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Media, Women And Prostitution / Sex Tourism:
A Three Country Study Of Media's Response
To This Human Issue

By

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&
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MEDIA, WOMEN AND PROSTITUTION

A Comparative Study in South and South East Asia, Sponsored by UNESCO

Coordinators
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the last decade, women's right groups have expressed serious concern over the increasing incidence of prostitution and sex-trafficking, particularly in the countries where governments have adopted aggressive tourism promotion policies and have contributed in no small measures towards the problem of 'tourism prostitution'.

International Concern with regard to Trafficking in Women.

International concern with regard to trafficking in women dates back to 1904\(^1\) and 1910\(^2\) when the members of the League of Nations agreed to secure fair and humane conditions of labour for women and children and execute the agreements made by International Voluntary Association to suppress such traffic in women. The two instruments were concerned with the white slave traffic from European countries.

The notions of freedom, equality and human rights which gradually took roots in the societies during 19th and 20th century provided the motivating force in

1. **International Agreement for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic, 12 States, Paris 1910, 13 countries.**
2. **International Convention ......(12 states) (Paris 1910, 13 countries).**
questioning inequalities and injustices in the political, economic and social spheres and in 1948 resulted in the adoption of a Universal Declaration of Human rights by the UN.

In 1920 when the League of Nations came into being the League Assembly directed its Secretariat to issue a questionnaire to all governments regarding legislative measures they had taken to combat the traffic in women and children. In 1921 an International Conference on traffic in women and children was held to evolve an action strategy based on the information provided by the governments (India was also represented). A draft convention was drawn up and adopted by 30 members voting in favour, while twenty one abstained.

The International Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in women and children (1921) dropped the term 'white' which restricted the earlier Agreement (1904) and the 1910 Convention to only European Countries. It's interesting that it laid down certain conditions under which forced or compulsory traffic in women might be permitted i.e. a woman of 21 years of age with 'consent' could be recruited, but the act of procuring was made offence. One wonders how many women would 'consent' to
be recruited for this purpose. Later it was realised that at any age the act was condemnable although more so in the case of under age girls. In 1922 an Advisory Committee was appointed to review the information supplied from various sources, however, it was asked not to concern itself with the problem of prostitution at the national levels (the source) but trace the culprits operating internationally. It stressed that attention be paid to Theatrical employment of women abroad, employment of women in licensed houses, information on state regulations, women police, obscene publications, abolition of licensed houses, repatriation of foreign prostitutes, alcoholism etc.

In 1923 the Advisory Committee .... met and the representative of the US submitted a memorandum recommending the League to investigate this phenomenon, which countries were involved in the traffic and what was their modus operandi.

A systematic attempt to collect more information about this problem was made when the American Bureau of Social hygiene offered funds to the League to conduct studies about trafficking in women in different parts of the world (between 1926-1930) in major cities which
were used as bases. It was also proposed that the survey should make distinction between countries having licensed/regulated houses of prostitution and those which believed in the abolition of prostitution; countries which banned the admission of prostitutes and those which benefitted from the trade and placed no restrictions for such persons in their immigration laws. The enquiry not only revealed that a traffic of considerable dimension was being carried on but also the extent to which foreign prostitutes who were minors (between 14-16) were brought into a country despite the law banning it. The main routes of traffic were identified to be from Europe (particularly Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Italy, Poland, Rumania, Spain, Turkey) to South and Central America (Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay) and to North America, Alexandria was one of the chief port used for the traffic.

In 1929 the issue stimulated new interest and during the Fifth Commission of the League Assembly it was decided to extent the scope of the enquiry to countries not covered earlier particularly those in Asia. Accordingly a travelling Commission of Enquiry was constituted and a cross section of government and non-governmental functionaries gave information for their respective
countries. The findings of this Committee revealed that the licensed houses were the main source of the traffic and within Asian region women of Chinese origin formed the bulk of such victims, followed by Japanese women and a small numbers of Malay, Siamese, Philippines, Indian, Iraqi and Persian women. The report also pointed out that girls mainly from poverty stricken families were exploited by unscrupulous elements as a source of earning. It also led to a rethinking to extend the scope of the Convention to women of 21+ (known as International Convention of 1933 for the Suppression of Traffic in Women of Full Age).

Side by side the League of Nations also considered it important to curb the publication and circulation of obscene films and literature, which had a degenerating influence on society in general and which was assuming alarming dimensions after the 1st World War, (1923 Convention on the Suppression of the circulation of and trafficking in obscene publications). The three country studies amply illustrate that the battle against prostitution and pornography continues.

The enquiries had already confirmed that the trafficking in women was greatly encouraged by brothals, and the Advisory Commission on Social question drew up a Draft International Convention on Suppression of Exploitation
of the Prostitution of others (1937) in order to ensure prosecution and punishment of persons running a brothel or forcing a person to enter prostitution. In 1946 the UN took up this question and the ECOSOC asked the Secretariat to review the 1937 Draft Convention and unify the existing International Instruments relating to suppression of traffic in women and submit the report to the Social Commission and also ascertain the views of various governments. The new Draft Convention for the Suppression of Immoral Traffic was considered by the ECOSOC in its ninth session (1949) and was adopted by 15 votes to nil, with one abstention. The General Assembly adopted the Convention with a view that such practices and institutions were incompatible with the dignity and worth of a person and endangered the welfare of the individual, the family and community.

Debates on the issue of prostitution within the UN system, since the adoption of the Convention have reflected varied concerns and also explanations for the recent increase in the incidence of trafficking in women. Its links to what is happening within the institution of family and marriage has yet to be adequately understood and analysed.
Article 16(3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states; "the family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state". However, the Mexico Plan of Action adopted by the World Conference (1975) states "the institution of the family, which is changing in its economic, social and cultural functions, should ensure the dignity, equality and security of each of its members". Violence within the family is an issue which has received increasing attention in recent years and it is manifested in a number of ways i.e. battering, rape, molestation, assault, harassment and mental torture. The issue received much attention at the Nairobi Conference in 1985. The forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, adopted at the Nairobi Conference made specific reference to abused women. In addition it expressed concern over the problem of 'forced prostitution'.

'Forced prostitution' is a form of slavery imposed on women by procurers. It is result of economic degradation that alienates women's labour through processes of rapid urbanisation and migration resulting in under-employment and unemployment. It also stems from women's dependence on men. Social and political pressures produce
refugees and missing persons. Often these include vulnerable groups of women who are victimised by procurers. Sex-tourisms, forced prostitution and pornography reduce women to more sex objects and marketable commodities.³

The ESCAP organised a workshop of "Experts on Prevention and Rehabilitation Schemes for Young Women in Prostitution and Related Occupations" (Bangkok, June '85). The Executive Secretary pointed out, that "the issue of prostitution can be viewed from different angles: for some it is an issue of ethics or religious morality, for others it is an issue of 'sexual slavery', the subjagation of women and an aspect of their struggle for liberation. Some view it as an inevitable outcome of an inequitous socio-economic situation accompanied by the ruthless exploitation of a most vulnerable and defenceless group. A narrower and equally valid concern is the view that it is a health hazard, both in its direct effect on the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases and as a conduit for the trafficking and abuse of drugs. The criminal justice arm of the government regards prostitution from the viewpoint of its implications for law and order. In some countries the concern is that the national image is being tarnished through prostitution acting as a magnet for the promotion of global sex-tourism".

³ Forward Looking Strategies of Implementation for the advancement of women and concrete measures to overcome obstacles to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the UN Decade for Women ....
In the Regional Inter-governmental Preparatory Meeting of the ESCAP region, held at Tokyo (March 1984), it was recommended that, with respect to the impact of tourism promotion on women and the effects of rapid migration of young women from rural areas, governments in this region be called upon to take concrete actions against the increasing incidence of prostitution and sex-trafficking by:-

- imposing stricter penalties through legislation on those responsible at all levels for the organised prostitution trade;
- raising the problem of prostitution at the regional level so as to exert pressure on those countries involved in the trade to do their share in halting organised prostitution.

Victim or Offender: the Indian Debate on Suppression of Immoral Trafficking in Women and Girls

It appears that after the Convention was adopted and several Asian countries ratified and enacted legislation to deal with this problem, the national level debates were revealing of both the understanding of various facets of the problem and the concern of the society to treat it as a human rights issue. As an illustration we are presenting the debate in India which lacked the spirit which had motivated the International Convention.
India was a signatory to the Convention on the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls and had been associated with the various facets of this problem, since 1921, when League of Nations directed its concern to the issue. The Constitution of India under Rights Against Exploitation, has placed "traffic in human beings" as a violation of fundamental right, a violation which will be punishable according to law, though article (23) specifically mentioned "begar" and other forms of forced labour, there was no special mention of exploitation of women for purpose of prostitution - internationally or nationally. It was in 1953 that the Calcutta High Court clarified that trafficking includes not only 'slavery' but trafficking in women for immoral and other purposes.

An inexplicable fact of the above provision is that trafficking in women or for that matter any type of trafficking in human beings could be punished only when the Union Government makes a law to that effect, because the Constitutional Article makes the point clear that it has to be punished 'in accordance with law'. Yet it took six long years for the Government to move the Bill dealing with Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Children (November, 1956). Till then except
for some State legislation, only the Indian Penal Code provided for punishment for selling or buying or hiring a minor for prostitution. The provisions were therefore limited and made punishable only when a minor girl i.e. a girl below 18 years was the victim.

Introducing the Bill in the Lok Sabha, the Minister explained that it was necessary that we have a law because we were signatories to the Convention and not because it was a national and human problem. This leaves one with the impression that but for this compulsion, perhaps the problem would not have been taken up at all. The lukewarm attitude to this issue was also reflected in the debates on the Bill, as it lacked the spirit which had motivated the International Convention that trafficking was a violation of human right and was not a moral and ethical question. One group of members argued that prostitution was a manifestation of the socio-economic condition and it was poverty which drove many women into prostitution and the Bill as proposed by the government would be of no avail unless it is treated as a national problem providing at the same time the means for the women to earn their livelihood. China was cited as an example where by providing full employment the Government had been able to eradicate prostitution.
It is interesting that even at the initial stages of the introduction of this Bill, the government was aware that it could not be abolished "as it was a profession and banning would violate the fundamental rights of a person to carry on one's profession or trade". Soon after this Act became a law, it was challenged on the same ground by a 24 year old woman that the law was unduly restrictive and presents her from not only supporting herself but also her two younger brothers and sisters whom she was bringing up. The Allahabad High Court upheld the constitutionality of the Act (not the validity of the profession) commenting that prostitution was "a slur on human dignity and a shame to human civilisation.... as it is not possible to completely abolish, it has to be tolerated as an evil necessity..." It was therefore permissible to place reasonable restrictions "to mitigate the evil effects of the trade or profession and protect the interest of general public". Another piece of wisdom in this judgement was that "prostitution had to be permitted because the number of prostitute in this country was too large to get them rehabilitated in society if under the law they are stopped from carrying on their profession" - rehabilitation being the responsibility of the state.
Tolerating or allowing prostitution as long as it is not a public nuisance seems to be the dominant concern during these discussions in the Parliament. The Minister while arguing that there is both a public and private aspect of it and the latter also need to be eradicated, however, referring to the observations of the Select Committee he said that, "it could not be put to an end by the law but we should keep prostitution beyond easy access so that if the average men has to spend considerable time and money and there is also a danger of his arrest" then that would be as far as the law can achieve. He also argued that if a woman who carries on prostitution in her own home, the law enforcement machinery cannot reach her. Apart from this one member also expressed apprehension that giving power to law enforcement machinery to enter a private dwelling house would mean unnecessary harassment and persecution.

The Act as it finally emerged did not attempt to abolish prostitution (as prostitution per se is not a penal offence) but attempted to inhibit or abolish the commercialised vice. It is punishable only if a woman is carrying on prostitution within 200 yards of a public place (i.e. religious worship, educational institution, hostel, hospital, nursing home etc.) or if she is soliciting or
molesting a person for the purpose of prostitution. These two penal provisions are in the Act not with a purpose of protecting a woman from forced prostitution but because it is regarded as a 'public nuisance'.

The penal sections of the Act also make the keeping or managing or assisting in the keeping of a brothel punishable with a mandatory sentence of not less than one year's imprisonment with a fine. If a person punishes who seduces her with the purpose of sending her for prostitution.

The provision that anyone above the age of 18 years living on the earnings of a prostitute is punishable and not excluding even her family members from this provision brings out clearly that neither the legislature nor the judiciary have looked upon the prostitute as a person who has been forced into this profession due to economic necessity and who may be looking after her children, brothers, sisters and aged parents. The minority which during the debate stressed this point urged the government to take steps to provide economic security without which prostitution would continue.

To make the law more effective an Advisory Committee submitted its report in 1968 and recommended that the term prostitute in the Act should include call girls. The
Law Commission rejecting it stated that as long as the call girl "does not parade her charms in public or indulge in soliciting in public" it should not come within the purview of the law. The most significant paragraph reflecting the thinking of the Commission was that if law tried to stop prostitution then "in some insidious and subtle form it is bound to reappear in society and that may have greater potentiality of destroying the peace in family life and also in society ... therefore it has to be kept within its legitimate bounds without unduly encroaching upon the institution of marriage and family". Our law makers concern from the protection of family seems pathetic, which is at the expense of some women who can be sacrificed for protecting the institution of family. It is also strange that those who advocated that society and the institution of family need to be protected, never thought of giving a certain amount of protection to the prostitutes, to prevent her from contracting diseases and to minimise her isolation.

II. The Present Study

The concern for aspirations and dignity of all human beings and equality of rights for women would remain a wishful thinking if concerted action is not taken to
ensure respect and recognition for women's rights. The UNESCO representative Mr. Jean Fernand - Laurent, special rapporteur on the suppression of the traffic in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others, reported to the UN Economic and Social Council (1983) that "UNESCO has since its founding, been combating discrimination against women as well as racial discrimination, in both cases the fundamental rights of the human person are violated..." The spokes-person of the Director General at the Mexico Conference (1975), stressed the need to fight sexism and denounced the torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment of prostitutes in professional establishments where they are virtually prisoners of life. Apart from these extreme cases, the Secretariat of UNESCO considers that prostitution in general and the exploitation involved are revealing of the image of women held in the collective thinking of society...

The Medium term plan (1984-85) adopted by the General Conference at its 4th Extraordinary Session (1982) stressed that both education and the media and cultural industries must work towards a goal of counteracting the stereotypes and helping young people bring their critical faculty to bear in selecting and sorting out messages spread by the communication media. This is one of the aim of UNESCO's sub-programme entitled Education and Communication.
In the last decade studies on the portrayal of women in media have accumulated. The activities of UNESCO’s communication sector aim to focus on the following dimensions: (i) to help understand why the media in virtually all countries tend to be silent on major topics regarding exploitation of women, particularly in the form of prostitution; (ii) what information channels are used to draw women into sex-tourism, prostitution etc.; (iii) how can existing information media contribute to informing women and young people generally of prostitution’s reality and thereby help in preventing it.

The present study is a step in this direction. The other objective of the study was to help clarify the methodology for carrying out a similar work in other regions of the world.

In view of the diversity of the countries in the Asian region, broad guidelines were prepared by the Centre for Women’s Development Studies, explaining the objectives of the study with some tentative suggestions, in the hope that the three country studies may address some common issues in addition to other country-specific and location specific problems. Since the time and resources were limited for a proper analysis of media’s response to
the issue, we thought that the present study may be limited to the press and the print media, utilising existing material and some selective interviews with media professionals, decision-makers, readers, concerned researchers, social workers etc. and women involved in prostitution. The following set of issues were outlined for the study:

1. The first set of questions may be addressed to the reasons why the media in most countries previously tended to be silent on this issue. Some of the tentative reasons could be:

(a) it did not view the issue of prostitution as women's exploitation;

(b) difficulties in investigating the issue and hence ignorance about the dimensions of the problem or its causes;

(c) media is more news oriented than issue oriented.

