

**Women Empowerment and Sexuality:
Ancient and Modern perspectives**

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Research Article

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Introduction

According to Bromfield (129-130) despite sexual slavery and women trafficking gaining substantial attention from the social work profession in the present times and has been demonstrated as a contemporary human rights abuse. Movements against sexual slavery were famous in both the US and Great Britain with feminist organisations and social workers having a major say in campaigns to avoid the sex trade. In the progressive era, first time the sex workers were portrayed in the US as being trafficked without their consent for prostitution by male agents. Women's endeavour plays a major part to strengthen the vitality of human civilisation by their dominance and incarcerations to create a swift growth in all areas in this world for ages (Pal 1). Many women in ancient times especially in India were refused rights to property and equality because of caste system, joint family network, absence of basic education and racial discrimination. Slowly problems of disparity and discrimination on women started to appear as an outcome of custom and women became limited to domestic work (Pradeep 96).

Women in the ancient times were recognised as wives and mothers and their position was secondary to men. Most of the people argue that the common changes introduced in the mid-20th century feminist drive were for the better. Domestic violence currently is a misconduct and women's related issues do not take the back seat in the current times as women now have better educational background and opportunities than earlier times (Whetmore 1). This essay aims to assess the women empowerment and sexuality during the earlier and current period. It will evaluate the development that has been brought during the present times and how women are being empowered and freed predominantly from sex trades and their children have a better future in terms of education, living and basic needs.

Analysis of women empowerment: Ancient and modern perspectives

In the Western world women empowerment is usually linked with explicit stages of the women's rights movement during the ancient times. This drive tends to be divided into three levels, the first one began in the 19th and early 20th century where suffering was the main feature. The second stage that was during 1960s consisted of sexual upheaval and the role played by women in the society. The last stage feminism was frequently observed during the beginning of 1990s. Women's empowerment and encouraging women's rights have appeared to be a key international movement and is an unending determination to break new ground in the recent

times. However, women and girls constantly face discrimination and violence in their daily routines (worldvision.com.au). Women generally undergo laborious tasks especially in countries like Africa, Latin America and certain parts of Asia. From ancient times they have been responsible in contributing to the family income equally by doing farming or other activities. Nonetheless, they play an insignificant part in the society as most of the places it was a man dominated society (dvv-international.de). Women's empowerment is not an easy task but a challenging one that needs to be instilled into the communities globally. The stereotype thought process needs to be broken in all the regions and this will take more than education and constant training to bring equal rights to women. As per Nazneen (1995) many actors working on women's rights questioned whether their stance and plans were good enough to safeguard the progression made so far and whether the country would go into reverse mode and compromise on women's rights. The concern regarding women empowerment and gender equality is the main agenda globally as gender inequality is prevalent across all cultures. Empowerment is described as a multi-dimensional social approach that assists individuals to gain control over their lives. The main reason why women empowerment started to increase is because sustainable development cannot be attained in the absence of women's empowerment and gender equality. Women empowerment is about permitting and preparing women to make life changing choices on diverse issues in a nation. Moreover, to form a fair and sustainable economy and to improve woman's roles in maintaining their families and societies, attaining gender equality is principal factor. Economic progression is one of the main elements of sustainable progression that is unimaginable without the participation of women (Bayeh 38-39). The goal of women empowerment is to create a society where women inclusive of all colour and religion are able to freely walk and care for and foster their families must be formed in safe and healthy settings free from any inhibitions (Just and Sara 11). Women comprise of half the population in the world, however, in Western societies women did not receive equal rights and position unlike men in all areas of life. Women started to engage in other malicious activities to survive and sustain their lives as they did not receive the reception that men had got. Therefore, women of today require better recognition and economic power to be independent and on par with men.

