



BULLETIN : 7

from **DURBAR**

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Law makers are putting their weight asking change in the law (ITPA)

Durbar means unstoppable. Since its inception it fights for the human and citizenship rights of the sex workers. The existing law (ITPA) that is meant to regulate especially absolves rights of the sex workers and put them at the mercy of law enforcing agencies. Clauses under ITPA have ruined the life of sex workers and their children as well. As a result DMSC since its inception raised demands to amend those Clauses. DMSC as part of its advocacy work met policy makers regularly.

In 2006 the sex workers held procession into the Parliament to protest and demand for amendment of ITPA. Again this year on 1st March Durbar hosted a program titled 'Sex Workers Meet Law Makers' where many parliamentarians were attended and agreed to support sex workers rights agenda.

Slowly but steadily sex workers are started getting support from different corners of the society. Recently, on 7th July, almost 25 Parliamentarians' showed

overwhelming support in favour of the above mentioned sex worker's demands and sent a letter to Smt. Krishna Tirath, Minister of State in the Ministry of Women & Child Development requesting to make necessary amendments of the ITPA. Their views as articulated in the letter are:

1. Delete of Clause 3.1 of the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1956 read with the amendments made in 1972 and 1986 and insert a new clause "Guaranteeing issue of House rent Receipt to sex workers by the landlords".
2. Make necessary changes in Clause 4 of the Act so as to ensure that the sex workers are not exploited by the House owners, their goons etc. It should also be ensured that the land ladies will not get 25% of the income of the girls and the land lady will also bear the cost of evening meals and dinner of the girls where the 50% share system exists.
3. Make necessary amendment in Clause 7 and ensure that no action will be taken against any old Red Light area if new temples, mosques, church, school, Colleges or Hospital are constructed within 200 meters.
4. Withdrawal of Clause 8 of the Act which deals with seducing or soliciting for purposes of prostitution.
5. Withdrawal of Clause 18 and 20 of the Act.

A Tribute to women empowerment

On the occasion of Durga Puja

The largest festival of Bengalis i.e., 'Durgotsava' starts with the period called 'Devi Paksha', recalls the symbolized by the 'Asura' to reestablish again. It is a period of period of women's. But fact that this festive celebration but also a space for women in our society.



1st prize, Swanirvar Durga

power of 'female shakti' Goddess Durga who slays peace and sanctity on earth Devi's, period of mother's, how many of us realize the season is not only for time to respect and create



2nd prize, 41 Pally Club

For Bengalis, her arrival brings joy and festivities. It's no different for the sex workers of red light districts. To them, the Goddess is truly a source of power. They believe she provides them with the strength to fight life's daily battles and survive. But they are discriminated and stigmatized by the so called main

stream society. They are cast aside when the city gets enveloped in puja frenzy. These women hardly get a chance to participate in the puja.

In 2010, during the puja, DMSC along with Ekdin, the daily newspaper House organized a competition in Kolkata named 'Ekdin Durbar Samman'. The criteria of selection process were based on the women's role in decision making process in



3rd prize, Naskar para

the puja committee, identification of theme and decoration strengthening women's issue and the engagement of the committee in other social development work. The jury members were those women whose life is filled with violence, stigma and discrimination. They were from sex workers and from tribal communities. On primary stage, 89 puja committees submitted nominations out of which first ten was identified in the 1st phase of selection following a measurement matrix. It was very difficult to select the first three among them because all of them were showing strong women's participation both in management as well as in creative areas.

Finally, 3rd prize was awarded to Naskarpur Sarbojanin Durga Puja, 2nd prize goes to 41 Pally Club and the 1st prize goes to Swanirvar Durga. The award ceremony was held at Press Club on 23rd September 2011.

Durbar's role to prevent trafficking

Human trafficking is a menace in our society , more so in West Bengal as it has porous international borders which make it easier to cross the boarder to reach West Bengal from neighboring countries namely Bangladesh. DMSC engaged into this work since 2001 following a unique approach called Self Regulatory Board. The board consists of 15 members. 8 members are from sex workers community and the remaining seven members will comprise of

- a) Local counselor (representative from local government)
- b) Medical doctor from Dept. of health
- c) Representative from State Commission of Women

d) Representative from Bar Council

e) Representative from Women's Organization working

at the state level

f) Representative from Social Welfare Board (Ministry of women and social welfare)

g) Women activist of repute

The board prevents entry of minor girls and unwilling adult women in the sex trade.

Recently a 15 years Bangladeshi girl named Hena (name changed) was rescued by Durbar. She was a meritorious student and was spending a happy life with her family. But March 13, 2011 was a day which brought a storm in her life.

What happened to her?...In the morning when she opened her eyes, she discovered herself in Kolkata, India. She was trafficked..... Her dreamy eyes always search for a morning, where she is sitting in between her father and mother! But every morning, when she wakes up, her dream wipe out with in a second.

Hena was reading in class IX. It was a day to collect scholarship money. So she with her friend Priya(name changed) went to the school to collect that money. But unfortunately they have not got their money that day. So they decided to visit Hena's aunt's place which is near to her school and stayed the night there. The next day Hena and her friend were supposed to board a bus towards her home.

Priya called up her boyfriend Raj (name changed) to the place. But suddenly Priya felt a pain in her stomach. So they went to a doctor. After that they got up in the bus where she felt sleepy after having some water from Raj. She felt unconscious.

When she arose she found herself in Kolkata. She was sold to a brothel in Chetla but the peer educators of Durbar had already spotted her on the day one and rescued her. She was brought to the short stay home of Durbar. Durbar's experience in repatriating Bangladeshi is not so encouraging. As laws and procedure is so cumbersome that hardly rescued girl can go back to their home country and often spend years (even her whole life) in remand home preceded by police and judicial custody. Often country of origin does not recognize them as their citizen and the receiving country do not allow her to leave outside custody or in remand Home. Though DMSC has raised this complex issue to influence policy maker in both the countries nothing has changed as they are least bothered about a "trafficked women". This was probably a unique case where after 7 months. DMSC succeeded to hand over the girl to her father through the High Commission of Bangladesh and the I. B department of India.

Durbar this time could influence Foreigners' & *NRI's Department*, Government of *West Bengal* and BSF office. However this process hardly produces favorable result and often number of bottlenecks prevents trafficked women to see new light in life.