2. What are the reasons in the recent increase in media attention to this issue and to what factors it is due to?

(a) increasing role of women's organisations/protests/investigations by concerned scholars;

(b) increase in the traffic and recognition of new forms of sexual exploitation of women as a consequence of economic transformation;

(c) use of this institution to promote commercial interests, business prospects etc.;
(d) Prostitution as a response to increasing poverty and deprivations, increasing migration of unmarried young girls from rural areas and general deterioration in social environment (rising crimes, violence against women);

3. Degree of response/concern among different groups -

(a) Attitudes of media professionals to this issue and what kind of readers/viewers' reaction they are trying to provoke (as a human interest story as a human rights issue as a women's rights issue as a social issue).

(b) Attitude of media decision-makers to publishing these stories or portrayal of such an issue. Degree of social priority they attach to this institution. The attitude is cautious/resistant or responsive;

(c) Readers'/viewers' reaction to this issue. A cross section of readers may interviewed;

(d) Degree of concern/response of different groups - Does media provoke any response from policy makers, social workers, educators, social analysts, health workers, women activists, and among media professionals.

4. What is the role they expect media to play?

(a) Suggestions for making the media's expected role more effective could perhaps generate some meaningful follow up action.

5. Finally, if it is possible then interview some of the women involved in prostitution to assess their own attitude to this problem.

The Philippine report collected data from the following sources -
(a) A survey conducted by the Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women (TW-MAE-W), exploring media's grasp of the issue of prostitution, their biases to the 'women's question', factors affecting publication policies and commitment to the role of media in tackling the problem;

(b) Reflections of media people on their perceived role;

(c) Three public fora organised at three key cities of Metro Manila, Cebu City and Baguio City. In each of these places the preliminary findings of the survey conducted by the TWMAEW were presented before the invited people from the media, voluntary organisation and women's groups.

The Malaysian report relied on review of literature on tourism, prostitution in general and in Malaysia, analysis of newspapers and travel brochures and a survey conducted to ascertain views on women's issues. Those interviewed included general readers, social group, hotel staff, media professionals and the personnel of the Anti-vice department of the Penang police stations. The opinions on the issue differed considerably between general readers and social groups. The survey covered 12 respondents (4 males and 8 females) who were regular readers of four selected newspapers. Respondents gave their reaction to women's page and articles, advertisements, images projected by the media in general, and link between portrayal of women as sex object or as
appendage of men and prostitution in the country. A total of 31 respondents were interviewed. As Malaysia is a multi-racial country newspapers in English, Malay and Chinese were selected for an analysis in the study. The period covered was between 1970-80 as during this time the government started to pay more attention to the tourist industry. The report points out the limitations of the survey due to time constraint and lack of co-operation among respondents particularly the hotel staff to give accurate information regarding prostitution. Some of the respondents gave answers that contradicted each other as they were afraid that their position will be affected.

The Indian report relied mainly on literature review and analysis of various studies conducted on this issue and the press reports (both in English and Hindi). The bibliography includes 19 reports and 128 articles which appeared in the press mostly during 1980-85. The report does not elaborate on the methodology. Few interviews with journalists, concerned women professionals and institutions engaged in rehabilitation programme i.e. All India Association of Social Health, were also conducted.

In contrast to the Philippine report which points out that 'there is a dearth of literature on the issue of women and prostitution as only two studies and a magazine
article touch as the topic in a remote way', the Indian report says that "the media coverage of the issue of prostitution can be said to have responded in part to the challenge with sympathy and interest ... although the 'call girls' have received only sensational coverage so far and there has been no attempt to understand this activity".

A summary of three reports is appended to this paper.

III. The Dimension of the Problem

Prostitution in many Asian countries has a long history. The Malaysian report indicates that a Malay writer in the 19th century had commented on prostitution. Social historians have written about the existence of prostitution under early years of British colonisation. Women were brought in from neighbouring countries of China, Japan and Java to cater to the sexual needs of colonial administrators and other male migrants.

The Philippine report tracing the history of colonisation says, "Filipino women have borne the brunt of Spanish-inherited feudal values - a residue of 400 years under Spain, that reduced them into properties of men,"
and almost a century under American clutches which has ingrained values and attitudes that cater to the foreign and pave the way for an easy sell out". It further states, "part of the surrender of sovereignty is the surrender of women's rights to decency and respect... It is a known fact that prostitution proliferates wherever the 'rest and recreation' needs of American military men have to be met... With each base agreement the Philippine government implicitly extends approval to the consequences of American military presence in the country... The phenomenon of transnational-prostitution is a case in point where the interplay of cultural subjugation and political economy has worsened the plight of women in the Philippines".

The Indian report tracing the history of prostitution, mentions that social historians have found that the problem of prostitution is referred to even in the earliest Hindu epics. The Hindu society had one standard for the higher caste and a different code of ethics for the lower and from earlier times there existed certain castes where the traditional occupation for women was prostitution. HAreeditary prostitution is a distinctive feature of the Indian scene. Famous courtesans hailed from these castes. The courtesan tradition of dancing girls continued throughout history and in the 4th century B.C.
the famous book on statecraft written by Kautilya, included in the text the duties of "controller of courtesans". Later historians have written that "the courtesans were a normal feature of urban life, neither romanticised nor treated with contempt (p. 3). The picture changes during the Mughul times and in the 16th century the emphasis on music and dance and cultivated courtesans, feature of the Mughul court - remained a part of the elite life. The 20th century prostitutes in the 'kothas' (brothel) of Delhi and Lucknow, bear no resemblance to the past of which they talk nostalgically".

Present day prostitution in India has another link to a very different tradition of the system of 'Devdasis'; maidens dedicated to God, which merits special attention. This tradition goes back to 3rd century A.D. when devdasis the 'courtesan of God', were also considered the guardians of the classical tradition of music and dance. The present degradations of the 'Devdasis cult' bears no resemblance to the earlier classic devadasi tradition. An investigative report by the team of Joint Women's programme bluntly puts it that "traditionally a practice of dedicating girls to goddess or god to serve in temples, today is only prostitution with religious sanction ... With its distinct rites, its particular form of recruitment
and initiation as well as its myths of justification gives the profession its legendary - ritualistic justification... a certain immunity from social ostracism.

Today Devdasis from Karnataka and Maharashtra have rebelled against the corrupted system which has become a supply chain for the brothels in cities. In 1982 the Government of Karnataka passed a legislation called the 'Karnataka Devdasis (prohibition of Dedication) Bill,' forbidding the practice of devdasi. A journalist writing in the Indian daily, estimated that "in the border areas of Maharashtra and Karnataka, about 4 to 5 thousand girls are still dedicated annually at the Soundatti Temple and other small shrines. It is the admixture of social, religious, cultural and economic exploitation of women of the weakest sections of our society". Dedication offers a false sense of respectability to prostitution. Blind faith, poverty and superstition keeps the cult alive. There is a general belief that there is no way to stop this practice unless the problems of the poverty-stricken families who dedicate these girls are tackled at the basic economic level.

In India considerable amount of writing has been done on the problems of devdasis. Studies show that about 30 to 40% of the prostitutes in Bombay's cheapest brothels are devdasis and about three-fourths
of them were under 14 when they entered the profession. In Pune it is estimated that about 50 per cent of the prostitutes are devdasis. The study conducted by the Joint Women's programme indicates that in Nipani, Belgaum district, one of the main 'transit' points in the traffic of women to Bombay, out of 800 prostitutes, 200 were devdasis. At another transit point Arhani, out of 500 Harijan families, 98 per cent practiced prostitution and dedication has been just an excuse for prostitution. However, it is heartening that due to persistent efforts of dedicated social workers, the devdasis are getting organised. Mahatma Phule (an eminent social activist) Samya Pratishten Pune, convened two largely attended conferences of devdasis, focussing attention on the miserable lives of these women. The press gave a wide coverage. A 'rebel' devdasi Revbai became the president of the Pune Devdasi Sanghathan in 1982. She declared, "why should any god or goddess insist that anyone enter a profession like mine? ... If any one becomes a prostitute it is only because of circumstances". Two tobacco workers from Nipani are fighting against this institution through an organisation called Sawali, a centre for rehabilitating devdasis as well as deserted and displaced women. The media coverage of the two conferences and the agitation of devdasis has not only exposed their exploitation but also created public awareness.
A press report from Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh) says than more than 100 prostitutes have got organised to safeguard their interests. They felt that such an association is needed to deal with the old and sick prostitutes; to educate and help children to get in good occupation; to raise their voice against banning their entry into temples and raise public opinion on the issue of acceptability of the prostitute.

On the other side of the spectrum the clandestine prostitution or what is termed as 'call girls' phenomenon, has not only increased but it is virtually impossible to break through the nexus surrounding it. The General Secretary of the All India Association of Social Health feels that "in the cities the new 'voluntary' prostitution poses greater problems for society than does the traditional prostitution in the red light districts". In her view prostitutes are less in number and easier to approach than the 'voluntary' prostitutes. A sociologist who has written the only detailed study on 'call girls' in India, claims to have interviewed 150 girls, although she admits it is very difficult to get information (Promila Kapur). Occasional news items on 'call girl racket', indicate that the procurement network is very wide and includes luxury hotels; guest-house staff, night-clubs, travel agents etc., always on the look out for
possible victims who come from middle and affluent classes, students, working women etc. The middle class girls become a prey of the 'culture of consumerism' which is an entirely new phenomenon.

The Malaysian report also quotes several contemporary studies on prostitution, which show that hotels, bars, and nightclubs are considered as unofficial prostitution centres. A study in Penang found that there were about 450 prostitutes in the 30 hotels surveyed and another study estimated that there were about 296 prostitutes working in 24 hotels in Penang. The Malaysian report quotes a study which categorises prostitutes as:

a. Market prostitutes or back alley prostitutes;
b. Street Walkers;
c. Prostitutes with employers;
d. Bar, coffee house, night clubs; and massage parlour prostitutes;
e. Freelance prostitutes;
f. Special prostitutes.

Market prostitutes are at the bottom of the hierarchy. The high class prostitutes are the newcomers and are discreet in their action and usually pick up clients in shopping complexes and super markets.
This group comprises mainly of housewives and young girls wanting to make quick money to buy consumer articles. Prostitutes with employers, known as 'call girls', normally have a sponsor or a pimp who has a private house and is known to certain contacts only or they visit the clients in hotels. Female employees at massage parlours, night clubs, bars, social escort agencies, prostitute for additional earnings which far exceeds the earnings from their work.

The Bangkok 'massage parlours', the 'girlie bars' of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, musical coffee houses and other spots of night entertainment have become notorious in being used as a facade for prostitution.

A report from Thailand says that "in view of the prevalent tendency of middle class people to display self-righteous indignation and demand a ban on prostitution, or the 'reform and rehabilitation' of prostitutes in the name of morality, we feel it is important to view the profession from the point of view of those women who practice it". Tracing the history the report says that from the legislative sources before 1905, the year in

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which slavery was abolished, it appears that prostitutes were recruited from the slave market. After the abolition of the slavery, a lot of these slave women become prostitutes and the 1909 Act demanded that places of prostitution should be discreet and it forbade soliciting on the streets. The 1960 Prostitution Prohibition Act made brothels illegal and made prostitution a criminal offence as the former Prime Minister of Thailand thought that it encourages crime and is a threat to the family institution. In 1966 the Entertainment Places Act made prostitution flourish in all forms then in traditional brothels. Dr. Pasuk's study of Bangkok's 'massage parlour girls' gave economic reasons as the primary factor of migration of these girls from rural areas. Most of them claimed that they were supporting parents or their own children. It is estimated that at least half of the 500,000 to 700,000 prostitutes, work in traditional brothels. The author believes that traditional brothels play a more vital role in the continuation of prostitution in the country and the strongest factor including women to prostitution is economic pressure.

The report argues that while it cannot be denied that prostitution grew with the arrival of Chinese in the mid-nineteenth century and the presence of American in
Pacific war, the Korean war and finally the Vietnam war in the sixties, however, the prostitution existed and was institutionalised before the arrival of Chinese and later American soldiers and tourists.


In some countries of the Asian region there is a serious concern about sex-tourism. The ESCAP workshop discussions (1985) focussed on the explosive increase in prostitution, in the last two or three decades due to the impact of large scale transnational organised tourism. The report says, "while prostitution and tourism existed independently, the media campaign to sell package-tourism has transformed the concept of leisure to incorporate prostitution. The two are now interacting and being transformed in the process". In 1984 the Regional Inter-governmental Preparatory Meeting at Tokyo, had also expressed concern about the impact of tourism promotion on women and the effects of rapid migration of young girls from rural areas and increasing incidence of sex-trafficking. While the traditional practices such as courtesans, concubinage, devadasis, have contributed in no less measure to the increase in prostitution, during

5. ESCAP Workshop 1985.- op.cit.
the last decades large scale commercialisation of the prostitution trade both nationally and internationally, has dramatically increased in recent decades.

Both the Philippine and the Malaysian reports have emphasised that one of the strategy adopted by some countries of the region for economic recovery and to fight general economic stagnation, has been aggressive promotion of tourism, as it brings in foreign exchange. The 1982 ESCAP report, estimated that tourist arrivals in Asian countries by 1981 averaged 16.2 million annually and the revenues from tourism amounted to US$ 7.4 billion which was 6.9 per cent share of the total world tourist expenditure. In 1983, the ASEAN countries are expected to spend US$ 22 million on promoting tourism (quoted in Arrifin, p. 12). The intensified efforts to promote tourism as an important sector of economy, not only affects the natural resources which fast get commercialised, but also places women in a totally new phase of discrimination, when they are used as promotional gimmicks by portraying local girls as models of feminity, seductiveness and demureness in travel brochures and pamphlets (Arrifin).

Tourism as a service industry has a multiplier effect in the economy i.e. on local industries, markets, goods and services and employment opportunities. The best sea
and mountain resorts and other scenic spots get commercialised as tourism is based on the philosophy of consumption. Governments supporting the policy of aggressive tourism promotion, give such projects trade incentives. The Malaysian report quoting the Director General of the Tourism Development Corporation, indicates that Malaysia earned M$800 million in foreign exchange in 1981 as compared to M$276 million in 1970. Penang where this study was conducted has become a big tourist attraction. The promotional effort which began between 1966-68, Penang was selected for the US Army R&R programme. The 1972 Pacific Area Travel Association workshop marked Penang's entry into the international tourism scene by establishing Penang as the prime holiday resort.

The Philippine report strongly indicts the open-door export-oriented policies of the government to face the economic challenges faced by the country. It remarks, "As the economy floundered, strategies of recovery mapped out in the recent decade have been, wittingly or unwittingly, at the expense of selling human flesh in the sex industry and in the labour market. Thus care about sex-tourism, entertainment abroad, the marriage market, domestic bondage and other forms of female exploitation (Sr. Soledad, P. 1)"
In many countries of Asia, women's groups have protested against degradation of women as sex objects in the ads and against sex-tours. Sex-tours to Japanese tourists evoked strong protest from women's groups. The Third World Movement Against Exploitation of Women (TW-MAE-W) spearheaded by Sr. Soledad, has been crusading against such practices which are no longer limited to national boundaries. The Japanese Transport Ministry issued warning to agencies organising sex-tours to Taiwan, Philippines and Thailand. International press reports have also pointed out that 1.5 million Japanese men go on holidays to South-East Asia on sex-tours and 2,000 prostitute in Manila and 100,000 in Bangkok cater to Japanese tourists alone. In Malaysia sex tourism is on a much lesser scale, however press reports have occasionally highlighted the use of sex as a tourist bait by some holiday packages sold abroad, however 1980 survey on tourism, hotels and social escort agencies, shows that Malaysia is very much a part of tourist sex map in South-East Asia (Ariffin).

