

BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF CHILDREN OF VOCSET IN RED LIGHT AREAS of Coastal Andhra Pradesh INCLUDING SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

1 Situational Analysis.

The History:

It all began with the King of Mutli once known as Chitival who was known to conduct competition between gymnasts from far and near. People from various sections of castes and classes represented in the event displaying their talent and strength in return for the praise of the King. During such event, a dommara named Polerigadu participated and pleased the king who in turn gifted him a ring as well as a royal edict was passed stating that the wearer of the ring would from now onwards should head the Dommara Class and his descendants would fall under the same caste. The ring then given is said to be the same that is now worn by the head of the Dommara tribe of Chitival, which bears an inscription in Telugu declaring that the wearer is the high Priest or Guru of all the Dommara. He is the high priest and exercises supreme jurisdiction over the community both in spiritual and temporal matters.

The tribe is traditionally considered to be wanderers who engage themselves as athletic performers as a custom as well as a means of livelihood. They are called as Dommara, Dombari and Domber in various places as the form of Dom, which is the outcaste community in the Northern India. In the hierarchy of caste they fall just above Pariahs and Madigas. Traditionally, they are engaged in hunting fish, mat making, donkey and pig rearing. Their food habits include eating cats, pigs etc. They marry one person, but keep concubines for pleasure, which finally resulted in hereditary prostitution.

The girl children in the community traditionally are forced into prostitution once they attain puberty by their own parents. In a family of girl children, the eldest daughter is fully made aware that the tribal survival totally depends on her being a prostitute and hence is not permitted to marry. Whereas the younger daughters are allowed to marry, but in all the cases, the husbands encourage their wives to enter into prostitution and she earns between Rs. 5 to Rs. 50 per customer. Hence the tribe is economically organized around a system of child prostitution, which has a tradition and cultural sanction.

Whereas the boy children are used as pimp, procurer or labourer in the flesh market. Each Dommara has an average of 4-5 children regardless of her marital status. Whereas none of the men in the tribe have work and spend most of their day idle and also acting as brokers and pimps and traffickers.

Traditional Dommara Dance:

The Dommara women are known for dancing half naked in front of the village community. In fact they are forced to perform so. These women who are made to dance (in local language called as 'Record Dance') earn around Rs. 500 to Rs. 5000. But the event organizer who in turn pays them around Rs 500 -600 seizes all their earnings thereby putting them under further debt trap. The girls from the age group of 15 to 40 are engaged into this dancing. In fact their parents including the mother and father train them to dance. In some cases after dancing, the girls are forced into engaging into sex with the customers who mostly range from normal village person to politicians.

Voice of the Voiceless:

"I don't want to go home. I don't like my parents... but you know all my uncles, aunts and relatives tell me that I am as beautiful as the cinema actress, Sridevi so why don't I engage in Dommara dancing..I mean half naked...che cheee..but I don't like to. Initially my friend and I learnt to dance for fun...but later on my friend became a professional Dommara dancer. She is just 14 years...but I don't want to. Last week when I go for celebrating my attainment of puberty. I mean turning to being 13 years...you know....you know..." as tears started to roll down her eyes... My father (step father cum pimp) came home drunk and..and tried to rape me....he is my father..how could he forget that and engage in such an act...I tried to die by cutting my hand as I could not face myself and my parents don't look at me like other normal children.....so I don't want to go home..who is help me " Durga 13 years (a girl child of women in prostitution).

... "I don't get food when I am hungry if my mother is entertaining customer I hardly get time with my mother, but she has all the time to sleep with all strangers" Lakshmi 8 years (a girl child of women in prostitution)

... "I have to run errands for my mother's customers in the evening. I don't go to school because all the other children call my mother a bad woman"... Ravi 10 years (a male child of women in prostitution)

... "I hate the way men who visit my mother give me strange looks".Radha 12 years (a girl child of women in prostitution)

.....Anjali is aged 12years, who stays in the national highway with her mother day & night. her mother involve in highway prostitution. She had difficulty getting enough to eat and feels the lack of a good place to live. She is studying 5th class and likes school, but she no longer attends school. She doesn't like it when the teacher scolds and beats. She says would like to study and become a doctor. She also wants to leave the prostitution area. What are her chances of avoiding a life of prostitution ?