Firstly, educations among women were considered the highest priority that will enable to empower them. The other issue is workplace harassment where many cases of rapes and sexual assaults have been reported even during modern times. For this and other reasons women need to be empowered of all sorts to safe guard themselves and to secure their sanctity and dignity. Less than 50% of working women are in the labour marketplace that has not witnessed much of changes as per UN reports. Many decades after the adoption of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action progress towards equal power and rights for women continues to remain indefinable. Women holds 28% of management related positions in terms of power and decision-making abilities world over as of 2019. When gathering data of Fortune 500 companies only 7.4% represented women and even in political arena women have started to represent themselves in stronger rules in comparison to the earlier times. However, some areas women are still under represented like science, technology, engineering etc. Even in areas like scientific research and development women are a minority which makes up less than of the world's researchers (un.org). Globally, women's accomplishments are being revelled on International women's day. In 2011 close to 45,000 accidents it was found that most of the car safety features were not designed with women in mind. The basic factors like women's height, neck strength and positioning of head were not even accounted for that denoted there were viable to injuries (weforum.org).

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The status of sex workers globally

The women in India who are in this trade are exiled from the community and normally live in isolation. Most of the women who turn into this profession are exploited and frequently marketed. They are left with no choices and means to survive since they are not good in any other profession due to lack of support, money and education. They have been forced into the profession from the time they were young. Although the cops and other women welfare activities organisation try to give them respite from this trade by saving their lives, nonetheless, there are others who do this by choice. Many women choose this profession as a means to support their families and some are abandoned by their husbands and do not have other ways to earn a living. The women in this trade do not have basic education and enter this profession as they think it is an easy way of making money. The question is can these people be ever blamed for this action. Is it wrong if this trade enables them to feed their children and themselves? However, some of them resort to this profession to make money and to be financial stable, establish some good political connect too. The government hence must focus on giving these people basic education from a young age. Every woman who is in this profession has a different and a painful story to narrate (Sanotra). Moreover, the most prominent NGO to organise sex workers in South Asia is the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee is located in Sonagachi, the red-light area of Kolkata. Sex workers are the most marginalised community mainly in India compared to the Western world. Despite free legal assistance cherished in the Indian community the deprived and marginalised women access to legal facilities remain a long dream(Pai, Seshu & Murthy 3).As every country maintains and refines public health approaches, emergency policies there is an immediate requirement to safeguard the rights of and to support the most susceptible members of the community.

Sex workers are the most marginalised community in the world. Internationally most of the direct sex workers have extensively stopped due to physical distancing especially during the present COVID-19 crisis and thus, leading the precarious population to more weakness economically. Sex workers who do not have roof to rest on resort to drugs or are refugees with uncertain legal or residency status encounter more challenges in get access to health facilities or financial relief. Thus, mental health issues will be possibly be worsened by fear over income, food and shelter as well trepidations over contagions in the absence of social protection (Platt 9-10).All genders (female, male and transgender) continue to have uneven pressure of HIV infection in all the regions. Despite substantial improvement and promise in HIV deterrence and treatment equipment present worldwide, the capability to bring programs to scale and maintaining the coverage is constantly hindered(Shannon 2).Depression is a main reason of incapacity among women globally and growing evidence indicates that women involve in sex work are at increase rate of suicide and depression. For example, in Mongolia, women who engage in sex work undergo explicit proximal and stress linked to their profession that also consists of violence, alcohol abuse and decreased access to many facilities. Thus, social welfare and mental health facilities in Mongolia for women involved in sex work and other weaker populations are still in its early stages (Carlson, et al. 2).

Sex workers are usually to prone to health and social issues like unintentional pregnancy, exploitation, discrimination and drug abuse. In the recent times many strategies have been formed to prevent the spread of HIV through constant training, communication, encouraging people to use condoms and counselling sessions. The focus on HIV target groups mostly comprise of sex workers that has shown a massive impact on decreasing the transmission to the entire population, thus, stated to be cost-efficient. However, marginalised groups of sex workers

face many obstacles due to reasons like criminal sex activities and discrimination at different health centres (Rinaldi, et al. 2). Despite sex work being an income generation activity that covers different work areas and arrangements, it poses many challenges for the people to secure and preserve their labour rights. The people are normally excluded from labour standards that set safe work surroundings, maximum work limits, the right to collective bargaining and minimum pay. When sex workers, the clients and third party are accounted for criminal offence, sex workers are unable to report violence and labour rights abuses. They do not have access to government social security system that consists of health insurance, housing and loans to commence any small enterprises. Sex worker unions have been refused formal identification and the leaders are detained and sentenced under broad anti-trafficking regulations. Additionally, many new trends are affecting these people's experiences at work. The immigration and border authorities have incessantly targeted women from the global south regularly screening women on the basis of sexist and racist typecasts. In Australia where sex work is legalised in certain jurisdictions, Asian women who arrive with tourist visas have their baggage's screened and searched for any abnormal items like apparel or shoes and phones scrutinised for messages by border authorities. For example, Canadian immigration control detained Thailand community members who had arrived for a meeting stating they were too young and innocent and suspected some women to be sex traffickers(Nswp 1-2).