The Philippine survey on this issue reveals that seventy six per cent of the respondents agreed that the past decades saw a rise of mass prostitution which they believe has become a national problem and 83 per cent
link tourism with prostitution which is used as a come-on. Fifty three per cent of the respondents covered by the survey considered commercialisation of marriage as another form of prostitution.

The Indian report says that 'prostitution-tourism' now an accepted foreign exchange earner or the tourism related to 'Rest and Relaxation' near foreign troops bases, prevalent in some Asian countries, does not exist in this country in those forms, however, another variety of 'prostitution tourism' does exist which is pertaining to 'Gulf connection' and provision of 'call girls' to foreign tourists in hotels in metropolitan cities.

In Hyderabad the 'muta' marriages received much press coverage, relating how poor Muslim families who are normally expected to pay a handsome dowry in their daughter's marriage, were delighted to get these "willing husbands" from Gulf-countries. Instead of demanding dowry they were willing to pay money to girl's family. In many cases after one wedding night in a hotel, the husband disappeared. Since the girl could not get a *talag* (divorce) she could not marry again. In few cases men got these ignorant girls to sign talag papers at the wedding itself without the least suspicion as to what these girls
were letting themselves into. In a few cases these 'husbands' got passports prepared for the girls and took them to Bombay airport with a family escort, and then disappeared. Families get easily tempted with the promise of jobs to men abroad and money for supporting the family at home. The furore in the press drawing government's attention to these scandalous practices (1981, 1,000 girls had received visas for the Gulf countries) reduced the incidence, but the marriages are continuing. No serious study has been done on this phenomenon. The Estimates Committee Report tabled in the Lok Sabha in 1981, expressed concern of the exploitation of young Indian girls by foreign nationals. The report pointed out that thorough enquiries in 1978 have revealed that Arab nationals in the 60-70 year age group had got married to Indian girls, who were later sold to Arab households as domestic servants or forced to take "unpleasant and indecent practices" (Patriot, 29th April '81). Later, a detailed procedure for verification of the bonafides of the husbands and certain checks were laid down by the External Affairs' Ministry, however, the Committee regretted that these instructions were not carried out by Indian Missions. The Government also wanted that cases of desertion and exploitation of Indian wives should be given discreet publicity in order to caution people of the dangers inherent in the matrimonial alliances with unknown foreigners.
Tourism also plays its role in 'new forms of prostitution'. A report from West Germany indicates that feminist groups and legislators of the opposition party are waging a campaign against the importation of Third World Women and Children for sexual purposes. The agencies advertise their services in the country's main newspapers and weeklies, offering "affectionate Latin American women for marriage, trial period, and right to return guaranteed", accompanied by photographs. Asking the government to crack down on the groups' trafficking in human beings, the report says that about a dozen such agencies have been making huge profits since the 70's. The agencies offer men tourists trips to Third World Countries, providing them with a hotel and female companionship (sometimes from girls 10 years old). They also offer women who are willing to marry West German men. In both cases they offer catalogues containing women's photographs and vital statistics.  

The degradation of women on the mass organised scale has aroused much passion and anger. In the Vienna Conference (1984) a delegate from South Korea described the "Kisaeng" tourism in her country where thousands of girls are engaged in entertaining foreign tourists (estimated 200,000 Kisaeng girls).

6. Ifda Dossier 48, July/August 1985
The 'Kisaeng-tourism' in Korea has evoked strong reactions from women's groups. The word originally referred to women hired to entertain at parties and social gatherings. Today the word is synonymous with prostitution. A survey conducted by the 'Korean Church Women United' found that the total number of tourist service girls engaged in entertaining tourists, belonging to government licensed party-houses and like places in addition to those working at brothels amounted to no less than 100,000 in 1978. The tourist guide books project Korea as "a paradise for men, where 'Kisaeng' girls leave nothing unattended". Foreign travellers comment "it was like picking up a slave girl in the slave market". In 1978 Korea earned US$ 10 billion in annual exports and the number of tourists reached a record one million mark. 'Kisaeng' girls carry their official identification card called 'Certificate of Employment in the Entertainment Service'. They are also required to attend an orientation programme sponsored by Korean International Tourism Association and the main emphasis is how crucial is foreign exchange for the country.

The Thailand delegate gave a gruesome account of the 'Phuket Fire Case' in 1984 where girls forced into prostitution for tourists were burnt to death as they

7. Yoon-ok Kim Sohn (South Korea) - Kisaeng Tourism in Korea (1980).
had been locked in their rooms when the fire broke out.
The Thai delegate to the ESCAP workshop said that "prostitution is no longer limited to national boundaries in fact it has expanded into exploitation without barriers".

Poverty, illiteracy, lack of employment opportunities, insecure and low paid jobs etc., do contribute in a major way to the exploitation of women. The majority of women from the vulnerable sections of societies become victims of fraudulent recruitment practices. Studies in India have found a vicious nexus between rural indebtedness, practice of bonded labour and prostitution. The exploitation of lower caste women in a caste society is an important element in forced prostitution. Economic deprivation and husband's indebtedness to the landlord/money-lender forces many low caste families in the hill areas to sell their women to the brothels in plains. In a penetrating report Gupta writes, "the constitutional guarantees for individual human rights are still unknown to the people of Purola, and ignored by those officials responsible for seeing that they are implemented. Local revenue official themselves are intimately involved in the trafficking of women, and the police who get their

cut in the game, turn a blind eye". In this area organised trafficking started after 1947 when new communication channels opened it up to officials and traders. The development of the area itself paved the way for human exploitation. Liberal sex mores prevalent among some of the hills and tribal people are also capitalised by the commercialised prostitution channels.

(b) **Military bases and Prostitution**

The Philippines and the Malaysian report also discuss the role of military bases in encouraging prostitution. The Philippine report says that the US Naval and Air bases have not only spoiled the natural resources of mountains, forests, land and sea, but have also spoiled human lives, dispossessing indigenous tribes, devaluing base workers and degrading females of the sex strips. Part of the surrender of sovereignty is the surrender of women's right to decency and respect. Even children have become prey to sexual abuse. It is a known fact that prostitution proliferates where the rest and recreation needs of the American military men have to be met. The city government of Olongopo and Angeles have issued ordinances requiring the Filipino women to go through periodic check ups to protect men from sexual by transmitted diseases but nothing is done to subject men to such check ups, who carry these diseases.
Besides these development like tourism promotion and defence strategies, the government has other ways of aiding and abetting prostitution i.e. licensing of 'hospitality girls' is another form of legalising prostitution. Several other agencies such as escort agencies, night clubs, massage parlours, dance halls, health clubs etc. also are front covers for illicit prostitution activities.

(c) The Impregnable Nexus: the Seamy Side of Prostitution

It is important to distinguish between 'forced' prostitution and free prostitution and between individual women involved in prostitution and the institution of prostitution. The latter has become an organised crime. Organised trafficking in women and girls is a big business. Because of large profits in 'flesh trade', kidnapping is a favourite method of procurement particularly in rural areas. A study conducted in Bombay found that out of 10 cases of kidnapping, six involved child-lifting between 4 to 10 years old. These children are brought up in brothels and the rebellious ones are beaten into submission and forced into the profession through threats and physical violence. Village girls from remote areas
kidnapped or enticed away with promises of good jobs in
the cities, or get into fake marriages to be sold in
country markets or taken away to the cities far from their
homes. In some cases girls are sold to pimps by their own
families. Employment of young girls in insecure and low
paid jobs and the impact of culture of consumerism also
contributes to the induction of girls into prostitution.

The ESCAP report particularly stresses that although
women may choose prostitution as a strategy of survival
for themselves or their families, however, it should be
kept in mind that prostitution as a calculated rational
choice is not sufficient for us to understand the
phenomenon. Such a view tends to ignore the economic
system underlying the institution of prostitution in which
individual and collective interests are grounded. These
interests help sustain the institution and can also lead
to various forms of coercion and fraud.

The network's agents are everywhere, cannot be
easily identified and sometimes enjoy political patronage
or power. The procurement network for what is termed as
'call girl' phenomenon is broad based and includes
hotel and guest house staff, travel agents, taxi drivers
etc. who keep a close watch for potential victims. In
addition places like 'massage parlours', beauty saloons, health clubs of dubious distinction, dance schools, cabaret shows and other such modern facilities, hotels and private guest houses, provide a facade for clandestine prostitution. Police raids on residences and private guest houses in posh residential areas have found that in many cases the clients and the girls have high connections. A wide spectrum of students, working girls, women of leisure seem to be involved in this racket for various reasons (Malik). Promila Kapur found that the call girl network operates in very invidious ways. The meeting ground is provided by middle-aged women or rich widows who host parties for those already in the network. She feels that the racket is so deeply entrenched in the metropolitan cities that the law can do very little.

While India is committed to the abolition of prostitution, it seems that urbanisation and industrialisation combined with growing permissiveness among higher income echelons, have all contributed to the rising incidence of prostitution in metropolitan cities, urban centres and business centres (Jyotsna Chatterjee, Joint Women's Programme). Poverty, illiteracy, heavy premium on the chastity of the girl before marriage together with sex inequality, is another formidable combination on which
the supply of prostitutes depends. A deserted wife, a widow, an orphaned sister - all unwanted burdens on their families are the ideal victims for exploitation. Manushi (a feminist journal) discovered a meat-packing factory complex on the outskirts of Delhi where school educated young women from rural Kerala, were kept virtually imprisoned by the employers who exploited them sexually at will. They were terrorised and beaten, and knowing that they are 'dishonoured' women they felt trapped and isolated (Malik).

In the areas where debt-bondage has led to women being sold to brothels, and have become recruiting grounds for prostitution, if a man fights this practice, he is often threatened by the money-lender and even by the local revenue official who also collects part of the earnings of these girls. A woman who was in the profession earlier, when interviewed said bluntly "Buy freedom for our men, give them land, these green fields ... which will contain our girls. Nothing else can". The exploitation of lower caste poor women is an important element of 'forced prostitution' and practically from all these poor tribal areas, stories appear in press of girls being kidnapped or abducted and sold in town or of their sexual exploitation by local officials, contractors and others in
power. Studies also report that 'hereditary' prostitution is prevalent in certain castes in India (Maghaiye, Chhota, Jangheiya, Koltas and Naiks) and men in these families act as pimps and girls who resist are forced through molestation and physical torture. In such families rituals are performed to initiate a girl in the profession from the age of eight years.

The 'religion-sanctioned prostitution' in the form of 'devdasi cult' is another recruitment channel. It is reported that anti-devdasi agitation has actually raised their rates because of the risk involved. Even priests are involved in the trafficking of these women. Men who have no means of livelihood encourage their wives and sisters to become devdasis so that they can sell them to agents.

In the metropolitan cities foreign tourists are offered girls by touts in taxis at hotels and sometimes on the street. Cabaret shows the sleazy night life in metropolitan cities is another facet of prostitution, the crude westernised version of the nautch girl openly advertised in newspaper and occasionally disturbed by police raids on 'unauthorised cabaret' (Malik).
The procurement network spreads all over the country, lucrative, organised, criminal in intent and action and incredibly difficult to root out, argues Malik. Each person in the chain gets a percentage of the commission depending on the quality of the girl. It is usually argued by social workers, that the reason why it is so difficult to break into the network is because people in high positions are deeply involved in the nationwide racket. Even when pimps and procurers are caught, few are punished, either because the signal comes from the powerful hidden controllers of the trade or because the law enforcement authorities are themselves involved or they have political connections. Press reports describing how women are openly sold in the market hardly merits any effective administrative action and the inter-state network in trafficking continues to thrive (Malik). Once trapped into prostitution they cannot break free except at the risk of their life.

The modus operandi reveals several layers of operators from local agents to inter-state gangs who ensure that the girls are kidnapped/purchased and despatched to distant places or to 'whole sale markets' where the brokers controlling the trade buy the girls for their respective employers. A dramatic exposure of this inhuman trade in
Madhya Pradesh by a journalists, gave a detailed account of the trade and operators behind it. After gaining confidence of the local agents, the journalist bought a girl named Kami a for Rs. 2,300 to prove his point and described how the racket is controlled and operated and the 'markets' where women are sold, are held eight times a year in secrecy with armed guards on watch. This girl who was later kept in a women's home, dramatically disappeared. After the expose the state government ordered a probe into the trafficking. The Rajasthan High Court admitted a writ petition to put an end to the flesh trade in the district of Dholpur. The petition mentioned that it is being done and protected by some influential and organised touts and politicians. A police enquiry later confirmed these facts. Later press reports indicate that the trade continues, only the venue has slightly changed. Dholpur remains the nerve centre of the flesh traders. The kidnapped and purchased girls are brought here for training and adoption before being sold off to brothels. A few months ago the police found that girls abducted from West Bengal were sold over and over again to disabled and aged Kashmiris in villages. Kidnapped by Kashmiri pimps all part of a well organised operation, most of these muslim girls were from Murshidabad. The 2,000 migrant Kashmiri labourers who go there every year, were obviously part of the network.
The Joint Women's Programme workers found that about 220 kilometres away from Madras flourished 'roadside prostitution' organised by 11 brokers known as the "business companies". They pay weekly money to the police station as "mamool" and refreshment for each night to the policemen on night duty. Most of the women were from poverty stricken families.

Kidnapping and trafficking is not confined within national boundaries. Many Nepalese women are also caught in the net of the procurement mafia and Indian brothels have a fair number of Nepalese and Tibetan women. The story of a 13 year old Nepalese girl Tulsa, abducted and sold at Bombay, hit the headlines when she was hospitalised as she was suffering from syphilis and T.B. It has now faded in the public memory.

IV. Current Debates on the Issue of Prostitution

Discussions on this issue evoke varied responses. As already noted earlier for some it is an ethical issue, for some it an economic issue and for some it is a human rights issue. Some believe that prostitution is connected with the three ism's: Capitalism, Imperialism and Feudalism. The revival of the debate on women's
equality and development during the last decade, has again pushed into focus the issue of women's right to lead a life of dignity free from all forms of exploitation. The debate on the nature of 'political' economy in the developing countries and its implications for poor vulnerable groups of women has become a major area of concern!

Prostitution is not an isolated issue but is symptomatic of the larger society and yet the society remains apathetic towards it. Described as 'the oldest profession' or 'a necessary social evil, it is either outrightly condemned by moralizers and social reformers and pushed into the dark crevices of society or at best ignored by those who believe 'it was there' since time immemorial and 'it will be there', thus oversimplifying an intricate human issue of sexual exploitation and subjugation of women, an inevitable outcome of the inequitous woman - man relationship. Jordan writes, "the prostitution as a profession stands within human society as solid as an immovable rock since the dawn of human civilisation whether glorified or mercilessly condemned and will continue to be, notwithstanding isolation it has been pushed into by a society of normal people. Nor we can just put an end to it only because we, normal people, happen to dislike
their being with us. Understandably this kind of social hypocrisy has led to a narrower concern of those who believe that we cannot eradicate or abolish prostitution and hence we should regulate it as it poses a health hazard.

Research on this issue, have explored economic motivation (poverty, debt bondage, unemployment), situational motivation (early sexual abuse of children, deception kidnapping, rape and forced prostitution) and psychological factors (neglect and ill-treatment in the family, broken homes, feeling of frustration, influence of friends etc.) as responsible for prostitution. The changing sex mores and the permissiveness and prevalent consumer cultures are other contributory factors.

The Malaysian study reported low incidence of prostitution in areas which have a predominantly Muslim population. The report indicates that various studies in the country seemed to indicate to some extent the role played by consumer culture in motivating women to enter prostitution. Also related is the influence of friends who are involved in such activities and the demand for these services by the burgeoning affluent urban society.