.....Radhika is aged 15 years and born in Dommara Caste and a life in Tadepalligudem. Dommara is a caste that practices prostitution as a caste profession. She never went to school. She is aware of her mother's profession. Her mother continues the profession of prostitution. She takes business. care very much about her two daughters who are her hopes to continue.

These are the voices of the children of Sex workers in red -light areas. These children are vulnerable to the ways of the trade right from their birth and at every stage of growing up. Lakshmi, Ravi, Radha, Anjali and Radhika are not rare events. Hundreds of such children face the prospect of being traded into commercial sexual exploitation each year. They are cruelly victimized by a life situation they are born into through no fault of their own are forced to bear the burden of societal hypocrisy regarding sex work.

Victims of trafficking choose to bear children not only out of the desire to love a child of their own, but also of their need for security. However, the environment that these

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children inherit gives them an unhealthy start in life and, due to a lack of education and social stigma, the children of sex workers will not find a future outside the red light area, without help. The saying, "It is better to catch them young" would be, most applicable to the children of sex workers, with regard to planning welfare and development programs for them.

Victims of perceive their children as a source of economic security for their later years. The desire to have a child is reflected in the words of a mother, sex worker . . . "Men may come and go after using us, but it is my child who will be my only support. I shall therefore not mind doing anything for the proper upbringing of my child, even if it means to stay away from him/her for his or her betterment."

The various aspects of the lives of sex workers children include living conditions and surrounding environment, health conditions, school experiences and psychological conditions are pathetic. Red light areas are not only places where men go to buy sex. They are also places where all generations live together where children play, work, study and grow up.

Child Trafficking a bird's view:

The Smoothest (although illegal) and least intervened area of trafficking of children in prostitution is second-generation prostitution i.e. the induction of children of prostitutes into sexual slavery.

The trafficking, sale and prostitution of girl children have become major problems in Andhra Pradesh particularly in Coastal Andhra. Hundreds of girls and women travel on a regular basis and traffickers from organized crime syndicates trap them.

Andhra Pradesh particularly Coastal Andhra Pradesh is identified as a high supply zone for sending and transiting girls from other states for sex. It also sends its own women and girls to states of Mumbai, Calcutta, Goa, Chennai, Orissa and inter districts for prostitution, Marriage and cheap Labour. It also trafficks boys and girls for begging as child Labour.

One of the major reasons for the prevalence and increase in trafficking is poverty and traditional customs, which makes women particularly vulnerable. Many are tricked into prostitution, there are others who take it up as a way of improving their status. When children get into prostitution or get trafficked it has been found that many came from homes where they have had to face abuse or where there has been violence and tension.

The large prostitution areas of coastal A.P are Chikaluripet, Ongole, Guntur, Mangalagiri, Eluru, Guduwada, Nalajerla, Tadepalligudem, Rajamundry, Kavali, Nellore, Sullurupeta & Naidupeta etc., and also small towns in all districts. Where ever the Dommara community (Nomadic tribe) are located, it was identified that that area become an ideal ground for prostitution. People of this Dommara Community maintain brothel houses and also involve in this trade. Prostitution is engrained as a traditional way of life through Generation among many of the tribes such as Dommara & Yerukalasanani etc,

DEFINING THE DARKNESS

Body symptoms in Child hood	Mental impact in Child hood	Interpersonal relationships Children
In Childhood malnutrition, tuberculosis, Sexually transmitted diseases, fractures and trauma to internal organs failure to thrive.	Reactive attachment disorder, Mental retardation, torture syndrome, gender identity problems, autism, depression, hyperactivity with attention delicate disorder, learning disabilities, functional enuresis, functional enuresis, pervasive developmental disorder, autism, conduct disorder.	Are often abusive, clingy often react violently to touch, in interactions with adults, are often idolizing or devaluing with rapid shifts form one to the other.

VULNERABLE SITUATION OF CHILDREN OF VOCSETS

One of the major problems these children face is not being able to pursue education due to lack of motivation and poor economic conditions.

HELPS statistical findings show that, in Coastal Andhra Pradesh alone, there are about 25,000 sex workers; in AP about 2 lakh above women earn their bread by selling their bodies.

