



Don't Legalise Sex Trade, Give Workers Jobs Instead

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Today, a lot of debates are going on about legalising prostitution. But there are different interpretations and discussions when one refers to “legalising sex work”. While some are advocating decriminalisation of sex work, others are opposing it. Not legalising it but providing for human, fundamental and other such rights to these women is a better course of action as suggested by the ones adopting middle path to the issue.

Certainly we are not that helpless that our women need to sell their bodies to make their ends meet. Legalising sex work implies that a woman has an extra source of employment by being a sex worker. Can a woman’s body be treated as a commodity which can be sold in the market?

Sex workers are victims and not criminals. There are far better ways to curb the problem, which have not been considered yet. Rather than decriminalising such immoral acts, which lead the human soul to nowhere, the solution is to ultimately scrap off sex trade and focus on replacing it with industries—big scale, small scale, cottage, etc. in such areas. This would benefit the women, their children and the country as a whole. Investors need to be attracted for opening industries in areas where such activities are largely practised and encouraged to provide employment to these women. The investors can be attracted by giving them special benefits such as tax exemptions, relaxed labour laws, lesser duties, tax holidays, etc. For instance, special economic zones are made in various parts of the country attracting more industrialists. The aims of such zones include increased trade and investment, job creation and effective administration. To encourage businesses to

be set up in the zone, liberal policies are introduced. These typically relate to investments, taxation, trading, quotas, customs and labour regulations.

Opening workplaces for these women where they could engage themselves is obviously a better option rather than legalising selling of their bodies. Further, these women can be given free training in various kinds of activities such as factories, construction, plantation, agriculture, dairy, handicrafts, handlooms, etc. Some industries find it is difficult to get trained workers. These trainings would serve the purpose for industries as well as the women.

The objective of all arguments is one: to provide social security to these women. Giving them a source of employment and providing them wages would be the best way to achieve the same. If regular employment is not available, they could also be considered for contractual, temporary and similar employments. They could even be encouraged to take up jobs like that of drivers, clerks, peons, housekeeping staff, among others. What we lack in our country is vision and knowledge. The mindset of women living in red light areas needs to be changed and widened. Not only would the above provide for decent source of employment, but diseases such as HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases can also be curbed.

Recognising the existence of sex workers, giving them human rights and fundamental rights is essential, but recognising their work like other trades, jobs or, in other words, regulating service conditions of such a profession where money is paid for using someone's body cannot be accepted and encouraged. In fact, making prostitution legitimate also goes against the International Labour Organisation's definition of 'decent work'.

It is ironical that on one hand we are fighting for women's equality, promulgating Acts and provisions for their protection, while on the other some of our people are advocating legalisation of prostitution. A truly progressive country encourages women's respect, equality, and not prostitution.

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