The Philippines report indicates that journalists (excluding male journalists) were of the opinion that prostitution thrives because of the law of supply and demand, while the male journalist saw the problem as not only a question of sexual inequality and objectification of women but also one of economic poverty and neo-colonial politics, with lop-sided government priorities. The women representatives thought that it needs to be looked at from a humanitarian angle. Capitalism via west has devised more sophisticated forms of exploiting women via fashion shows, nude painting sessions, sex-tours etc. In the western system it is normal to exploit anything including women for profit... The government is certainly to be blamed but so are the men... The church too as an institution has not done anything positive by way of raising the discourse beyond morality thus blaming the victim rather than the system (Soledad).

Is prostitution an ethical issue or an economic issue? Are women entering prostitution of free-choice or are they 'victims' of economic pressures and fraudulent elements running the business? Malik argues "Prostitution in India has many faces. At opposite ends of the spectrum are the beastial 'cages' of Bombay's red light district, where girls and women of all ages offer themselves, symbolising
the prison of their existence; and the five star hotels in metropolitan cities where 'call girls' in increasing numbers operate in luxurious comfort... In both sex and a woman's body are commercial commodities, both are victim of a social value system which accepts an unequal status for women and men. In this system women submit to male sexuality to 'safeguard' the morality of society... The male dominated society has come to a unilateral decision that men are biologically different ergo prostitution is a 'necessary evil'. This tacit acquiescence of the society partially explains, "the reason why minimum public support is extended in dealing with the legal aspects of trafficking, why so few voluntary women's organisation are involved in meaningful programme of rehabilitating those who want to escape, why only few concerned people recognise that it is the worst form of physical and mental bondage".

The majority of women are forced into prostitution by a combination of social, economic and personal pressures plus the social mores which continue to govern Indian society. Even where girls appeared to have entered the profession 'voluntarily' investigation often reveals that a combination of circumstances had made the so called 'choice' almost inevitable. The persisting taboo on the widow remarriage, premium put on girls chastity before
marriage and the increasing incidence of dowry, poverty, illiteracy and lack of employment skills and opportunities for women, is a formidable combination on which the supply of prostitution thrives. Unwanted girls considered burden on their families and vulnerable women in search of jobs, are all ideal victims for exploitation. Hereditary prostitution in certain communities and the 'religion sanctioned prostitution' (the corrupted Devadasi tradition) keeps the human supply line. The link between prostitution and bonded labour and rural indebtedness has been another contributory factor. Flesh trade is big business and the hidden forces and power structures behind this institution make it difficult to penetrate the syndicates running it.

The women's movement looks at the problem as a human rights and social justice issue. The ESCAP Workshop emphasised that the issue of prostitution needs to be reconceptualised and should not be viewed merely as a moral issue. It should be viewed with the perspective of socio-economic transformation in Asia associated with the industrialisation and economic development. Yet the epithets used for these women such as 'fallen women', 'harlots', 'whore' have a moral overtone describing women who have deviated from the standard code of social conduct.

10. ESCAP Expert Group Meeting - op. cit.
Whether women choose prostitution as a survival strategy or are forced into it by circumstances, both have an element of exploitation in it. The 'rational choice' argument may be valid in few cases however, it is true that bulk of the women are victim of circumstances. This view also tends to ignore the economic system underlying the institution of prostitution which sustain the institution through various forms of coercion, fraud and enticements. The growing polarisation in economic terms between classes, rural landlessness and pauperisation, outmigration of young girls and dislocation of family support, have all directly and indirectly contributed to prostitution. Transnational organised tourism, emergence of EPZ and FTZ employing young girl migrants from rural areas, in unstable or insecure jobs under exploitative conditions, media campaign to sell package tours, commercial ads etc. have all been guilty in some measures in the devaluation of women.

The debate on legalising prostitution and licensing is another controversial issue. Jean D'Cunha writing in a women's magazine (Femina) thinks, that the debate on legalising prostitution is gaining ground and is grossly sexist in nature. The first current of thought advocating legalisation prevalent among some welfare organisation,
the police and government circle, according to her, is reactionary and outrageously sexist as it believes that (a) prostitution is a necessary evil, (b) it is a safety valve for maintenance of family structure, (c) it is a safeguard against rape and (d) licensing accompanied with regular medical check ups will prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases STD. Interestingly a regional Training Course on Suppression of Immoral Traffic, jointly organised by the National Institute of Social Defence and Gujarat State Crime Prevention Trust (1984), had a panel discussion on 'legalisation of prostitution'. The panelists strongly opposed legalisation and wanted strict prohibitionary measures to curb and eradicate prostitution. They were also of the opinion that after the introduction of the Parliamentary Bill in 1986 cases of kidnap, rape and adultery have reduced. If the recent statistics on crimes and violence against women are to be believed then the claim seems to be totally baseless. Eightees have witnessed a strong protest from women's groups against rape, dowry death and other forms of sexual exploitation of women.

The second school of thought according to D'Cunha believes that prostitution is often a women's choice and it is a profession like any other. Legalisation will
also put an end to police harassment, and ensure minimum wages, creches for children, better living and health facilities and protection from anti-social elements. It will also wipe out the stigma of immorality and criminality.

The Indian Health Organisation is demanding legalisation of prostitution. Its secretary Mr. Gilada says "we intend to work for the legalisation of prostitution because it is not possible to stop it and even if we proceed in that direction we will be disturbing our family and society system. To streamline the world's oldest profession we feel that there should be a compromise between prostitutes, society and government". It is important that prostitution should not be considered as crime by women but to justify the inhuman exploitation on such grounds is against all norms of social justice and human dignity.

Another strong supporter for licensing Mr. K.L. Bhole, who is supposed to have helped form the Delhi Prostitutes Union (Known as Patite Uddhar Sabha), has filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court, challenging the provisions of the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act as Ultra Vires of the Constitution of India as it imposes
 unreasonable restriction on the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution (freedom to practice any profession). He also believes that if properly regulated it should result in controlling the spread of VD.

A study sponsored by the Planning Commission used as samples VD patients, as the problem has caused serious alarm over recent years. Bombay's Indian Health Organisation found that in one of the known red light district of Bombay 90 percent of the prostitutes who attended their health camp were suffering from VD. Most of the women were treated by quacks or assisted by elder prostitutes. Dr. Bhalerao narrating her personal experience, found that inborn prejudice even in medical circles, prevails and even women doctors would not go near the prostitutes. She feels that home health care was necessary for them as they were reluctant to go to the hospitals due to ill treatment by the medical staff. It is also important that effective measures are taken to check the clients also. Besides STD, prostitutes suffer from other health problems due to congested rooms, lack of proper diet, anaemia. Many of them receive physical injuries as a result of sadism and

11. A report published in 'India Today' (July, 1985) says that VD has emerged as the third most dangerous affliction in the country after malaria and tuberculosis. By conservative estimates the number of people afflicted by VD has gone up to 7.75 lakhs in 1981 as against 2 lakhs in 1971. This may be gross underestimation as the disease has acquired a leper-like stigma.
perversion and many suffer from severe depression, nightmares, insomnia and suicide tendencies. The most horrifying aspect of prostitution in India is child prostitution. Many of these are sold as "virgins" specially to men suffering from STD as there is a criminal belief that the disease gets cured by intercourse with a virgin.

Those who oppose the legalisation system are convinced that this tantamounts to legalising exploitation of women with state indirectly sanctioning it. Instead of removing the stigma of immorality it will single them out and make them more vulnerable. The argument that prostitution is a 'necessary evil' as it saves man's family life from his sexual frustration, is the worst form of sexism and all that one is doing is accepting that "sex and a woman's body are commodities to be sold in the market". In a culture where virginity and chastity is highly valued and even a rape victim is shunned for losing her honour, women are expected to pay a heavy price for saving the rest of the society and family from disintegration (D'Cunha). Studies in several countries reveal that prostitutes shy away from registration as it stigmatises them for the whole life. She becomes a public woman on record. Legalisation will neither stop
harassment nor will it check the spread of STD unless steps are taken to let clients submit to medical check ups.

On the other hand the 'abolitionist' system to which India is pledged has increased the number of pimps and facilitated gangster control of prostitution. It is argued that "when prostitution is driven underground, prostitutes are forced to associate with criminal elements". D'cunha suggests that what is needed is legislation which will decriminalize the act of prostitution per se and should make the client an offender and at the same time make legal measures against pimps, landlords and brothel keepers who exploit prostitutes, more stringent and foolproof. A strong organisation of the prostitutes themselves is a must for protection of their civil and human rights.

Rebuilding the psychological and social damage done to these women is a real challenge.

V. Is Media Evasive, Silent or Sensational on this Issue

Emotions run high but the analysis falls short of a real understanding of the complex interplay of forces which have not only perpetuated, but increased
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the incidence of prostitution. The intricate network of
pimps, clients, brothel managers and law enforcement
machinery, shows such versatile adaptability to the changing
times and social conditions, and an organised and determined
effort to perpetuate the system, that it is difficult to
penetrate the nexus.

The general attitude seems to be that the problem was
always there and it will be there until the time the
distorted-value system perpetuates the unequal status of
women. The persistent intellectual and social apathy is
acknowledged by many who are concerned with the most
degrading problem of 'sexual slavery', that "unlike other
'unpleasant' socio-economic problems in Indian society,
which are increasingly being forced into public focus and
on the social conscience, prostitution remains relatively
invisible even in the media... The attention paid by the
media to women's issues during the last decade has resulted
in prostitution also receiving greater coverage but more
often from the point of view of news, often of sensational
journalism, rather than of constructive, meaningful and
regular exposure of an exploitative system involving
fellow human beings" (Malik). She further points out that,
"in comparison to the tragedy which invests certain aspects
of the profession, the shameful acceptance of forced...
prostitution and of child prostitution by our society with
the exploitation of girls and women by the massive network
of the flesh trade the media exposure has been woefully
inadequate. Nor has the media played the role of which
it is capable, both in educating the public and in
stirring the public conscience into action against the
exploiters either by trying to change the traditionally
biased attitude towards the victim of the profession or
by putting pressures on the authorities concerned into
attacking the factors of inequality and poverty which
generate prostitution. The report further says that a
great deal of information from research studies already
exists for journalists interested in following up the
lead but this has happened in very rare cases perhaps
because of the failure of women’s organisations to play
a more constructive role.

The Philippine report (based on an analysis of 100
questionnaire distributed to media professionals both
women and men in Metro Manila, Metro Cebu and Baguio City)
reflects not only gender differences in the media
professional’s attitude to the whole issue but also
sexist biases in men’s attitude. Although eighty three
per cent respondents admitted that prostitution has
became a national problem, the report indicates that
54 per cent respondents think that there is a shallow understanding of the issue and one of the reason is that the geopolitics of prostitution is rarely tackled. Half the respondents partially agreed that media tends to sensationalise the victim, while 70 per cent of them thought that nothing much is said about the people who profit from the sex industry. Two women media personnel felt that media has thrived on the exploitation of women (ads and tabloids) and prostitution is often used in media to sell, emphasising lascivious pictures, promoting sexual entertainment and an overplay of sexual crime stories.

The media itself has contributed to the devaluation of women. A woman editor writes "it has become matter of fact for certain newspapers to jazz up their front pages with pictures that can only be mildly described as cheesecakes. These periodicals have been getting away with it by cruelly putting down those who speak against 'indecent exposure' as prudes and puritans, if not self-righteous moral guardians... Because this message is imparted through apparently legitimate media, men become all the more convinced that a woman exists for the taking. If she can not be bought she can be raped or similarly subdued with no heavy-weight on men's conscience". Lamenting the fact that "while there is so much exploitation as well as courage and compassion to write
about, our periodicals waste the space in depicting woman as sex objects, because publishing is a business first and foremost". (p. 28).

Women's issues are still considered soft areas. Political and economic issues get the most coverage and attention. Another woman editor from Philippines thinks, that "major political or social upheavals would generally generate enough interest for newspaper to be sold on the stands, but on lean days decision makers have to depend on sensational pictures to whet up the consumers' appetite".

The connection between media's portrayal of women as sex objects and sex crimes and violence against women, has been emphasised by all the three reports. A note of caution comes from a woman journalist from Philippines, "The media are two-edged tools if they take up the issue of women and prostitution, they can either promote the cause of decency or can be the very source of indecent ideas depending on how they handle the material. If they expose a prostitution business, the guns should be trained on the men behind the business and less on prostitutes. Otherwise it would be like sending drug addict to jail without punishing the drug-pusher".
The Malaysian study also accuses the media of denying women the rightful place in the society by portraying women as a lesser half and as objects of pleasure and have thus helped to reinforce negative stereotypes thus degrading women of their self-respect and dignity. The Malaysian report includes selected advertisement featuring semi-nude female models. The report indicates a slight change in the trend around 1975, the beginning of the International Women's Year. Newspapers started featuring articles on issues such as low paying jobs for women, women in important career and business, domestic violence, legislation etc. but the advertisements showed no noticeable change although much milder in their projection of women. It was partly due to the enactment of an Advertisement Code of Ethics. Attempts by the government to incorporate Islamic principles in government policies, legislation and advertisement was also responsible for advertisements being less blatant. Criticisms from concerned groups like the Consumers Association of Penang also led to more restraint in the selection of articles and photographs. The vernacular papers still reinforced the stereotyped roles with occasional articles on women's issues. The travel brochures brought out by the Tourism Development Corporation of Malaysia, adhered more to the guidelines laid down by the government, rather than the newspapers and other magazines.
The Philippine report says that media people have been silent about the issue of prostitution because of their helplessness to combat it, although lately the significant rise of prostitution and protests by women’s groups have resulted in sudden interest. There seems to be a strong contradiction in the attitudes of media people towards the issue. While some believe that its role is to expose the seamy side of life and raise a public outcry others think that it is helpless in combating prostitution and it can only be minimised and or regulated. Many agree that the economic crisis has driven women to prostitution, however they feel that it is not newsworthy.

The Indian report argues that over the last few years as a direct consequence of the UN Decade for Women, media has shown increasing awareness of the complexity and seriousness of the problem of prostitution, but it is highly inadequate. Giving few illustrations from print media about effective expose of the problem the report hints that there has been no follow-up either by the newspaper or by the journalist.

The 'story of Kamla' exposing the flesh racket flourishing at a small township situated at the junction of three states (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar
Pradesh) in India, became a landmark in media’s coverage of the issue. It combined sensationalism and earnestness of serious reportings. The journalist got the hint about the widespread flesh racket in the area while covering an election assignment, however his editor remarked "no use doing a general story. No one will pay attention. Just another scandal, they will shrug. The only way to wake these damn fools up, is to actually buy a girl". This is exactly what he did and bought a girl for 2300 rupees. A young man from that area proudly told the journalist that there was no brothel in the country without some connection with this small town (Dholpur). The front page headline story—the 'scoop', provided the sensation and caught wide public interest and even inspired a film and a play. The state government ordered a probe and a writ petition was filed alleging the involvement of influential people in the racket. Finally Kamla disappeared mysteriously from the home she was placed for rehabilitation. The Indian Express filed a petition in the Supreme Court to initiate remedial measures, however the disappearance of the girl pushed the issue in the background again. In the meantime the trafficking in the area continues with a slight change in the place and some local press people found that the area remains the centre of the traffic and the modus operandi has become even more difficult to penetrate.
One of the few reasons why inadequate coverage is given to the problem, is also because it is not easy to cover. Another reason is that it is so difficult to enter protective homes where the rescued girls are kept, nor is it easy to visit brothels and talk freely to the girls with the all powerful madam hovering around. The girls are themselves reluctant to talk about what they think is a 'life of shame'. Some of them develop a fatalistic attitude, Jyoti Sabharwal who interviewed some of them at GB Road Delhi which has about 64 brothels according to police records, quotes one of them saying that "even the girls from our families whom we educated could not get jobs. All this talk about getting the girls married is sheer nonsense. Who will accept our girls? So many behanjis (sisters) from various organisations have come and gone and have recorded our statements, but nobody has ever done anything... Everyone talks but nobody uplifts the fallen people but pushes them down''.