Similarly one among the vulnerable group which was omitted, avoided and not considered is the sex workers community. The children of sex workers were also deprived of many situations and not receiving good education. The obstacles towards sex workers children being admitted at institutions include:

Birth certificate - Most of the sex workers children are considered illegitimate and even their births are also not registered.

Ration card - mostly the sex workers are the migrants of the different state brothels and they do not have any proper residential address and record to prove their nativity in a state. Hence most of the sex workers are excluded form any ration cards to prove their citizenships.

Lethargic attitudes of the parents - for most of the children, both the parents are actively involved in the flesh trade. This situation excludes them from making the necessasary arrangements to get them prepared to go to schools. They even failed to follow whether the children are continuing their education or not. Hencece it results in chidren being drop out of schools.

Risk of entering into trade - female children are motivated to enter into sex trade and the boys are trained as pimps or drug peddlers, which not only disturbs the children but also removes their motivation towards their education.

Trauma - Hooligan, thugs and criminals are high in the area, which is a constant fear and threat to the existence of the children and currently all children live in slums with constant fear burdened with trauma, which affects towards concentration on education.

Absence of parents at home - police arrest and mobile sex work are separating the children from the parents often. The loneliness increases the trauma of the children and disturbs them from concentrating on education.

"There are lots of schools that refuse to admit children, if they find out that these are children of prostitutes. Till very recently the names of both the father and mother were necessary for the school form. From there the problem begins. Numerous states have said that the names of both the parents are not necessary. Yet there is a very deep-seated social prejudice and we receive complaints about heads of schools rejecting forms that don't carry the father's name."

The various aspects of the lives of VOCSETs children include living conditions and surrounding environment, health conditions, school experiences and psychological conditions. Areas of prostitution are not only places where men go to buy sex. They are also places where all generations live together, where children play, work, study and grow up. The problems of VOCSET's children need to be studied and understood, so that these children can be given the care and attention needed for them to enjoy the human rights as they are entitled to.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT:

In the evenings, the older children loiter around outside on the streets, as their mothers cannot keep them at home nor do they have the time to attend to them. These children have been isolated from birth from mainstream society, and get exposed to all vices, constant fights, frequent use of abusive words and bad language, which become a part of their lives. They are also exposed to such degraded social elements as pimps, brothel keepers, corrupt policemen, procurers, bootleggers, alcoholics, drug peddlers, drug addicts and all types of customers. In the absence of normal family socialization and due to lack of constructive activity, these children start bootlegging or running errands for their mother's customers. Later on they will be dragged into pimping and procuring. Children as young as 10-12 start smoking cigarettes and are used as drug peddlers. Many of the boys are child workers, earning their living. As they have to fend for themselves, soon they become miniature adults, exposed to hard realities, very practical and clear about the future. Their goals and ambitions remain limited because of the factors like the role models around them, financial insecurity and psychological insecurity.

They imitate whatever they seen: fighting behaviors, sexual behavior, etc. Often children are confronted by two conflicting situations. They are prone to developing an early acceptance of the goings on in the area, pitted against their own natural desire to run away from it all due to social pressures.

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At school the VOCSET's child begins to discover the reality of "socially acceptable children". Other children sooner or later come to realize the child's background, because of the area he or she comes from, because the father is unknown and due to irregular attendance, because of poor marks and typical behavior problems, such as aggressiveness and falling asleep in class. The teacher scolds the child and other children begin to refuse to mix with him, which leads to a feeling of alienation.

Mothers get very little time to feed, dress and take their children to school after a long night of work. After school hours, these children are not able to find an atmosphere congenial for study, nor any guidance. The present situation of these children is hardly conducive to academic achievement. It has been found that there is a great deal of irregularity in attendance and a high rate of dropping out amongst the children of VOCSETs who attend school. If a VOCSET's child ever reaches college or beyond, then he or she often faces ostracism from other students, who invariably find out about his or her background. Sometimes this leads to dropping out even at this stage.

HEALTH CONDITIONS:

Health is no longer considered only the absence of disease or infirmity. Today it is described a state of well being of body, mind and soul. The circumstances of these children, if they have no where else to go except their mother's place of business or the streets are not conducive to mental or physical health.

The health of children born to mothers suffering from sexually transmitted diseases or HIV+ during pregnancy is even more vulnerable. Most of the children suffer from infectious diseases and few escape venereal diseases, due to sexual abuse. Despite the desire to look after them, mothers find it difficult to take them hospitals when required.

