDS among FSWs and others. The government and other development agencies educate them for compulsory use of condoms during sex, regular health check up and so forth.

On the other hand, there is regular publicity in all sorts of media to protect the girls/women from trafficking. Girls' education and awareness on gender equity is also a regular concerned. But FSWs were not sensitized to protect girls from trafficking into the sex trade. Even there was no proper step taken to rehabilitate the children, specially girls from sex workers' community.

We find that once victims use to commit violence to victimize other of their same gender. It is our set back that we are not actively doing work to save the girls from sex trade.

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