Less serious magazines rely more on sensationalism than serious and probing write-ups. In general women's magazines have acquired a new approach by focussing on serious issues instead of only fashion, beauty and cuisine. Few very perceptive write ups in the 80's on the issue of prostitution have appeared in the print media,
however, it still remains by large a neglected issue. Malik maintains that even some outstanding women journalists writing on broad spectrum of women's issue, have not paid much attention to studying this problem. In a very recent seminar on the 'Girl Child' participants made only a passing reference to child prostitution. The reasons may be tied up with society's attitude to the "fallen women" reflected in the following report:-

"Delhi's Garson Bastion Road - GB for short - is a two way street. Also two faced by day an industrial market of hardware dealers, by night a whorehouse catering to the software of the senses. Perhaps the street's position indicates its double life: it runs precisely between two worlds (India Today, March 15, 1985)"

Media coverage on the 'devdasis' has been good and the reasons seems to be the reform movement and the pressure coming from various organisations working with them and encouraging devdasis to organise against the exploitation and work for the rehabilitation of women and children. The publicity through media coverage has not only placed the problem of devdasis before the people but has also generated pressures on the state government to pass anti-devdasis laws.
Media coverage of the problem of the 'Muta marriage'—where elderly men from the Middle East posing as wealthy Sheikhs, married teenaged girls for few weeks and then deserted them—stirred up the public conscience towards cruel exploitation of young girls. The feminist magazine 'Manushi' has systematically and consistently been raising the issue.

The media coverage of the case of a Nepalese girl Tulsni may not have brought back her childhood, it did spark off police action, who rescued 1600 girls from brothels and the Nepalese government set up its first home for women.

The Philippine survey of media professionals' response to the issue evoked interesting although sometimes contradictory reactions:

- Media have put on a facade of exposing the syndicates that maintain prostitution dens, however like the drive against prostitution by the law enforcers themselves, its campaign has been short-lived;

- If media play the role on a 'hit and run basis', the time will come when prostitution will affect even the remotest parts of the country;

- Newspapers publish raids on prostitution houses but the photographs are used as come-ons to boost the circulation of the newspaper.
Media's role on these issues has not reached a point by which the culprits, the agencies involved and the procurers of prostitutes are regularly played up in the different publications. If there is news at all on the developments in this "business" or what cause-oriented groups are doing to stem prostitution, it is done only on an irregular basis, at times when the raids are conducted.

Media's role is to inform/expose/educate/influence public opinion, may be official mores - but this is as far as media can go.

VI. Developing a Counter-ideology:
Can Media be an ideological tool?

There seems to be a general agreement that media's attitude to women's issues has changed during the women's Decade, however, it is still treated as a soft area while political and economic affairs get maximum coverage. According to the Indian Press Commission reports, the coverage to women's issues is 10 per cent in Urdu Press, 6 to 7 per cent in language papers and 4 to 8 per cent in English Press.

Can media be cause-oriented? Can media help in developing a counter ideology? A Filipino panelist to the open forum, countered by saying "can media afford the luxury of being cause-oriented? It can't at present. Media should be restructured so that it is not held by
a financial lifeline”. Another panelist commented that “advertising is the lifeline of any paper and at best one can caution the advertisers”. Many journalists pointed out that as part of their profession they face certain constraints howsoever, they may like to advocate a cause. One woman journalist from Philippine felt that if media can provide extensive information on the issue, it could be instrumental in affecting radical changes in people’s attitude provided there were no control and censorship, there was courage and there was freedom.

Besides the limitations faced by the print media swing to ownership and control by commercial interests, the “publishing patriarchs” also suffer from patriarchal ideology. Sr. Soledad feels that media personnel are also persons colored by gender ideology and products of their own cultural conditioning. Sexism seems all pervasive, the insidious effect of the dominant patriarchal ideology deeply embedded in people’s psyche. Big business also has its stakes in women. The sex industry – prostitution - tourism, pornography, marriage market (mail order brides) etc., profits, from selling a woman’s body. Military prostitution has always been implicitly sanctioned by the governments.
Besides the commercial and the ideological trap of the print media, the media professionals do reflect a feeling of inadequacy and helplessness. Some of them believe that media people have been silent on this issue because they cannot combat it. The powers behind sex trafficking are neither easy to identify nor easy to expose. Some media people suffer from a sense of defeatism and believe that "there is no way we can eliminate this. Public sale of flesh can only be minimised and or regulated to within acceptable levels of a rational society". Another journalist thinks that "the problem will not go away with any amounts of words thrown its way, nor does he think that he possesses the fierceness of determination of a crusader to launch a campaign against the world's oldest profession". Another media person puts the blame on government system and believes that media's role is to inform/expose/educate/influence public opinion - may be even official mores - but this is as far as media can go... Besides what alternatives can be given to those who indulge in prostitution?" (Philippine report)

Despite the general melody which the print media suffers from, there seems to be a broad agreement that media sensationalises the victim particularly in the
coverage of raids but is silent about those who profit from the sex-industry. The stories are sometimes used for media to sell, therefore more women should enter the media particularly at decision-making levels.

The CWDS organised a Discussion Forum last year, on "Media and Women's Issues: Towards a more effective role". The women participants drawn from different media talked about the conflict they face between their identity as a woman and identity as a professional. The fear of getting typecast was also expressed. One of the participants a documentary film maker talked about the danger of stereotyping that occurs when one works on women's issues and thus narrowing down of one's professional interests. Another participant thought that "we must not give an impression that we have taken up women's issues because we are women but we should make it a drive against all oppression and violation of women's rights as equal human being".

Malik argues that there are many aspects of the problem of prostitution which, if they are systematically covered, could help in creating public awareness and concern and in changing the general attitude that prostitute is a social outcaste with no hope of returning
to the society which exploits her and then considers her a criminal. She feels that much of the coverage should be with depth, follow-up and understanding however, even media coverage can do little if public conscience has become so dulled or unresponsive that people are not provoked into action. There are few journalists today who write with compassion and anger on the exploitative aspect implicit in this profession and on the collusion of social forces who benefit from it. It needs not only a genuine concern and commitment but a unique courage and single mindedness to write about such issues.

The Philippine report quoting a woman panelist says "if there were more hazards for enterprising flesh vendors in the business, there would be less chance for women to go into prostitution". Another media person thinks that media primarily reports happenings and if some public or civic organisation moves, the media can reciprocate. One media person believes that the limited role of media in combatting prostitution should also be partially attributed to the government’s toleration of prostitution.

At a theoretical level media persons agree about the vital role media could play in the crusade against prostitution. Then how to influence policies which run
counter to principles of equality and social justice?
It is a fact that under repressive regimes, free press is
the first casualty along with people's rights. In many
countries government controlled or guided media toe the
government line and have become the ideological apparatus
of the government. Tourism/military bases and prostitu­
tion has become a sensitive issues in some countries.
Women's organised groups with access to information have
raised their voice against such oppression. The
representatives of women's organisation suggested the
steps to fight the system - i.e. deportation of pedophiles,
stricter laws and faithful implementation, pickets and
rallies, articles and letters to the editors, fora and
symposium on feminism and prostitution as one area for
struggle. The media can actively support these
initiatives. Perhaps initiative can come from the women
in media, however there efforts have to be supported by
a strong women's movement. The Malaysian report stresses
that women's action groups must provide alternative
magazines and literature for the general readers and
women specifically. It also suggests that all biased
legislation be reviewed and anti-vice laws should
impose heavier penalty on those who lived on the
earnings of prostitutes and on entertainment places
which served as a cover up for illicit prostitution.
Issues of women's oppression and exploitation cannot be left to women's movement alone, and media has to play its legitimate role in exposing the social roots and social implications of the problem. Prostitution cannot be treated as a problem of minority section or as an ethical issue to be swept under the carpet. National policies relating to health, education, employment, defence, tourism etc. all have a bearing on this vital area and the linkages between various factors contributing to the increase in the incidence of prostitution need to be adequately dealt with. The Philippine report ends on an optimistic note, "once people in media realise that it is not heaven to remain in the trap that commercial and traditional print media have got on into, then they can start creating a counter ideological apparatus at the service of a new kind of social order that is just, humane and feminist". It could be possible if forces join hands in responding to the challenge thrown up by those persecuted by the society for its own lapses.
APPENDIX I

(A) THE MEDIA, WOMEN AND PROSTITUTION

Sister Mary Soledad Perpinan,
Philippines

A Summary

The Philippines, an archipelago bordered by the Pacific Ocean and the China Sea, is of strategic importance to the United States, Occupying a territory as large as Singapore, the US Subic Naval Base and US Clark Air Base have destroyed natural resources of mountains, forests, land and sea. They have also despoiled human lives, dispossessed indigenous tribes, devalued base workers and degraded the women. It is well-known that prostitution grows where the rest and recreational needs of the American military men have to be met. Even children have become preys of sexual abuse. With each base agreement, the Philippine government implicitly extends approval to the consequences of American military presence in the country. The government of Olongapo and Angeles have laws requiring the Filipino women to submit to periodic check-ups and get cleared from sexually transmitted diseases. Nothing has been proclaimed to protect the women from the American military men who are the real carriers of gonorrhea, VD, herpes, AIDS etc.

It seems that both American and Philippine governments are party to military prostitution. Moreover, Philippines has fallen into the deep pit of foreign indebtedness. Genuine economic independence is too far off. After the implementation of import substitution policy of the 1950’s,
since the 1960's to the present time there have been a lot of problems like devaluation of currency, incentives to foreign investors etc. and all these have inhibited nationalist development. To improve the economy of the country certain strategies were adopted which were at the cost of selling human flesh in the sex industry and in the labour market - local and foreign. This probably occurred unknowingly but the fact remains that sex tourism, entertainment abroad, marriage market, and other forms of female exploitation began with the attempts at the recovery of national economy. The agricultural development was also far behind and so families in the countryside forced the girls to find employment in the urban centres and abroad. Thus rose the breed of "hospitality girls", troupes for Japan and the Gulf states, mail order brides for Australia and Europe and maids for Hong Kong and Singapore. Philippine had been a Spanish colony for 400 years and American colony for a 100 years, so it has ingrained values and attitudes that cater to the foreigners. Filipino women have, ultimately, become victims to such atrocities.

The present research study was carried out to find out the attitudes, views and roles as perceived by print media decision-makers and professionals with reference to women and prostitution. The conceptual framework behind the survey is the assumption that attitudes and views are related, i.e., how one feels about a matter can colour one's perception. Moreover, the views held have also a bearing on the affective level. Views on prostitution are influenced by basic attitudes towards women. The second assumption is that the projection of a role is one step towards assuming that role. Therefore, it is important for media people themselves to articulate what media people should do.
There is a dearth of literature on the relation of media to the question of women and prostitution. Only two studies and a magazine deal with this topic, though, not properly, viz., Racellita Ann C. Manvel's *A Content Analysis of the Writings of the Four Women Columnists of the Bulletin Today: Arlene Babst, Melinda de Jesus, Sylvia Mayuga and Ninez Cacho Olivarez*; Kiné David and Pennie Azarcon-de la Cruz's *Towards Our Own Image: An Alternative Philippine Report on Women and Media* and Marra Pl. Lanot's article *Must Women be Victims of Sexual Violence to be in the News?* published in Weekend. In the first study, it was found that the four women never discussed the problem of prostitution. In other magazines such as Bulletin Today and Tempo, women's issues were not given any importance. Rape stories that did appear were not followed up to the fate of the accused.

The primary research was carried out in spite of limits in time and limitations of the calculations. The data was gathered through the following methods:

1. A *TW-MAE-W survey of media personnel* (Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women);
2. Reflections of Media people on their role;
3. Three public fora.

**TW-MAE-W Survey on Media, Women Prostitution**

The objectives of this survey were:

1) to explore sexist biases and other aspects related to the "women question";
ii) to assess media's grasp of prostitution as an issue;

iii) to look into the factors that affect publication policies of decision-makers and professionals;

iv) to elicit commitment to the role media is to play in tackling the problem.

The questionnaire designed was a simple one and the respondent only had to tick the best answer. Ample space was provided for comments. The survey was undertaken in Metro Manila, Cebu City and Baguio City. There were 100 respondents out of which 47 were based in Metro Manila, 31 in Cebu City and 22 in Baguio City out of which 42 per cent were females and 58 per cent males. This shows that Philippine media is male-dominated. Except for 25, all the respondents were in print media out of which 47 did not have more than five years of experience in media work.

Prostitution is an evil and must be put to an end. Bold films affect the moral values and attitudes of the people. Social escorts of the tourists usually end up 'entertaining' the guests and this practice degrades the women, in general. These were the views of most of the female respondents. They felt that laws must be enforced to stop this practice. Persons who arrange for these prostitutes should be penalized and not the prostitutes themselves. This was the opinion of 78 per cent of the respondents. Moreover, it was felt, that it is the policemen who protect the local syndicates. Many male respondents, on the other hand, felt that there was nothing wrong in visiting the prostitutes sometimes. It is not offensive to print pictures of scantily-dressed females but it is scandalous for matrons to go after machos. Another fact that came to the limelight was that
there was the presence of a racial element because only Asian women were used for military prostitution and sex tourism.

On the sexist biases of the media, male and female respondents showed their gender leanings. Most women think that newspapers glorify sex. This type of publicity is not necessary to sell a product. They also felt that the Tabloids favoured sexploitation. Less percentage of men felt that this was true. The largest percentage of 'no response' was for the item "the graphics of my paper/magazine can be sexist". Only one third of the respondents disagreed on this. More women (40.5 per cent) than men (25.9 per cent) agreed that media tend to sensationalise the victims of sexploitation.

To find out whether there were significant differences between gender responses reflecting personal attitudes and sexist biases in print media, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed for certain items. There was a strong correlation, Pearson r.78, for points of agreement and a moderately strong relationship, Pearson r.75, for points of disagreement. When T-test was applied for the correlated samples the results showed 5.0 for "Agree" and 4.54 for the "Disagree" responses. This shows that indeed there were significant differences between male and female answers for both cases.

76 per cent of the total respondents recognized the fact that the past decade saw the rise of mass prostitution. 83 per cent admitted that prostitution has become a national problem 67 per cent did not agree that since it is an old problem it is not newsworthy. 83 per cent of the respondents linked tourism with prostitution, 49 per cent
connected it with US military presence and 53 per cent with commercialization of marriage fashion shows and some conferences often serve as prostitution fronts. The sexual exploitation of children (below 15 years of age) raised the ire of 96 per cent (the highest percentage of those in agreement). Poverty was seen by 72 per cent as the driving factor behind prostitution. That prostitution be tolerated for the good of the economy was the stance of only 3 per cent of the respondents. Besides developmental strategies such as tourism schemes, the government has various ways of aiding or abetting prostitution. 71 per cent of media people felt that licensing of "hospitality girls" is a form of legalizing prostitution. Many feel that churches had not properly understood the problem of prostitution and that consciousness of Filipinos about this phenomenon is high. One reason for the shallow understanding of the issue is the fact that the geopolitics of prostitution is rarely tackled (54 per cent of the respondents).

