

PROSTITUTION AND VENEREAL DISEASE

By

A. S. M. TASADDOQUE HOSSAIN,*

Before discussing about the role played by the prostitution in spreading venereal disease, it should be emphasised that prostitutes here are only included as of legal brothel, those who are licensed and organised by the state, and defined as who give themselves to the first comer for money without choosing and without taking pleasure, possessing no other means of existence¹. It is apparent that even where there exists no legal prostitution now-a-days, references are often made on prostitutes for the spreading of venereal infection. It should also be appreciated that as regards venereal disease, main emphasis has been here on gonorrhoea alone as its recent world-wide increasing distribution has caused much havoc and alertness, particularly among the public health workers.

Regarding contribution of prostitution^{2,3} towards the spread of venereal disease—especially in the face of recent world wide persistent increasing number of gonorrhoea cases—has always been of much controversy. But careful investigations have failed to confirm the views that they are the main source⁴, inspite of the fact of statistical possibility of spreading the disease; and it has been estimated once that five inmates of a brothel in an infectious state had between them received 7,000 visits in a fortnight¹. Of course, on the other hand, any extent of promiscuity can outweigh such statistical possibility, and it has been noted from Jamaica⁵ that 59.2% of a series of gonorrhoea patients had sexual relations with only one female during a period of four weeks. Nevertheless, as their association has always been over-exemplified, various sorts of action had been introduced from that part in many places including compulsory medical examination and treatment, etc. It is appreciated that as they have been recognised long before as a great menace to the society, recently many countries are already putting their strong hands to suppress and abolish them. But it has been curiously noted that there exists some class of people who somehow frequents to the prostitutes. On suppression the legal prostitutes have largely been replaced by the good time girls,⁶ society girls, call girls, etc., who are increasingly becoming a problem now-a-days in many highly sophisticated communities even, most particularly in the European continents; and the prostitutes are losing ground in the struggle against clandestine prostitutes. So to say, in theory, prostitutes are forbidden there, but in practice there is either much more or at least as much prostitution in the country which forbid it as in the countries which allow it. The effect of these new substitutes can easily be illustrated that the number of gonorrhoea cases was really declining in Copenhagen,^{7,8} but the abolition of brothels and the abolition of the regulations for the prostitutes brought about a sharp increase in the incidence among the males there. It is also equally regretted that though the prostitutes have always been blamed for the spreading of venereal disease, particularly gonorrhoea, but no study has so far proved their contribution conclusively.

* Dept. of Social Medicine, 9, Dudhope Terrace, Dundee, U. K.

Rather many planned studies have proved and established the clandestine prostitutes as a main source of venereal infections, which include not only the society girls, good time girls vice doll, etc., but also described as amateur, picked up, casual etc. Thus a recent study from Poland¹¹ has shown that the risk of contracting gonorrhoea is five times more from casual amateurs than the prostitutes, and an another study¹² has shown that 'picked up girls' were responsible for 76% and prostitutes for 6% of venereal infections in the army. These sorts of girls always mushroomed wherever the prostitutes are suppressed by legal, social or moral force. Conversely, their growth is less favoured where there exist the legal prostitution, as the former is costly to maintain and to preserve ethical secrets. This group of girls not only hinders the success of any effective anti-venereal campaign, but also produces multifarious effects on the society though so far no study has ever been carried out to evaluate their job and influence in the community. This group of girls though very often included as prostitutes in many recent literatures, differ from legal prostitutes in various ways, and sell their favours equally for money, or for kind, and they almost always have other means of existence.

On sociological point of view though the prostitutes are a great menace to the society, but being indetified they have always been kept in some organised way through registration and other legal provisions; and as the brothels are kept somehow segregated from the rest of the community, they have practically no influence on the society and many sociological surveys have failed to establish them as a main source for infection. Therefore, whenever any prostitute be cited as a source of venereal infection, it is possible to get hold of her and to prevent further dissemination of the infection through treatment or prophylactic measures, in spite of the fact that the present diagnostic procedure, especially for gonorrhoea, is often unsuccessful, more particularly in the cases of females.

The good time girls, call girls, society girls, etc., are though morally prostitutes, but not regarded as such, for which neither they are organized through registration or other legal provisions, nor the population is kept segregated from this community. Thus they live within the society, and their association influences the adultery and reduction in the community at large and often increases the women traffic, certain glamour, easeness of life, and overfamiliarity. More important having no definite place, they very often have intercourse in the park, in the back of the car, etc. which not only creates some scene publicly but also do not facilitate them for ablutions and other prophylactic measures, even when such are possible. On the other hand as their meeting is often casual and unrecognised, being a source or contact of venereal infections, about always they cannot be prevented from disseminating the organisms, and the contact tracing or the individual case finding is often highly unsuccessful. Therefore, their presence not only may infiltrate the society, but will obviously produce hindrances for any effective anti-venereal campaign. Venereal disease rather would always remain as a scourge in the human society as long as there would exist such women traffic,

On sociological point of view, every moral support would be available for the abolition of prostitution. But such view can never be emphasised as that will only bring another disaster. It is possible to eradicate prostitution through some positive measures, but it requires foremost a radical and rational change of the society itself; and as long as such cannot be done, mere suppression of the prostitutes, by legal, moral or social force would always be replaced by clandestine prostitutes, which not only would ever cause a failure in venereal disease control programme, but would also produce manifold injuries to the society. That is why, more particularly their presence induces adultery, fornication, etc.

CONCLUSION

Though prostitution has always been blamed for the spreading of venereal infection and though the statistical possibility is much higher among them, so far no study could prove that the prostitutes are the main source. But various studies have conclusively proved that the good time girls, call girls, are the main source of spreading the infection. Though morally they are prostitutes, but are not regarded as such, flourish very much on suppression of legal prostitutes, nor segregated from the midst of the community, which is possible in case of prostitutes. They not only play a very remarkable role in spreading the infection and cause a failure of effective venereal disease control programme, but also their influence and effect on the society are highly injurious.

Prostitution can practically be eradicated with some positive approach provided a radical and rational change of the society is possible at the same time. As long as such cannot be achieved suppression of prostitutes will always favour emergence of unorganised clandestine prostitutes with great threat. Till then for the control of venereal disease and for the safety of the community at large, much better could have been done by favouring the existence of legal prostitutes than by encouraging the heavy traffic of such amateur girls.

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