A VOCSET mother, in the absence of a male breadwinner needs to earn a livelihood, which results in the neglect of her children. Many children below two years of age are even drugged during their mother's working hours. Their food is given only when the mother is free, so the children either go hungry or fend for themselves. Older children, if any, end up taking care of the younger ones.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS:

The mothers initially have great hopes and aspirations for their children for a bright future. They try their best by providing everything possible materially, while what the children lack most is love and care. The mother herself, who lacked this to some extent during her own childhood and certainly after entering prostitution, feels insecure and transfers this insecurity and sense of rejection to the child, making her or him socially vulnerable.

Children sharing the sleeping quarters of their mothers come to know all about sex acts by the time they are six years of age, while suffering from lack of motherly attention. From the beginning these children develop a lot of behavioral problems. VOCSETs' children tend to be extremely hyperactive and have a very short span of concentration. They imitate whatever they have seen : fighting behavior, sexual behavior, etc. Often children are confronted by two conflicting situations. They are prone to developing an early acceptance of the goings on in the area, pitted against their own natural desire to run away from it all due to social pressures.

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The ostracism the children feel at school results in severe psychological pressures and emotional complexes, often making them rebellious, abusive, violent and they develop a bitter feeling towards life. A VOCSETs child long to grow up faster so that he can leave behind the bitter memories of his childhood. His earliest ambition is to earn well and possess a decent home where he and mother could live happily. But these are only castles in the air, for he has already dropped out of school due to the unbearable taunts of classmates. A boy will be soon caught up in the underworld activities of the area. A girl will be inexorably drawn into the vortex of her mother's activities. While life for both boys and girls born to VOCSETs is difficult, life for a VOCSET's daughter growing up in the red light area is even more frightening.

The Girl Child of the Sex-workers in Prostitution localities:

The closest role model for a female child is her mother who is either a VOCSET or a brothel keeper. Most female children by the time they have reached puberty, have had sexual experiences.

Having practically no contact with the rest of the society, they perceive the world as a place where all women sell their bodies to make a living and men earn money by procuring clients for their mothers. Those girls who attain puberty cannot evade the evil eyes of the customers who visit their mothers, and soon fall prey to them.

Unlike other communities in India which dread the birth of a girl child and idolize sons, here is one instance where she is very much wanted. "A Daughter is an insurance policy for VOCSETs" is how the community looks at a birth of a girl child, who, when they become too old to attract customers, are unable to find another source of income. If she enters the sex trade, she becomes a source of security for her mother in her old age, a source of income to the brothel keeper, pimp and procurer and a pawn to the moneylender.

The Male Children of the VOCSETs in the Prostitution localities:

For the male children of VOCSETs, the closest role models are the pimp, the smuggler, the corrupt petty policemen and the drug addict. Due to lack of employment opportunities, a low level of academic achievement and a lack of healthful recreational activities, male children get dragged into pimping and procuring and other underworld activities.

CASTE STRUCTURE OF PROSTITUTES

CASTE	%
Scheduled Caste	42.00
Scheduled Tribe [Dommaras/Erukalas]	25.60
Economically Backward Caste	16.30
Other Castes	16.10
	100%

These girls do not have any positive role model before them, either in their mother or father or in the neighborhood. Majority of them live in the vicinity of their own people. The children are exposed to immoral activities of their mothers and relatives. One cannot expect these children to be different when they grow as adults. By the time girls attain puberty they are exposed to sexual experience and many a time they become unwed mothers and continue to remain as VOCSETs as they find themselves caught in the vicious circle.

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In the first place, economic hardship is not the origin for this institution to emerge. But today economic reasons have become one of the factors for this trade. Poverty among these communities, desertion by their menfolk, death of breadwinner forces the women to become vulnerable for prostitution.

Menfolk encouraged by quick and easy money join in providing clients for their womenfolk. Economic hardships faced by the community forces young girls in the family as a commodity for purchase. Secondly, these communities do not own agricultural land for cultivation. As a result they have to depend on agricultural labour for earning. The earnings as coolie/labour fetches only between Rs. 30/- to Rs.60/- per day, whereas a VOCSET earns around Rs. 250/- on an average per day.

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