On media coverage and policies, most (74 per cent) felt that the account of raids on the prostitution dens will necessarily stop prostitution. The dailies run personal ads that have become a via media for soliciting sexual services. Nothing much has been said about the people who profit from the sex industry. Media people acknowledged the newsworthiness of protests and programmes against prostitution. 91 per cent of the respondents felt that investigative journalism has contributed to exposing the problem of prostitution. Three-fourths of the media respondents were optimistic about being able to do something about it. There were a few cause-oriented media people though only 7 per cent appeared to be helpless and hopeless.
Reflections of Media People

Space was provided for the respondents to write down their personal insights of media's role with reference to women and prostitution. These comments were grouped under various headings. They were:

1. Fatalist, hopeless. Prostitution has been with us since Biblical times or even earlier. There is no way to eliminate it. The tabloids will do anything to survive - sex and violence. This problem will not go away with any amount of words thrown its way.

2. Inadequate, ineffective. The media have put on a facade of exposing the syndicates that maintain prostitution dens. The newspapers publish reports of raids but the photographs that go along with it are used to increase the newspaper circulation. The newspapers seem to thrive on exploitation and play their role on a "hit and run" basis.

3. Blind to women's exploitation. Women and prostitution are just some of the many topics that crop up every now and then. There is nothing wrong with prostitution as long as there are daily or weekly medical check-ups of prostitutes. But child exploitation and prostitution must stop.

4. Promoter of prostitution. Women are being used in the media for commercial purposes like the promotion of new products, the tourism industries and other things. Media has emphasized prostitution through pictures promoting sexual entertainment.

5. Seller of women. The periodicals have been getting away by cruelly putting down those who speak against "indecent exposure" as prudes and puritans, if not self-righteous moral guardians. The skin shows sells not only the periodical but also sells women. Women are either treated patronizingly or held in low regard. This attitude is imparted through the media and men become all the more convinced that a woman exists for the taking. Code of ethics must be made not to mint money at the expense of womanhood.
6. Male-chauvinist. Male chauvinism bares its fangs when it comes to the business of selling newspapers. Major political or social upheavals would generally generate enough interest for newspapers to be sold on the stands, but on lean days, media decision-makers have to depend on sensational pictures to whet up the consumer's appetite - the male consumer's, that is. On any day, the tabloids' inside pages contain feature articles and advertisements accompanied with photographs of scantily-dressed females. By allowing themselves to be featured as sex objects, these females are prostituting their own bodies with the media acting as their pimps. Since all the editors of broadsheets end newspapers are men, the decision to feature women in bad light also belongs to men. Even women editors are forced to put out articles that generate income. While deliberately or indeliberately helping or encouraging prostitution to flourish, the newspapers and magazines will not hesitate to put out stories/articles that condemn prostitution and exploitation of the female sex.

7. Informer, exposing roots. Media should take the issue of prostitution seriously. It could be instrumental in affecting radical changes in public attitude and play a critical role in the fight against prostitution by exposing involvement of some government and police officials in the proliferation of the flesh trade. If the stigma of being an operator of the sex dens can be labelled on the maintainers, the crimes they have committed might be brought to the limelight and later eliminated. If there are mere hazards for enterprising flesh vendors in business, there would be less chances for women to go into prostitution.

8. Reporter of happenings. Media cannot print moves to combat prostitution unless the public or some civic organizations act. The media primarily report happenings. Together with vigilant and not merely publicity-conscious individuals, we can minimize the problem. Regular follow-ups and investigative reporting must be done.

9. Activist. Media should launch a campaign to legalize prostitution to regulate the spread of venereal diseases and child prostitution. Licensed prostitutes should be taxed to raise funds for their retirement into a more respectable business.
10. Change-agent, pressure group. Media could be an effective catalyst for a drive against prostitution. To tackle prostitution, we must not prosecute the prostitutes for most of them are victims too. Stiffer penalties against recruiters, pimps, customers and others who force women into prostitution.

11. Partner of cause-oriented groups. If only the media people would live up to their roles as partners in progress of supporting cause-oriented groups in their fight against the evils of society such as prostitution and denounce person or persons responsible for these. The society can be a better place to live in where women are respected and not considered only as sex-objects.

12. Upholder of women. Media have a vital role in publicizing the status or plight of women, the diminishing or enhancing of their rights, their exploitation or their enhancement. Women are men's partners in life and in social development. As such, they should be respected and protected.

13. Champion of a person's dignity. Exploitation of a human being, whether sexually or otherwise, is always immoral. The media must champion the dignity of the person - as a child of the creator-created in his likeness. Beauty and quality should be emphasized by media not sexiness or cheapness.

14. Media as guardian of morality. The media should be bounded by ethics and morals so that presentation can be picturesque without being vulgar. Newspaper publishers should not regard their power as a business venture. Media people are gatekeepers of morality or even guardians. The root of the problem should be looked into drastically by the government and the church.

Public Fora on Media and Prostitution

Stimulating exchanges and interactions among media decision-makers, media professionals and concerned groups from different sectors of society took place in 3 key cities of Philippines. Metro Manila, Cebu City and Baguio City.
Metro Manila is the capital of Philippines. It is the executive, financial, political and economic centre of Philippines. All major national newspapers and magazines are published here. All major international news agencies also hold office here. The main points raised at this forum are summed up below.

In the Philippines not enough attention is given to the problem of prostitution. Even if it gets coverage the press feels helpless about it and so is the government. Prostitution in the military bases is considered part and parcel of the R and R of American military personnel assigned or vacationing in the country. The journalists, with the expectation of the Filipino female journalist, were of the opinion that the problem is as old as mankind. Prostitution thrives because of the law of supply and demand. They also saw the problem as not only a question of sexual inequality and objectification of women but also one of economic poverty and neocolonial politics in which the government priorities are lop-sided. The women representatives felt that prostitution should be looked at from a humanitarian angle. The women also brought out the fact that the present economic and political situation increases the Filipino woman's exploitation. Women have to resort to flesh trade to survive or help their children survive. Some of the things that can be done are:

a) deportation of pedophiles;
b) passage of more strict laws and faithful implementation;
c) pickets, rallies;
d) magazine articles, letters to the editors;
e) fora and symposium on feminism and prostitution as one area of struggle.
Metro Cebu or commonly known as Cebu City, is dubbed as the "Queen City of the South". A very vigorous press exists in Cebu with four daily newspapers serving Cebu and Visayas with a circulation of about 500,00. It is the commercial and industrial centre for Central and South Philippines. The Americans used to have a military base at Mactan Island. Many blamed the present magnitude of prostitution on unjust societal systems and structures. Several participants tiptoed around the subject of government propagation of such systems and structures. It was pointed out that many prostitutes came from peasant families, which is not surprising when seven out of ten farmers do not own the land they till. Prostitution is not the problem of just one sector of the society. Media should be restructured so that it is not held by a financial life-line. Exploitation of women in movies and advertising was touched on. Prostitutes are the victims of the exploitation and so the pimps and procurers should be penalised. Media panelists explained that in the course of their profession, they face certain limitations in as much as they would like to advocate a cause.

Baguio City is dubbed the "Summer Capital" of the Philippines. Tourism is the major industry. It is also the site of Camp John Hay, a vacation spot for the American base personnel. There was striking honesty in the answers of the decision-makers. Bureau Chief of the Philippine News Agency, a government entity, did not deny that prostitution is a growing problem due to the presence of US Wallace Air Base as well as the tourist resorts. The Mayor said that there was no prostitution in Baguio City and it took the rape and death of a 13 year old to prove otherwise. Sister
Soledad said that the victim of prostitution loses the traditional values and suffers from the Filipino sentiment of eternal indebtedness to the operator and his wife. Atty. Nellie Marrero who heads an organisation for the protection of children asked the panel members whether giving coverage to prostitution would only promote it and be a source of temptation for the readers. The media people have been silent about the issue of prostitution because of their helplessness to combat it. Many agree that the economic crisis has driven many women to seek financial support through prostitution. In Baguio, studies show that there is a significant number of prostitutes who are also "working students". Many prostitutes in the city are also noted to come from depressed areas such as Samar and Bisacol. To top it all, a casino was imposed on Baguio City to attract the tourists in spite of protests by the citizenry.

Meanwhile, the Baguio people are indifferent and treat prostitution as a common problem. Among the residents there is no protest, no general consciousness of the problem. Stop trafficking of Filipinas (STOP) was organised in Baguio. It has not been ascertained whether this organisation has made a headway. It is felt that there is a lack of analysis about the problem. Perhaps, the relevance of the problems to people's lives may be pointed out.

From the present study certain conclusions can be drawn. The issue of prostitution is not newsworthy to the local media. Generally, though the local papers carry articles about prostitution, they are not consistent in their coverage. The local bureau of the government-owned Philippine News Agency has not carried stories on prostitution. Investigation has also been minimal. Furthermore, no research
has been completed on prostitution in Baguio City. Perhaps the initiative can come from the women in media. A literary contest can be launched to encourage women to speak out and make their sentiments heard. Women can be encouraged to write more about women's issue. These efforts to bring about women's consciousness should be supported. Only with a strong women's movement can the problem of prostitution be challenged.

The respondents, the contributors, the participants at the "Forum on Media, women and prostitution" are persons coloured by gender perspectives. It is striking to note that sexist comments were made by male respondents who obviously were blind to women's exploitation in prostitution. They felt that prostitution was a normal phenomena like the rising and setting of the sun. They were ignorant and unconcerned about military prostitution. Because of the effects of a deep patriarchal ideology women have been successfully reduced to the level of property; man's property by feudalism, the state's property by militarism and the property of business by capitalism.

It is unfortunate that women are the victims of male chauvinism, perpetuating this lord and master role in everything. Thus every man feels that it is the duty of the women to serve and obey him. Moreover, military prostitution has always been sanctioned. It is an unwritten understanding that women also can be called to serve officially. Big business also has its stakes in women. The sex industry—prostitution tourism, pornography, marriage market make profits by the millions. The selling factor of the products depends on the sex appeal of the advertisements.
From the reflections of both media decision-makers and professionals as well as the survey results and forum reports, there is a general consensus about the inadequacy of print media in their treatment of women and prostitution. The institutional analysis shows that the print media are such a potent force in the running of affairs that when a government tightens its hold on the people, periodicals are the first to be controlled. In the Philippines, when Martial Law was declared in 1972, in one swoop, The Manila Times, The Manila Chronicle, The Philippine Herald and the Free Press no longer saw the light of day. The periodicals that took their place were owned and published by tested cronies and relatives of the Marcoses. Even with the lifting of Martial Law in 1981, the government control remained stringent. It is obvious that media print only those articles that justify and support government's stand and moves. If they dare print something controversial the political apparatus intervenes with repression, arrests, secret killings etc. One such sensitive matter is the question of tourism and prostitution. In times of national crisis the print media is used to distract the readers by proliferation of girlie magazines with sensuous figures splashed on the covers.

Once the people in the media realize that it is not worthwhile to remain the commercial trap, then they can create a new social order that is just, humane and feminist. If they were to work alone, it would be an impossible task but if they joined hands with cause-oriented groups they could fight for justice and truth. Their service to truth should not be at the expense of any human
being whether male female or young or old. It should also be non-sexist and non-racist. Preference should be given to the deprived and downtrodden. The victims of exploitation should be given a voice. Only when the "woman question" is taken seriously can media fruitfully serve the cause of women.
(B) THE MEDIA, WOMEN AND PROSTITUTION

A study of Prostitution and Sex Tourism in Malaysia

Rohana Ariffin

A Summary

This study aimed at the portrayal of women in general by the printed media and the issues of sex tourism and prostitution. The objectives of the study were:

1. The image of women as projected by the Media.
2. The Media's concern on issues of prostitution and sex tourism which included women's rights and their exploitation that were focused by the media and why and when such issues were taken up.
3. The commercial interest of the media. Here the portrayal of the women's sexuality in the advertisement was surveyed and analysed.
5. Opinion and Reaction of Readers, Social groups and community groups.

The following methodology was used:

1. Literature review of secondary data i.e., on tourism, prostitution in general and prostitution in Malaysia.
2. Analysis of newspapers and travel brochures. The newspapers studied were The New Straits Times, Press, The Star Publication, Utusan Malaysia and Sing Pin Jih Pao.
3. Survey-Questionnaire method. This covered four target groups, viz., the general readers, hotel staffs, social groups/community groups and media professionals. A total of 31 respondents were interviewed consisting of 12 general readers, 8 hotel staffs (4 from beach hotels and the
remainder from the town hotels); 6 respondents from the social groups and 5 from media professional. The first three groups were interviewed in Penang and the rest in Penang and Kuala Lumpur. The social groups included different ethnic groups such as CEP, Aliran, Sahabat Alam.

The study also had certain limitations. Some of the respondents were reluctant to give any information, for example some hotel staff. Moreover due to time limitation only a limited number of respondents could be covered and these included some from media professionals and hotel workers.

Even though women from about half of the total population of Malaysia (49.8%) they are, still, unequal in terms of their social, economic and political positions when compared to men. Women in Malaysia mainly suffer from three forms of exploitation. Malaysia, being a developing country, does not recognize the role of women, their rights and importance. Women are also exploited as workers and also as women. They suffer from patriarchal cultural ambiguities. More males receive educational opportunities than the females in the seventies and the eighties. Hence, they are far behind men in the fields of technology, administration and management. Other factors which have contributed towards this inequality are the prejudices towards women's intellectual and physical abilities and influence of the mass media in shaping the opinion, of the society, of women.

The media, undoubtedly, is powerful and influential. It shapes the opinion, beliefs and perceptions of the people. Whatever is portrayed is accepted as the truth and nobody questions it. The Malaysian mass media are greatly responsible for distorting the image of women. They show women as
passive, dull-witted and as sex-objects. They presumably enjoy self-sacrifice and like being subjugated by men. Sex advertisements have become a normal practice. It is a general feeling that any commercial commodity can be easily sold when scantily dressed females are shown along with the product. This causes a false image of women, in general, in the minds of the reader/viewer. The Western countries also play a major role in influencing the portrayal of women. Women are stereotyped as housewives, mother and who is only interested in beauty, fashion and glamour. These images also influence the attitudes and perceptions of the women themselves. Women, therefore, find it difficult to break away from these norms and rules and change their behaviour patterns. The media has ignored whatever attempts the women made to redefine their roles, to create alternative behaviour patterns and life styles. Such an attitude of the media tends to weaken the women and they remain unheard and isolated as before.

The World Conference of the UN Decade for women recognized that women work twice as hard as men. Today, many Malaysian women have become wage-earners and professionals. A slight change in the trend of the media was seen at this time. There were features on the increasing level of intelligence among new-born babies, problem of high cholesterol in women and children, participation of women in business, child-beating etc. But the illustrations or the advertisements did not show any major change, though they were milder in their expression. By 1980, the articles were not solely on cookery or fashion but dealt with important issues such as parental love, pregnancy of single girls, low-paying jobs for women etc. In 1984-85 also the trend remained the same as in the eighties, with the advertisements being less explicit. Thus in the eighties, on the one hand, women were stereotyped
as housewives and on the other hand, important and current issues began to be discussed.

The government brought out an Advertising code which clearly stated that models should be decently dressed with their bodies covered till the neckline. Their skirts should be below the knees. Scenes of undressing and other similar acts were not permitted. It was seen that these laws were not strictly enforced. Therefore, steps must be taken to stop such 'malpractices' and violation to this regulation must be put to an end.

International tourism is one of the fast growing industries of the world. It tends to boost the economy of a country as foreign exchange keeps flowing in along with the tourists. Since 1969, Malaysia is steadily increasing its emphasis on tourism and intensifying efforts to promote tourism as an important sector of the economy. Women have been placed in a totally new phase of discrimination when they are used as promotional gimmicks. Travel brochures and pamphlets portray seductive girls. The tourist arrivals increased from 90,000 in 1973 to 2.85 million in 1983 in Malaysia as Penang was convert d into a tourist resort because of its sun, sand and beaches. The number of hotels also increased tremendously. Another face to this increase in tourism was seen. Sex tours began to be organized wherein women and children were sexually assaulted. It was found that the travel agencies offer such sex tours to Japanese tourists who are the biggest patrons.

