

And I touched the silver lining...

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Dressed up in low waist glittery sarees, pallu slightly pushed aside, luscious red lips and dark kajal these women stand at the Bangalore subway waiting for their customers.

The desire of every Indian girl is to find the man of her dreams, who will marry her and take her into a whole new world, filled with love and bonding. But not all girls are lucky enough to have their dreams fulfilled. A lot many of them, end up as victims of trafficking and prostitution with no fault of theirs.

Prostitution is one of the world's oldest professions but this may not be the best accepted one. Every year millions of girls are pushed into being sex slaves where they give up their bodies and dignity in the hands of a total stranger. Some take it up for the need of money and some for pleasure.

Jyothi is one amongst them. Standing at the Bangalore subway, this lady also has a similar story to tell. Being the daughter of a drunkard was not enough, she was uneducated and had her mother and two siblings to look after. That left her with no choice but to join prostitution which was going to be her only source of income for the next few years.

Standing on the subway, along with her fellow workers, waiting for customers crushed down all her dreams of a happy marriage and a happy life. Jyothi says, "I always disguised myself as someone who does not fear the future. I was all set to face the dark world. However, the bitter truth was, I was ashamed of myself, to face my poor and helpless family. I was a broken glass that could never regain its original beauty again."

Lives of prostitutes were never easy. They were tortured and shamelessly abused. These sex workers generally had a vicious cycle surrounding them, something that they could never get out of. They are brought in when they are young and are forced to work till they are too old to be accepted. Generally during this time they are allowed to bear a child and this child is



taken away from them soon after delivery and returned only after they have completed their years of service and brought a new girl into their business.

Jyothi always thought that this was going to be her fate. However, little did she know that her life was soon to take a new turn? This day was like any other, Jyothi stood in the subway. She noticed a man looking at her. Considering him to be one of her customers, she maintained an eye contact with him but the man moved away. This went on for some time until one day he approached her.

"I happened to notice a descent young handsome man observing me every day while I waited for someone to pick me up." Jyothi recalled, "It went on for a month or two until he finally approached me. His name was Vhaibhav and he just came up and asked me if I was ready to say good bye to my profession and get married to him. I was taken aback by his words but at that very moment I knew that maybe this was it."

Jyothi made no further comment and walked away with him. Unlike the other owners of sex workers who turn out to be very rude, the one who owned Jyothi was understanding and allowed her to go free. That was the day; she breathed her air of freedom for the first time.

It is true that India is a country where

prostitution is illegal and prostitutes are looked down upon. Jyothi too was looked down upon when she was to marry Vhaibhav. Her in laws were not so excited to have a prostitute marry their son but nevertheless they got married.

Years after her marriage, Jyothi now is in New York with her husband and has two lovely children. She had buried her past deep within her until today, but today she says she felt the need to reveal it to others just to tell all the sex workers that they are not the ones to be looked down upon.

In India, where thousands of prostitutes work every night, serving our ruthless drunkards. People are trying to make prostitution legal because they believe that if legalised then thousands of girls who are kidnapped and raped will be saved. But the case may not be so. Legalised prostitution would mean any girl could be kidnapped and forced into prostitution and no one would come to save her.



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