

**PROBLEMS OF SEX WORKERS: ISSUES AND  
CHALLENGES-A CASE STUDY OF SOUTH 24  
PARGANAS DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL, INDIA.**

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**Abstract :**

There are over 800000 sex workers in india.However unofficial figures place these numbers far higher.Sex work is a pre-requisite to ensure the physical and emotional inviolability of sex workers, their right to life, right to freedom of labour, health and reproductive and sexual right. In this research with almost 1000 sex workers in south 24 parganas also finds a substantial segment of women had prior experience of alternative work and often for sex work for better income and livelihood opportunities. The International Labour Organisation(ILO) and UNDP have emphasised on the need to provide sex workers with legally enforceable right to occupational health and safety and right to participate in the process of developing work place health and safety standard. There for the main aim of this paper is to explain the problems, issues and challenges of sex worker.

**Keywords:Pre-requisite, segment, enforceable, occupational, inviolability, sex workers, challenges, legally, alternative.**

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## **1. Introduction:**

Sex workers are engaged in the oldest profession known to us is looking down upon and is ostracized by our society. We look at them in disgust without knowing why they are in the profession.

The financial incapability of the sex workers make them vulnerable to such harassment. They are not in this profession of their free will but because their deplorable economic condition has left them no other option. A significant number of females move quite fluidly between other occupations and sex work. It is not easy to demarcate women's work into nearly segregated compartments.

One of the aspects of the sex trade in south 24 parganas is that of informal or 'flying' sex workers. Some are based in nearby villages or suburbs of the city and come to red light area only in the evening or afternoon. Most of the sex workers are single women, some are married with children, some are devadasi. With factories in the city middle class house wives and students act as 'flying' sex workers in order to earn their sustenance.

The plight of the flying sex worker shows how poverty can push an individual to such extremes. Most of them are in this profession just for the sake of their children, so that their child can have two proper meals a day.

It has become quite essential to grant them necessary right and legal remedies so the they can lead a life devoid of any harassment and torture, what we need to understand is that they are also human beings and that they have every right to lead a normal life, irrespective of the professionals which they are involved.

According to the Supreme Court of India has observed that sex workers are entitled to a right to life and must be accorded to protection guaranteed to every citizen. It instructed the state to provide recommendations on the rehabilitation of sex workers who wish to leave sex work of their own volition and to provide conducive conditions for sex workers who wish to continue working as sex workers in accordance with Airtical 21 of the constitution.

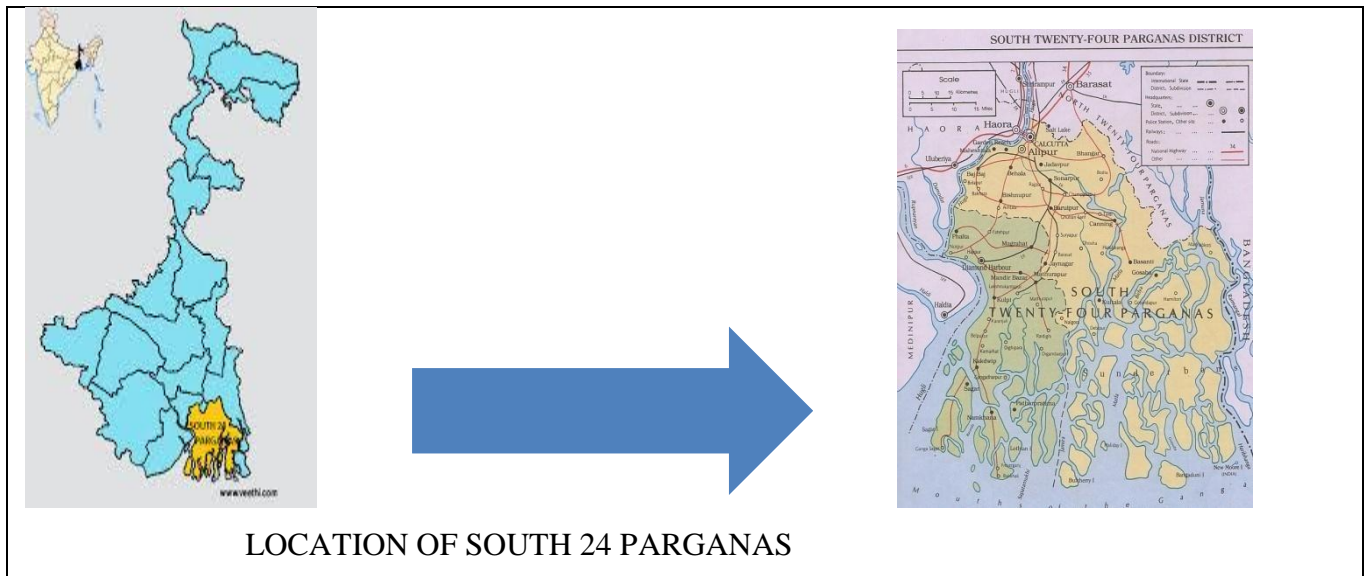
## 2. OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the present study are-----