With an increase in the number of tourists the locals adopt new cultural values to adjust to the whims and fancies of the tourists, for example, the social escorts usually ended up as objects of sexual pleasure. The local arts
and crafts also became commercialized like the batik. The drug culture and permissiveness among these foreigners tends to create a negative impact especially among the youth.

At this time the Japanese Transport Ministry issued strict warnings against sex tours. In March 1978 and in January 1981 the press exposed such usage of women for the improvement in tourism. Travel brochures and magazines of the Tourist Development Corporation Malaysia, Penang Development Corporation, Penang Tourist Association and Beach hotels showed local women decently dressed. They were not portrayed in a negative manner. Photographs emphasized the cultural and social practices of the local people. Women were shown to be involved in cottage industries, cultural dances, music etc.

Thus, we find that, on the one hand, the government was well aware of the ill-effects that tourism had begun to cause but on the other hand, there were plans to increase tourism to boost up the economy of Malaysia. The government issued strict orders (the advertising code) against negative portrayal of women but these were not strictly enforced. Due to the leniency of these rules and regulations these practices continued to exist and were not considered seriously. The media was also unaware of the immensity of the problem or rather chose to ignore it. Women were not considered to be having any intellectual capacity therefore their problems and issues were not of any importance.

Many researchers believe that prostitution is related to the conditions in the society. It was found that with an increase in tourism, prostitution also increased. Prostitution occurs not only because of social factors but also due to
the economic position of the family, strength of family ties, parental love, unemployment, illiteracy, frustration, influence of friends etc. There are also instances where girls are tricked or forced into prostitution by relatives and friends. Some studies (Abdul Hadi and Zakaria Ismail) indicate that prostitutes come from 'normal' family background, whereas other studies show that their fathers were usually drunkards, wife-beaters, womanisers or gamblers. Divorced women, on the other hand, enter into this business to support themselves and their children.

When there was a recession in the economic resources mainly women workers were retrenched from their jobs. Most of the women had low level of education and therefore other jobs were unattainable. They chose to enter prostitution as it offered more income. Moreover, with an increase in the cost of living it was not possible to live comfortably on a small income. Therefore when tourism increased along with sex tours more women were attracted towards this profession. The government also did not take adequate measures to check this practice.

It is a known fact that newspapers are an important medium through which ideas and attitudes come to the limelight. Four newspapers, viz., The New Straits Times Press, The Star Publication, Utusan Malaysia (Malay Press) and Sing Pin Jih Pao (Chinese Press) were chosen for analysis. These were studied at five year intervals from 1970 to 1985 for the months of January, July and December. Since "The Star" started in 1974, it has been studied from then on.
In the 1970's the New Straits Times mainly dealt with fashion, hair-styles, beauty tips, cookery etc. In their women's columns, Education and informative articles were very few. The advertisements that appeared in this paper exploited the woman's body. Some of the advertisements that featured semi-nude girls were those of Peugeot 504 car, Benson and Hedges, Coppertone sun-tan lotion, sweetex (sweetener) etc. The basic theme remained that women have no intrinsic and inherent worth.

'The Star' which started in 1974 focussed more on scantily-dressed girls. They felt that it was the only way to gain publicity. The articles on fashion and cookery appeared as usual. Only occasionally there were educative features. By 1980, there was a large extent of photographs of scantily-dressed girls in the advertisements. The government also issued warnings to restrain such exploitation. In 1984, the newspaper improved considerably. There were informative articles like focus on cerebral palsy patients, caring of the disabled, women in trade and commerce, how to get loans easily etc. By the end of 1984, social issues like the urban poor, single mothers, retirement and old age were featured. In 1985, issues such as legal status of women in Malaysia, rapes, domestic violence and the need for changes in legislations discriminating against women were discussed at great lengths. The newspaper moved away from stereotyping women's roles and their sexuality.

The Utusan Malaysia is a local newspaper that caters for the Malay population in the country. In the 1970's there were only a few articles on women's issues. In the eighties also there were a few articles on women but also several that were biased against women. By the year 1982 more women ministers
joined the government and there were articles on the role of women in politics. In 1984 there were features on the struggles of women in developing countries and their plight in social problems. The advertisements did feature women in their illustrations but these were not obscene or indecent, though they still showed women as mere housewives.

The Sing Pin Jih Pao is a Chinese newspaper that is issued as both national and regional newspaper. During 1970-75, women were not given any priority. There were features on fashion, cookery etc. and also a story of prostitution in the country. Interviews with successful female candidates in government examinations were covered but all these were few and limited. By 1980, the newspaper started a woman's column in its Sunday edition.

Thus, it can be seen that in the early seventies women were portrayed nearly as sex-objects, objects of pleasure, dull-witted etc. No importance was given to women's issues and problems like prostitution. The articles that did appear were very few and they failed to make any impact. But in the course of time there was an increase in social awareness. It came to be known that women were not only interested in fashion and beauty but also took a keen interest in current issues and problems. Even in the International Year of the Women, which began in 1975, not much change in the trend was seen. But by the eighties the newspapers brought out informative and educative articles though they were not very many. This does indicate that the coverage of women had improved considerably and that their intellectual level was not underestimated.

To find out the opinions and reactions of the people, in general, four groups were interviewed viz., general readers,
social groups, hotel staff and media professionals. An in-depth interview was done with the personnel in the Anti-Vice Department of the Penang police station. The general readers were very happy with the newspapers. They felt that educative articles on women's issues and problems were featured frequently. Women were featured as successful and intelligent. They felt that advertisements showing half dressed females helped in selling of the product. They were not opposed to such 'exploitation'.

The social groups, on the other hand, were very critical. They felt that the media did not give enough coverage to women's issues. In the women's page they felt that women were portrayed as aesthetic objects. They were unhappy that in the advertisements women were mainly shown as sex objects. They wanted a more positive portrayal of women and felt that the media was ineffective in curbing prostitution.

The Hotel Staff were reluctant in revealing any information. They agreed that tourists did ask for the services of a prostitute but they said they did not help the tourists in any way. The staff in bigger hotels denied any knowledge of such practices. They said it was against the rules of the hotel and did not know of any foreign women guests indulging in prostitution.

The professional groups included both English and vernacular newspapers. The Chinese newspapers felt that women were still interested only in conventional things. The English newspapers viewed that women's issues should be given more priority as times were changing. Both groups agreed that women should not be portrayed as a sex-object in the advertisements.
Finally, the Police personnel of the Anti-Vice Department said there were ten local syndicates that controlled prostitution in Penang. They arrange for both local and foreign prostitutes for the tourists. The highest number of foreign prostitutes were from Thailand. According to him, agencies such as massage parlours & dance halls merely hide these illicit activities.

The highlights of this study suggests that Malaysian readers were generally satisfied with the images of women and issues discussed by the Malaysian printed media. The social groups were more critical and opined that better portrayal of women could be attempted by the newspapers. Before the late seventies, newspapers were responsible for reinforcing stereotype roles for women. But around the late seventies there was a change, not drastic, in the trend. More issues of serious nature were discussed in the women's page. The newspapers were becoming sensitive to the changing position and roles of women. The change in the trend of advertisements was more slow. The newspapers felt that media has no effective influence in curbing prostitution or sextourism. Such issues were discussed very rarely and more to cater for readers general interest. The government also was not very effective in dealing with sex tourism and prostitution. It has, actually, to deal with a bigger force than merely individuals concerned. Though it did take steps to restrain exploitation of women, this was inadequate and ineffective.

Recommendations

As Malaysia is a developing country, profit maximization is its main concern. The advertisements are integrated with the market mechanism. In this situation the main purpose of the advertisements is to attract the consumer. Women caught into this set-up have a good chance of being lured into prostitution.
The Media: More women should enter the decision-making bodies as producers, editors etc. The Stereotype role of women should be consciously reduced. All forms of sexism like language usage, illustrations should be reduced. The elitist bias should be replaced by existing reality.

Education: Vocational training programmes should be set up at school level. This will equip the women with certain skills and reduce the choice of prostitution when they are unemployed. In school the children should not be taught role - specifics of a gender. They should grow up to feel that there are no fixed roles for a man or a woman.

Legislation: It is not enough to just make laws. They have to be properly enforced. The abuse of such laws should be curbed (eg The Advertisement Code). The laws which are biased should be altered. Legislation on tourism should ensure that no sex services are offered. A heavy penalty can be imposed on breaking these regulations.

Women Action-groups: Women's groups and organisations should come forward to create an awareness among the public. This will help to better the position of women. Workshops were held to assess the status of women and change the anti-women laws. These groups can provide literature and magazines that help to educate women from lower strata as well as those in the rural areas.

In conclusion, it can be said that a more positive picture of both the sexes should be made so that we can better understand their role in the society. Degrading one sex will create an unequal relationship and moreover it is dehumanising. Media being a powerful medium must contribute, to a greater degree, for the achievement of these goals whereby human relationships will be fair, equal and just.
times the temple authorities 'bought' young girls from destitute families in time of famine and brought then up as devadasis.

The city of Calcutta, the first capital of British India has a special place in the history of prostitution. With the establishment of the East India Company, commercial prostitution became a feature of Calcutta life. The British 'Sahibs' were entertained with nautch performances and a handful of brothels were set up. There were also the 'Baijis' in Calcutta who were different from the ordinary prostitutes, because many of them kept up the tradition of the cultured, cultivated courtesan. But due to the impact of industrialization the Baijis began to disappear and the bazar prostitution were encouraged when Calcutta became a big allied troop base in World War II, brothels sprouted in many residential and commercial areas to meet the requirements of the foreign soldiers. Calcutta's flesh trade received a new impetus in 1942 when destitutes fleeing from the famine in the countryside filled the city. The pimp and the procurers immediately took advantage of the situation. Moreover, with the partition of Bengal there were a new set of refugees, among them uprooted girls and women, many of whom had lost their families, either in the killings, or in the panic of flight.

The overall contemporary picture of prostitution in India differs in important ways from the scene in other Asian countries and countries of the West. India has no equivalent of the kind of prostitution familiar to Europeans and Americans but it does share with other Asian countries the appalling conditions of forced prostitution and of sexual exploitation of the worst kind in red light areas all over the country. The majority of the prostitutes are forced into this profession by a combination of social, economic and personal pressures. The basic inequality between the sexes in the social pattern is the causative factor which leaves women vulnerable to sexual exploitation. From the time she is born, a girl child in India is considered a potential burden on her parents, to be
'married off' as soon as possible. The extent of the burden depends on the family's financial position. The persisting taboo on the remarriage of widows in nearly all sections of the society is another related factor which contributes to forced prostitution. This can have cruel results especially in areas where child marriage still prevails. A girl is sometimes widowed even before she reaches puberty and the marriage is consummated. Such unfortunate girls are often sold into prostitution by the poor family members or because of neglect and ill-treatment run away and fall in the hands of the agents. A deserted wife, a widow, an orphaned sister— all unwanted burdens on their families are often ideal victims for exploitation for the procurers.

Social workers have found that in many instances girls are sold to pimps by their own families. Punekar and Rao's case histories expose the various pressures which force young women into the trade. To cite a few examples: Tara, the youngest child of a schoolmaster, who was widowed at 17 with two young children went to live with her brother and sister-in-law. They considered her as a burden. She ran off to Bombay as she had seen prostitutes, visiting the village looked happy and prosperous. Linga, daughter of a porter was widowed at 11 years of age. With no hope of remarriage and with her parent's concern she became a prostitute at 16 to maintain the family. Sena was married at 9 and widowed within a year. Her own mother arranged for men to come to her house to buy her services.

The Joint Women's Programme has carried out studies in Calcutta which bring out another form of exploitation widespread in the cities where young women working as domestic help are sexually exploited by employers. Girls like these have told social workers that when domestic service means they are sexually exploited by employers, it is far better to go into a brothel where at least they do not have to do other work as well. Such situations are repeated endlessly all over the country. Less is known about the fact that economic
deprivation in some parts has made these areas traditional recruiting grounds for prostitution. One such area is Uttar Kashi district in U.P. where low caste Harijan women are regularly sold as prostitutes in the plains. An Indian Administrative Officer, serving in the area, Robin Gupta, highlighted this practice in a searching report. This occurs because of the practice of bonded labour. To get married a landless Harijan borrows money from the local village headman at a high rate of interest. When he is not able to repay the money, the bride is sent to the plains to work as a prostitute. Another practice is for Rajput farmers, of higher caste, to contract several 'marriages' with girls from different Harijan families, paying a relatively low bride price. They keep the girls for some days and then sell them for a good profit in Delhi.

In Jaunsar-Bawar area, also in U.P. the Koltras, a low caste community, have taken to polyandry in order to maintain the family on the income from prostitution while one wife is kept at home, the others are 'rented out' to the brothel keeper on a system of 'share cropping' called 'Batai'. The Kolta women who have experienced brothel life find it difficult to re-adjust to the very hard life of women working as agricultural labourers in this terrain. So they prefer to remain prostitutes. In a vast majority of situations, poverty is the motivating factor for prostitution. A story in a Hindi Weekly, Ravivar reported "Highway Tourism" in villages along the main roads between Jaipur, Alwar, Ajmer etc. where village girls cater for drivers of trucks, private cars and other vehicles "Hereditary" prostitution is another feature of the Indian scene where the parents do not marry off their daughters because they expect them to go into the profession to increase the family income. The Koltras and Naiks of U.P. come under this category so also groups like Maghahiya, Chhata, Janghaiya etc.
The devadasi cult plays an important role in the exploitation of women that special attention must be given to it. The 'Karnataka Devadasi Bill 1982' was passed forbidding the practice of devadasi. But in spite of this legal bar the system still exists. An unfortunate girl whose hair gets tangled - caused by not combing or washing hair - is said to be 'marked' by the goddess as one of her own. The full moon night is the most popular time for dedication. The ceremony resembles a marriage and costs Rs. 500 to 1,000. The girl is bathed, dressed and bejewelled like a bride. A mala is also placed around the neck to denote her marital status. The place of the bridegroom is taken by the sword in these ceremonies. Once the girl has been formally dedicated and reaches puberty, any patron can demand her services.

The majority of the girls are dedicated when they are too young to know what is happening to them. By the time they grow up they are dominated by the fear that they will incur the goddess' wrath if they fail in their duties. Blind faith, poverty and superstition keep the cult alive. The old devadasis go from village to village playing on the fears and ignorances of the people. Agents from Bombay and other cities attend the dedication ceremonies, and some girls are taken straightaway to the cities, on payment. The suffering and misery of these exploited women is revealed in case histories. Jyoti Punwani mentions that 'Baby' a 20 year old was dedicated before she was born. Her mother was a mistress of a Jain. Since there was no way to look after her child, the mother made her a prostitute when she was in the fourth standard.

There are also other prostitutes who are not forced into the profession but go into it voluntarily. They are called 'call girls'. Dr. Pramilla Kapur has authored the only Indian work on 'call girls'. She interviewed 150 girls but admits that it is difficult to extract information. Mrs. Shakuntala Lall, General Secretary of the Association of Social Health feels that the new 'voluntary'
prostitution poses greater problems for the society. The 'class' of the girl and her payment depends on where she works. Girls from slum colonies are called to guest houses catering to lower income clients. Some girls are drawn into the call girl racket as they find it difficult to resist the sexual advances of employers or senior staff. Students are also involved in this network. The students said that the extra money took care of extra needs. Dr. Kapur explained that call girls do not represent any particular section of society. They come from every socio-economic background. In her view, the call girls are more educated and sophisticated than the prostitute, even these girls, in reality, are pushed into the profession because they are victims of social and family pressures. Coming from a broken home, discord with parents, resentment at too tight control over her activities, lack of sympathy, an unhappy romance, an unhappy marital relationship, any of these can lead a girl into this life. Very few enter this net because they enjoy the life.