Examining the living standards of sex worker's children

Internationally migration is a common phenomenon and most prevalent in the US and most of them tend to be women. The main drivers of such migrations consist of economic inequalities, less opportunities for women, natural calamities and family connects in those regions (Rael et al.1-2). The children of the sex workers have the risk of getting into the same profession or being trafficked. The children of sex workers encounter different risks, humiliation and discrimination due to their parents' habits or profession. Nevertheless, this weakness can be improved by possible sources of resilience linked to aid networks, parent wellbeing, parent-child relationships, education, economic conditions and other external factors. There are some organisations that have come forward to help these children with educational opportunities and a secured place to study, play and live when their mothers are working. Similarly, these programs also encourage the mothers to take up some vocational courses and alternative income generation prospects who wish to leave the sex trade or decrease the number of customers that will require sustaining their living. For example, TASINTA began in Zambia during 1990s that is a programme that assists sex workers to safeguard themselves from HIV. However, many women have voiced that a more comprehensive family-oriented practices were needed. TASINTA's partnered with residential care centres to serve as a boarding school for children whose mothers have demised and is trying to redefine family beyond the limits of biological connections. Members who are part of this profession have expressed they have been disgraced publicly and humiliated on several occasion which has ripple effects on their children for whom they wish for a normal up-bringing (Bowen and Vicky 5).

Two very crucial health and human rights concerns pertaining to sex work have been ignored world over like parental illness and mortality among the women sex workers and the wellbeing of their children (Quinan et al. 2). It is time to identify the requirement for and the right to maternal and children health facilities for female sex members and their children. Many female sex workers have high rates of HIV and complexities from unsafe abortions. Conversely, very less information is available regarding the worldwide impact of maternal illness and death on

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female sex workers compared to HIV. Internationally, many sex workers are mothers who raise many children. These children are prone to HIV, fatal alcohol syndrome, violence all at a young age. Many of the sex workers have stated that they have chosen this field mainly to feed their children and take care of their basic needs. Many of the workers have to leave their children alone at night and babies are usually given mild sleeping doses. In some cases, mothers leave their children in substandard care centres where they get less attention and are prone to injuries, fall sick from germ-infested food etc. Some mothers pay other sex workers and people in their vicinities to take care of their children, however, some of them take their children along when they are meeting with client. The children of these sex workers are also in distress as they face abuse and violence from sex agents and other members and when they enter school are often bullied or isolated, have learning disabilities and anger issues. Not taking initiatives to prevent such activities and mortality weakens the global sustainable development goals (SDGs) and other efforts that include elimination of paediatric HIV and congenital syphilis. Thus, the situation of several mothers who are sex workers or trafficking victims and their children disturbs their self-respect and human rights are intolerable (Willis et al.1-2).

Improving the quality of life for sex workers and women empowerment regulations

Marginalised populations encounter difficult, multi-level obstacles to access, follow and remain under HIV care. Thus, more intensive assistance and customised interference is required (You et al.).The World Health Organisation has described quality of life as a person's viewpoint of their stance in life in the context of the culture and value network in which they exist and with regard to their goals, expectations, standards and issues. For some group to have a good quality of life it is mandatory to have access to certain economic and social facilities like basic education, employment and income. A decent quality of life needs many factors that directly contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing (de Matos et al.561). Certain groups of sex workers namely unlawful migrants, young individuals or people being hunted down by cops have precise reasons to avoid all these controllers including health centres. These groups require a boost and assistance by some members who can be trusted. This is more probable to attract them than any written consent. When clinics attain a reputation for treating sex workers effectively, they can advise them about which clinics provide confidential care. The clinical care staff can recommend doctors and physicians who treat them with proper care and show compassion. Moreover, access to condoms and water-based lubricants is predominant to sexual health elevation. Condoms and lubricants must be constantly marketed and made accessible and affordable.