- ❖ To investigate the recent trend of sex workers.
- To evaluate the demographic and socio-economic status of the sex workers.
- ❖ To trace the factors which lead to push females make sex work attractive option.
- To formulate the strengthen sex worker's access to justice.
- ❖ To suggest the measures for the promotion of sex workers in the district.

## 3. LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA:

South 24 parganas district is in West Bengal state. It is situated between the latitudes  $20^{\circ}20''$  N  $22^{\circ}06''$  N and  $88^{\circ}20''$  E -  $88^{\circ}60''$  E longitude. The total area of the district according to Survey General of India is 9960 sq.k.m and total population is 8153176(2011) .The main location of district sex workers in Tollygunge under KMC ward no is 93 and 94, slums in Dhobiatala in East Kolkata under KMC ward no 58, Diamond Harbour of south 24 parganas under Diamond Harbour municipal ward no 9 and 10, Puratan Bazar area of Baruipur, Amtola, kharibaria. Most of the sex working place located suburban area, beside high road, petrol pump, temple side, marketing area, highrise hotel side, slum area etc.



#### **4. DATASOURCE:**

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through observation and direct communication with respondents in one form and other through personal interviews. The several ways to collect the primary data may be follows-----

i) observation method, ii) interview method, iii) questionnaire method.

The secondary data will be collected from Department of Health of South 24 Parganas, District hand book, NGO office, Website, Journal and Publications etc.

#### **5. METHODOLOGY:**

This is survey a regionally or locally confined one. As part of the objectives, the following sets of information were identified to the survey: ---

##### **1. Personal Backgrounds:**

Age, family backgrounds, religion and caste backgrounds, educational status marital status and dependents.

##### **2. Work Histories:**

Past and present experiences of work in sexwork and out of it, incomes mode of entry into sex work, sites of activity and perceptions on sex work.

##### **3. Sexual Experiences:**

Sexual experiences in and out of sex work, age of sexual initiation and type of prtners,perception of sexual pleasure with in work and out of it and abuse histories of the female.

##### **4. Stigma:**

Avenues from where stigma could emanate and what the sex workers perceive of it family, children and the state agents like police and health authorities.

#### **6. DATA ANNYLISS:**

The sample of female sex workers is comprised of 1000 females –a sex worker had to be at least 18 years of age in order to be included in the survey.

**1. BACK GROUND OF SEX WORKERS:**

1.70% were from rural family background, 25% from urban family background.

2.75% were from poor family backgrounds, 20% from middle class family backgrounds.

3.50% had no schooling, 10% had primary schooling up to class four, 15% had secondary schooling up to class eight, 8% had schooling up to class ten and 12% up to class twelve.

4.70% were Hindu, 20% Muslim, 5% Buddhist, 2% Christian.

5.25% came from Sc and 10% came from OBC backgrounds.

6.2% were aged 15-17 years, 15% were 18-20 years, 50-60% were 21-30 years, 25-30% were 30-40 years, 5-8% were 41-50 years and 1-2% were above 51 years.

**2. ENTRY IN TO SEX WORK:**

Females starts entering sex work significantly in the 15-18 years age group, peaking further in the the 19-22 years.