Another category of women who have entered the world of call girls are the wives of businessmen, officials, army officers and other such 'successful' men. Writing for Social Welfare, Shergil reported that in raids conducted in Delhi the police found the wife of a successful out-of-station lawyer, a highly paid employee of an emporium, the employee of a state guest house, a film extra and a girl from 'a very respectable' family. Personal pressures may certainly have much to do with such women taking the final step into this kind of activity but this is also intimately connected with growing permissiveness plus the new found 'freedom' in Indian society, particularly among the semi-westernized elites. It has become a 'status' symbol for some sections of urban society to be permissive, and in that context some girls may feel that to be a 'call girl' is to be 'modern'.
Tourism does play a role in this new prostitution. But this is done on an individual basis and 'tourism prostitution' with all its attendant degradation of women, on the mass organised scale as it functions in some Asian countries is still unknown in India. In Hyderabad the 'muta' marriage operation has been exposed in many press reports. A journalist, Kalyan Chander Jaiswal, related how poor Muslim families who normally must have Rs.20,000 for a daughter's dowry before she can marry, are delighted to find these 'husbands' from the Gulf countries who are willing to pay money to the girl's family. In many cases, after the wedding night the husband disappears and it is a catastrophe for the girl. She cannot get divorce and so cannot remarry. Life is even more difficult if she is pregnant. In some cases the divorce papers are signed on the first night itself. These girls are better off as they can marry again. Fortunately because of the uproar in the press, the Punjab Kesri reported that such marriages were decreasing in number.

Massage parlours and health clubs which have mushroomed in cities like Bombay and Madras have added a new dimension to this growing problem. Two year ago India Today carried an article on the proliferation of such establishments in Madras. The reporter estimated that about 300 customers daily patronized the 60 or so massage parlours. The police raids have done little to stop the functioning of the parlours by invoking the SITA, (Suppression of Informal Traffic of Women and Girls Act) although according to India Today the police raid most parlours at least once a month.

The procurement of the prostitutes is done through agents some of whom are employed on a regular monthly salary. The procurement network spreads all over the country, lucrative, organized and difficult to root out. The method of procurement is similar in almost all the cases. Local agents keep an eye open for possible
'material'. These are in touch with representatives of inter-state gangs who ensure that the girls, purchased or kidnapped, are despatched to their destination or to the 'mandis' in top secrecy.

In Uttarkashi, a study by Amir Hassan, a study of the trafficking in Rawain, a study of the trafficking in Rawain where Purola and Rajgarhi, the two centres of indebtedness based prostitution are situated, found that flesh trade was largely in the hands of local agents, most of whom belong to the same low caste as the girls. The agents, in turn, are in the hands of the higher caste and more affluent villagers. Hassan estimated that 125 local agents were operating in Rawain, all of them Harijans except for six of other castes. Traffickers are active all over the country. A few months ago the Kashmir police discovered that many girls abducted from West Bengal were being sold in Kashmir often to disabled or aged Kashmiris in villages. Some villagers have accused the police station constables in villages, where the girl is hidden, of raping the girls before they are sold to the eventual customer.

Male procurers in trafficking in towns and cities are usually rickshaw pullers, carters, taxi drivers, small traders, betel nut sellers etc. The procurers of call girls are taxi drivers, hotel and guesthouse staff, travel agents etc. The females are elderly prostitutes or women involved in illicit liquor business. The call girl procurement network is on a higher, more sophisticated level and is well knitted and hard to crack.

In Tamil Nadu the JVP uncovered a new angle to the racket. Ulunderpet town, about 220 km. from Madras has been a famous 'roadside prostitution' site for decades known to truck drivers. The prostitution is organised by 11 brokers known as 'business companies'. Each broker owns 4-5 young women. Each broker has 2 juniors responsible for taking the 'commodities' to the roadside and he is paid Rs. 5/- per night. The broker told the volunteer workers
that each 'business company' pays Rs.150 weekly to the police station as 'mamool', plus Rs.2 and refreshments for each night to the constable on night duty. Most of the women were there because of poverty.
There are also illiterate women who are duped by greedy husbands, fathers or brothers into signing on stamped paper, which they cannot read, stating that they are seeking divorce on grounds of cruelty or infidelity. The stamped paper is executed by a notary, also in the racket, and the woman is 'married' off to some other man, again a contract on/stamped paper. In this way the woman is sold from man to man with a legal sanction.

Victims of trafficking are also sold to foreign markets, to Singapore, Gulf countries etc. Manushi, a magazine run by women highlighted these women's problems and reported that the mafia were increasingly active in procuring Nepalese girls. A JWP worker witnessed the arrival of a mini bus filled with girls from Nepal in the red light district of Allahabad. Manushi also reported a case of 3 young Nepalese women and 2 children who were travelling from New Delhi, who were deliberately separated from their four male family members by a railway official with the connivance of the police.

In the case of the devadasi, procurement is much easier. The agents attend the dedication ceremonies and make their bargains with the priest or the family. Often priests themselves are the agents. Poverty, illiteracy, backwardness, lack of employment skills and opportunities together with sexual inequality are some of the factors that lead women to prostitution. Kidnapping of girls for sale into prostitution is another category of causes leading to profession. In an extensive study of Bombay prostitutes, S.D. Punekar and Kamla Rao found that in 10 cases of kidnapping, 6 involved child-lifting of children between 4 and 2 years of age. These children are brought up in a strict environment and introduced into the profession as soon as possible. The children having known no
other way of life accept it as normal. The other 4 girls who were above 18 years of age were forced into the profession by threats and physical violence.

The conditions under which the prostitutes live are miserable, overcrowded, dirty and unhygienic. The madams 'train' their girls by various means. Girls who come from communities where prostitution is 'hereditary' have less difficulty in adjusting but for others it is a tough, heart-breaking experience. The girl suffering from the trauma of being sold, kidnapped or deceived, already feels helpless and isolated, fearful, insecure and terrorised. Sometimes she is taken to a different linguistic environment so that she cannot communicate with anybody. Slowly, her resistance wears down and the girl accepts her situation. If she still resists, she is beaten into submission. After the age of 40, in many cases, their health deteriorates, because of their way of life, environment and lack of proper medical attention. Only a handful are fortunate and shrewd enough to insure against old age. But Menaka of Maihati said that she had a house and gold given to her by one of her clients for her future. But 2 years after her death she lost them to the pimps and was a pauper. Writing in The Sunday Observer, Jyoti Sabherwal captured the atmosphere of the G.B. Road, 'Kothas' as dark, dingy, stinking staircases lead to these brothels, painted, unsmiling faces of 15-20 girls are huddled up in each flat. The women keep very little of the money they earn. Pushpa from Nepal, 24 years old, told Femina that although she earned Rs.1200 per month she had no money with her. The brothel keeper charged Rs. 3/- for one bucket of water and interest on whatever she spent on buying things for the prostitutes.

Police harassment is a routine in a prostitute's life. Weekly or monthly payments are demanded and cannot be refused. In a programme on Delhi Television, prostitutes from the G.B. Road were interviewed. They told the interviewer that the police came regularly for their payments and confirmed that each officer and constable had his set
fee. Being completely under the thumb of the brothel keepers the
majority of the girls have to take on as many clients a day as their
madam demands regardless of their age or health. Some are forced to
submit to sadistic or perverted clients.

A study for the Planning Commission used as samples, patients being
treated for venereal diseases for it is widely accepted by medical
sources that prostitution is the major source of infection for sexually
transmitted diseases (STD). In developed countries it is compulsory
for those suffering from STD to go for medical treatment. In India
no such law exists. Bombay's Indian Health Organisation has done a
pioneer work under Dr. Gilla in trying to curb the spread of STD among
prostitutes. They found that in the Kanatipura area of Bombay, the
best known red light district, 90% of the prostitutes who attended the
health camp were suffering from VD and in most cases lack of medical
treatment was evident. According to Dr. Gilla, most women were
treated by 'quacks' operating so-called 'clinics' in red light districts.
Since these men have vested interest in the ill health of their patients,
they make no effort to cure them. Dr. Blalero once found a woman
suffering from spinal tuberculosis and not from STD. When this woman
was brought to the hospital the doctors refused to go near her. Dr.
Blalero deplores the callousness of the people who are not interested
in prostitution as a social problem. Doctors treating minor girls
engaged in the trade in a Bombay hospital concluded that even a few
years in the profession seriously affects their health. Many of the
women receive major physical injuries, all part of their world of
violence, often suffer from the results of sadism and perversion, many
suffer psychologically with severe depressions, fearful nightmares,
insomnia and suicidal tendencies.

While working with Bombay prostitutes, Dr. Blalero investigated
the incidence of STD in children and her findings show the existence
of child prostitution. Procurers make a high profit on 'virgin
prostitutes'. Perhaps the most horrifying aspect of the situation is
that these children are sold repeatedly as 'virgins', especially to men suffering from STD because of the belief that VD can be cured by intercourse with a virgin.

Over the past few years, as a consequence of the greater focus on women's issues during the UN Women's Decade, the media has shown an increasing awareness of the complexity of the problem. A number of studies have been published and provide a great deal of informative reading. The buying and selling of women in Madhya Pradesh was exposed by a Delhi correspondent Ashwini Sarin in the Indian Express. After several months in which he gained the confidence of the locals of Morena, Sarin actually purchased a girl called Kamla for Rs.2300/- and brought her to Delhi as living evidence of the brutal practice. After a great deal of publicity and public interest had been generated and the way she had been exploited, Kamla disappeared. Ashwini Sarin returned to Morena in 1985 but could not find her again. The Raviwar report on 'Highway Prostitution' where tea stall owners on the main Rajasthan highways were found to be operating makeshift brothels with girls housed in sheds just off the road highlighted this unfamiliar side of the profession.

An interesting story on the exploitation of tribal girls, in India Today was Farzand Ahmed's report on the girls of Ghumsar Udaigiri in Orissa. These Adivasis are easily taken in by petty officials and contractors who buy a wife and abandon her after a few months. Another story by India Today is a full investigation in-depth on the spread of STD. The editors felt that this subject was of great interest to all the readers. The less serious magazines do carry occasional stories on the subject and a recent report in Onlooker on the sexual adventures of politicians is an example of the kind of sensationalism which creeps into media coverage on prostitution. Similarly the Probe magazine uncovered a call girl racket on an income tax raid. The India Today report on Madras massage parlours described the proliferation of prostitution dens where the
reporter found clients were largely petty businessmen with money to spend. Jean D' Cuntia's excellent report in Femina 'No, this can never be a profession like any other' is an example of how a perceptive writer can grip the reader's attention. Similarly Preeti Mehra's 'Only a Hell to call Home' on the fearful conditions of the Agra Institution for rehabilitating women is a scathing indictment of how authority handles the rehabilitation.

It is extraordinary that no journalist specialising on women, have covered the aspect of female bonded labour. Even more extraordinary case of ignoring a glaringly obvious crime was the omission of child prostitution from a recent workshop on the 'Girl Child' organised in Delhi by UNICEF and media centre of Delhi. Journalists, even women are oblivious to the depth of the problem. Media coverage appears to be connected with the extent of voluntary work which is carried out in a particular area. The large amount of material available on the devadasis is a good example. Jain in his full page story on 'Devadasis: Maids of God and Men' focusses on the way social workers have encouraged the devadasis to organise themselves after creating an awareness in some of the women of the exploitation to which they are exposed and how little it has to do with religion. In another indepth story Imran Quereshi gives yet another facet of the devadasi example of how women themselves can fight for their rights in this degrading profession.

Another very different aspect of the problem, the 'Mata Marriages' in Bombay and Hyderabad has benefitted a great deal from the relatively wide media coverage it has received. Kalyan Chander Jaiswal and the Punjab Kesri along with other journalists and papers have performed great service by focussing on this aspect of 'Prostitution Tourism'. Perhaps the greatest service done towards waking the public conscience to the cruel exploitation of women is by the journal Manushi. The editor and staff seem to have picked up each and every story and news item which takes up any aspect of the profession. But it has a draw back of having a limited readership.
Many more news items appear now and then but there is no follow-up of a story. Moreover, it is almost impossible to enter the protection homes where rescued girls are kept and talk to them freely because of tight guard kept over them. Nor is it easy to visit brothels and talk to the inmates. Moreover they do not trust outsiders who they know from bitter experience have little real sympathy for them. Some journalists have performed a unique role in focussing on the human interest angle of the aspects of prostitution. Ms. Sheela Barse's articles 'To the Brothel Born', 'Selling Body and Soul' and 'Minor Girls Handed over to Strangers' are full of compassion and anger, both emotion which should be aroused by the exploitation of women implicit in this profession. But there should be more coverage with depth, follow-up and understanding as it is the only way to keep the problem in the news and in the public attention.

Attempts to reform prostitution is to go back to the days of the Hon'ble John Company when regulations against prostitution was brought about in 1668. After India became independent in 1947, other aspects of the problem was recognised. In 1950 India signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls and as a follow-up legislated the Suppression of Immoral Traffic in Women and Girls Act in December 1956, the SITA. This legislation has not proved satisfactory. K.C.K. Raja, Principal of the Police Training College in Mysore points out the SITA is an act of social legislation and so the society must realise the need for enforcement and recognise that it derives benefit from such legislation. Critics of the SITA allege the provisions against traffickers are not efficiently implemented and that powerful interests protect the traffickers. In an interesting new development the Bharatiya Ratna Udhur Sabha, an organisation established for the welfare of the prostitutes in Delhi, has filed a writ petition challenging the provisions of SITA. The failure of SITA is obvious in every aspect of the continuing immoral traffic in women which it was supposed to suppress. No attempts have
been made to correct the enormous lacuna in enforcement staff without which the police cannot be effective. The only explanation seems to be in the attitude of society at every level to prostitutes. Jordar relates how the study of prostitution has been inhibited by fear of the social stigma attached to anyone who ventures into the red light areas, even social scientists. Some feel that licensing would reduce the crime that springs up around brothels but others opine that legalising prostitution is totally against women's interests. Licensing will make the prostitute more vulnerable because it will single out and identify her permanently.

D'Cunha suggests that what is required is legislation which will decriminalise the act of prostitution. This will make the act neither legal nor illegal and remove both the focus on the individual prostitute and the punishment which threatens her.

The key to solution of the problem of prostitution is successful rehabilitation. In 1954 Rama Rao Committee pointed out that after care homes for prostitutes were inadequate and that prostitutes should themselves be associated with programmes to help prostitutes to earn a decent living. 30 years later Prachi Mehra in the 'Times of India' reported on government Protection Home in Agra. She described the difficult approach through slush and water, no electricity, no transport, no doctor on the premise, no hospital in the vicinity. The inmates were crowded in a small space. In 1981, the General Secretary of the (Agra) branch of the Association for Social Health alleged that the inmates had been 'looked up' and they included women who were insane, dumb children and victims of rape. Not only are educational and vocational training facilities very poor but medical supervision is equally lacking.

Some private organisations have taken up rehabilitation work, one of them being Savdhan, a centre in Talsari an adivasi village near Bombay. Lakshmi Iyer reported that 14 girls at the centre had found
peace and a home. Vinod Gupta, who founded Savdhan feels that marriage is the best way to restore the self-respect and sense of honour of the girls who have suffered. The marriages he arranges are a grand affair and so far all have worked out well.

The Association for Social Health and the National Institute of Social Defence of the Government of India collaborate in organising National Health Training Courses on this problem in different states. This is a valuable exercise of views and discussions on the various aspects and developments in this problem. By such discussions an effective implementing Agency could be created that would 'hate the sin but not the sinner'.