Also, training activities can aid to improve their abilities that are either directly linked to sex work or that expand sex workers' larger quality of life. Training can help to nurture a sense of community and permit the individual in it. For example, training on self-defence, first aid, exercise regimes and nutrition classes. Legal guidance is a prevalent support that many agencies offer and covers prostitution crimes, violence and property arguments. Places where sex work is not permissible, sex workers may want guidance about how to work without attracting trial or harassment. Likewise, here are other sections where legal guidance will be useful like child custody, family disagreements and migration. At times health promotion schemes can point sex workers to suitable agencies due to illness, homelessness, drug obsession or family emergency. They also help agencies to enhance the manner in which offers guidance to sex workers by the training members. Arrangements that help sex workers to get income from other mean can have a significant part in health promotion. Study in Kenya and Nigeria has indicated that sex workers with extra income sources to sex work are less probable to be HIV positive. For example, a

Kenyan project, KVOWRC, has two drives. First, the purpose is to empower women with knowledge, information and talent to negotiate harmless sex and to train peer instructors. Secondly, in acknowledgement that deficiency lessens women's power to ask for safe sex, also aims to raise women's income from other means apart from sex profession (aidsaction.net). For example, training is provided and loans are given to women to start small businesses. Moreover, it also aids and guides the people to establish or partner with land buying cooperative societies. During the last 20 years sex workers in numerous regions have developed collectives and support organisations. Certain organisations are human rights and legal reform firms. Others offer wellbeing facilities and support in self-help activities. Several people have created and executed their own AIDS deterrence projects. Some cooperate with service leaders to aid in making sure that sex work involvements are proper. Hence, self-organisation assists to overcome the issues of being alone and absence of self-respect created by marginalisation and humiliation. It can further assist to endorse and endure protective sex and harmless working scenarios by elevating sex workers' management of their work areas. Certain sex worker agencies have progressed into influential self-advocacy services that dynamically challenge human rights violations and the reason of sex workers' susceptibility. Many policies for developing the situations for sex workers have been formed and executed by sex worker agencies and in certain cases before HIV was recognized and programmes were sponsored. In many region health projects created at the time of AIDS epidemic have accepted community solidification work actions. In many situations sex workers' agencies have been shaped by users of such projects. This is a significant specimen of how health advancement addresses economic and social progress questions. Manifold plans provide self-defence classes and training in personal safety. Some issue personal safety equipment like alarms and sprays. A project in a comparatively encircled street area formed a whistle project because sex workers were being confronted within range of one another. Sex workers were provided with whistles to be blown if they succum any attack which will make others come to their assistance immediately.

Conclusion

Thus, this extensive essay offers a comprehensive insight about women's empowerment and what it was like in the ancient times and how things have changed for a better tomorrow. However, the lives of sex workers mainly face great trauma and denial from the communities like absence of proper medical aid, support from the government for their progression, training and basic education. The sex workers' children also encounter similar disturbances in school and from overall society. The sex workers resort to this job mainly due to lack of homes, income or no family to support them. They have the children for whom they need to provide food and shelter and get into the flesh trade which is more money and a hard job.

However, with time this activity has been approached by many non-profit organisations and other agencies that have come forward to render help in many ways. They have given vocational courses and training to create alternative source of income that will help them sustain and maintain a decent living for them and the children. They are care takers who provide basic education for the children of sex worker so that in future they can be employed in firms and not get into this trade. Safety trainings and voice against violence have been constantly promoted to these people and they are being empowered to stand and face the society in a better way.

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About the Writer

Hello I am **Rahul Singh**. I am a graduate from Jadavpur University and currently a phd research scholar from the department of Sociology [Adamas University, kolkata]. I am doing my research on the children of sex workers. Apart from being a student, I am also a faculty member in the department of sociology, St.Xavier's College, Burdwan. I am ambitious about my future goals which are to excel in the field of education. Apart from studies, I love to travel and meet new people from different places. I love to deviate from the general basic norms in order to accomplish a different mode of thinking in the society as I strongly believe that "without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible".

I describe myself as honest, ambitious and dynamic. I approach each event in my life with full dedication, honesty and love. I put my heart and soul into my work, and I believe that it shows in my works.