It can be inferred that the some economic reasons that push females out of the others labour markets are also the ones that make sex work an economically attractive option (Table..01).Some have handicapped husbands who are unable to work, and in order to run the family, they have to enter this profession. Some are divorcees who have fled from their torturous husbands and in order to earn, in order to secure a better future for their children they are force into this profession.

**3. AGE OF ENTRY SEX WORKER:**

The survey shows the highest frequency amongst those entering and in the 19-22 years age group this comprises 70% of the total. Some of these go on the work in the other labour market later, where the highest frequencies are in the 23-26 years age group (fig-01).

TABLE .1. MODE OF ENTRY SEX WORKERS.

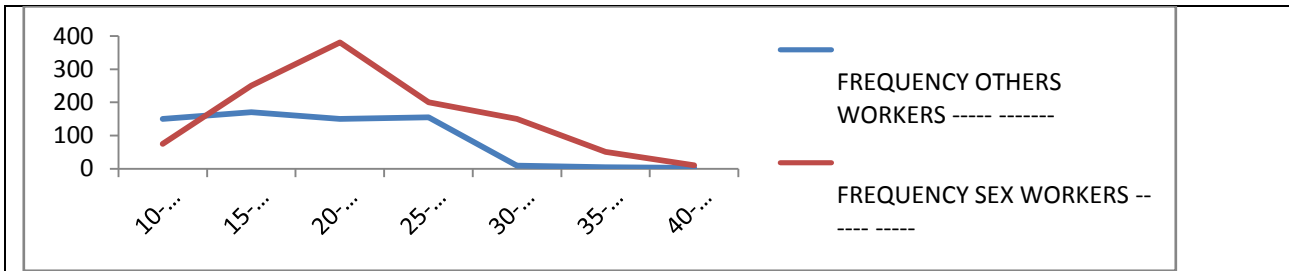
	MODE OF ENTRY INTO SEX WORK						TOT AL
	MYSELF	FORCED	SOLD	CHEATED	DEVADASI	NO REPLY	

Female entering directly into sex work( N=300)	210	21	27	18	9	15	300
% OF TOTAL	70	7	9	6	3		
Female with experience of other labour markets before or alongside sex (N=500)	360	35	25	60	15	5	500
% OF TOTAL	72	7	5	12	3		
Females with other works identities but sequence of entry unknown (N=200)	150	14	6	18	1	11	200
% OF TOTAL	75	7	3	9	0.5		

Source: Primary

survey through NGO, 2015.

On the other hand females from the other labour markets also entry sex work in the age group of 19-22 years through they continue to have high frequencies of entry at later ages as well as 23-30years.It is say that largest group of sex workers found in the age of 20-30 years.



COMPARISONS BETWEEN SEX WORKERS WHO ENTER DIRECTLY AND THOSE WHO COME VIA OTHER LABOUR MARKETS

Fig...01.

Source...Primary survey

through NGO SINI, 2015.

#### 4. VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS:

Violence against sex workers in south 24 parganas is linked to the perception of sex workers are criminals and not citizens. Several factors put sex workers at risk of violence. There is little appreciation amongst police of contexts and factors affecting sex workers lives, they ignore complaints related to family partner violence, instead offering advice to women about stopping sex work and settling domestic matters 'amicably' (Fig...02). Myths surrounding the violence of rape against sex workers ensure that they are constantly on the fringes of access and redress to justice. The myths include, 'A sex worker cannot be raped'.

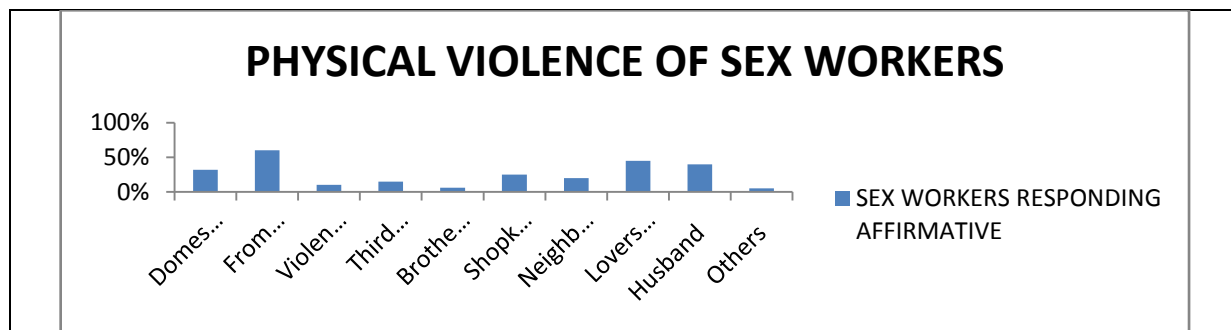


Fig...02.

SOURCE...Primary survey, 2015.

## 5. STATUS OF SEX WORKERS:

It had been intended to restrict the survey to sex workers who were 18 years of age or above. In the age of 15-25 years sex workers were income almost R.S- 50000/months, 25-35 years group women's earns almost R.S-25000/months and in the age of 50+ sex workers earns below R.S-5000/months due to their incapability sex working. It is say that 20-25 years age is extreme age of this professional.

Table...02...Monthly income of sex workers.

AGE GROUP OF SEX WORKERS	AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME OF SEX WORKERS IN R.S
15-25	30000-50000/-
25-35	20000-25000/-
35-45	7000-10000/-
45-60	5000-6000/-
60+	2000-2500/-

Source: Primary survey through NGO, 2015.

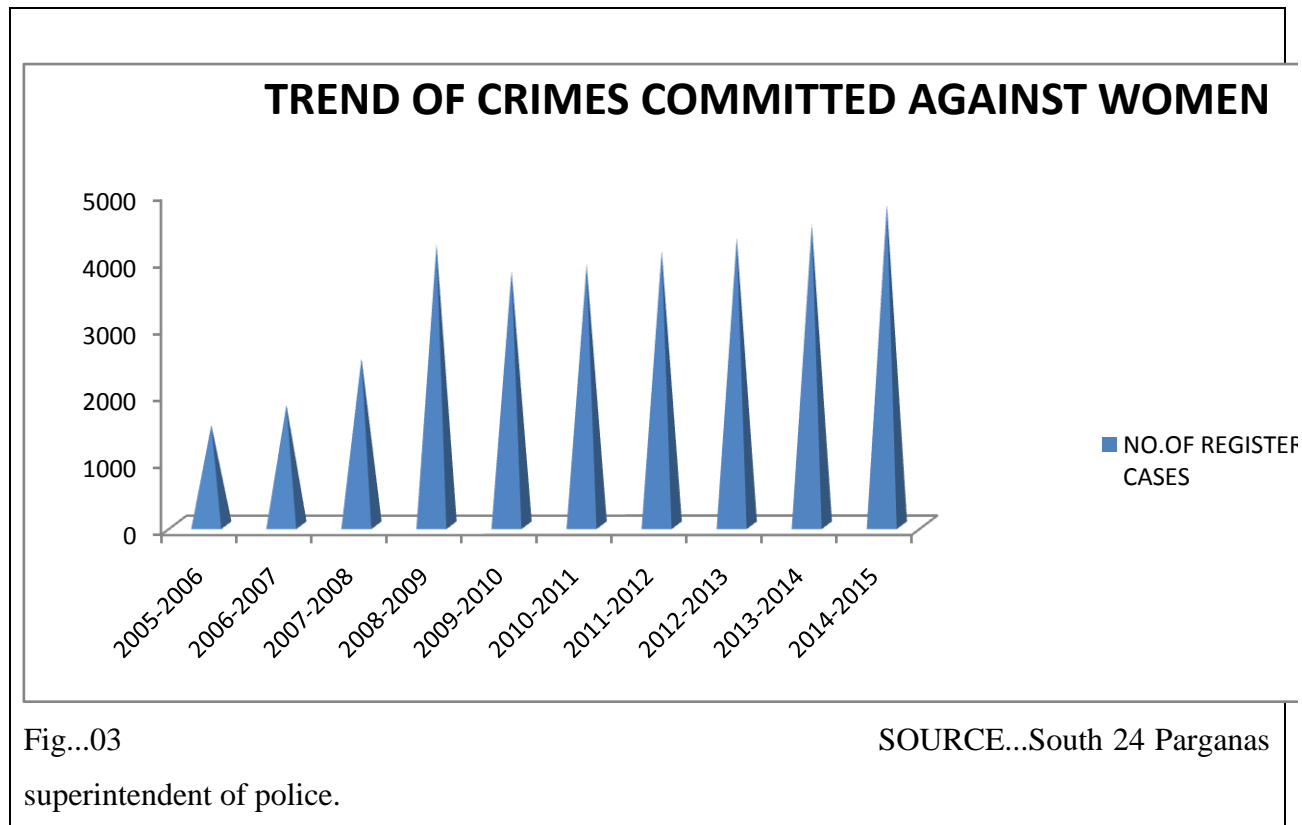
## 6. WOMEN TRAFFICKING:

Now trafficking happen for various motives like, forced prostitution, making of pornographies, sex tourism, forced marriage etc. The root cause behind these trafficking in south 24 parganas is poverty, lack of employment opportunities, child marriage, false promises, and social stigmas. The blocks Kultali, Canning, Baruipur, Gosaba, Falta, Magrahat and Diamond Harbour are identified as more migration and trafficking prone areas.

After discussing about the various forms of crimes committed against women let's take a glance of the overall trend of crime against women (Fig...03) In South 24 Parganas. From the trend analysis it is evident that in last ten year (2005-2014) the number of crimes committed against women has been shown an uprising trend except (2009-2010). The highest numbers of crimes were occurred in between (2013-2014). One of most dominant reasons of women's trafficking



was the poorness of peoples in this district. Though many sex workers have been deceived or lured by payment into sex work any might be said to be “trafficking”, there is a large number, who have not entered sex work due to any basis involving coercion or deceit. They have moved in search of a better life and livelihood. Though poverty and inequality are reasons for people to entre sex work and indicate inadequate “free choice”, it cannot be said that all people suffering from such conditions have been trafficked. They should benefit from human right support, including social and economic choices.



## 7. RECOMMENDATION:

There are some recommendations for the sex worker given below----

1. Prohibit the mandatory HIV and STI testing of the sex workers following arrest.
2. Awareness program to keep children out of sex-working circle and creation for congenial environment for their development.
3. Curative support through one day a week clinic.
4. Immunization programme for under 5 years.

5. Observation of special day's and annual cultural programme, sport, etc for promoting creative activities.
6. Ensure witness protection for sex workers testifying against traffickers and violators.
7. Ensure free legal service are available in rural areas for sex worker and offered by law years who have been trained in issues faced sex workers.
8. Day care centre for sex workers children up to 5 year for grooming them for admission in school and main streaming children into formal education centre.
9. Support for pathological and diagnostic tests, Hepatitis B for all.
10. Fammaily planning and support for school frees, uniform, book, statinaey etc for sex worker children.
11. Formation of Self Help Group (SHG) for micro saving programme.
12. Finnaly sensitivy to issues faced by sex workers should be made a part of training for police personal, public prosecutors and judiciary in partnership with community organisations of sex workers.



Durga puja by sex worker  
freedom festival



Right to education of sex workers children's



Sex workers

## 8. Conclusion:

Sex work offers a significant premium of income to that offered by other informal labour market offer across India. Poverty and limited education are conditions that push females into labour markets at early ages. Sex work cannot be considered as singular or isolated in its links with poverty as other occupations are often pursued before sex work emerges as an option.

Sex work is not the only site of poor working conditions, nor is it particularly prominent in terms of the employment of minors as compared to other sectors. Many of those surveyed also worked in diverse occupation in unskilled manufacturing or services sector for extremely poor wages.

For those coming to sex work from the other labour markets, they have often experienced equally harsh conditions of highly labour intensive.



AIDS conference by sex workers  
conference by sex workers

Permission of sex workers

Health

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