

# The Role of Gangubai as a Surrogate Mother in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Gangubai Kathiawadi*

Itsna Syahadatud Dinurriyah

UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya

[itsnadinurriyah@uinsa.ac.id](mailto:itsnadinurriyah@uinsa.ac.id)

## Abstract

This research aims to examine Gangubai's role as a surrogate mother in the brothel of Kamathipura. A surrogate mother is crucial in the prostitution area since the sex workers do not have any access to law, education, or health facilities. They are even threatened with being homeless. Thus, Gangu's emergence as the leader in the brothel saves the prostitutes there. She is chosen by her friends in the brothel as the one who can protect their lives. Gangu is a well-educated girl from a prominent family in Kathiawar. Her father is a well-known lawyer. Therefore, she is the one who advocates for women who work in the prostitution area in Kamathipura. Like her, women who are trapped as sex workers are those who are deceived by the ones they love. Gangu turns out to be a sex worker after her boyfriend, Ramnik, manipulated her to be a film star. This research is a qualitative one that explores the analysis through textual critical description. This research employs the feminist-rational choice approach that emphasizes female liberation on gender, strategy, institutions, power, and change. To get the findings, this research focuses on two themes that are the idea of a surrogate mother in the brothel and how the surrogate mother implements her power to protect her workers in her place.

**Keywords:** surrogate mother; brothel; sex worker

## INTRODUCTION

*Gangubai Kathiawadi* is a biographical film produced in 2022 by Bhansali Productions. This film gets its fame since the film narrative presents a prostitute who advocates for sex workers in Kamathiphura. Gangu is her pseudonym after Ganga Jagjeevandas Kathiawadi (Alia Bhatt) officially becomes one of the prostitutes in Kamathipura. She was sold for a thousand rupees by her boyfriend, Ramnik (Varun Kapoor), to Madam Sheela's (Seema Pahwa) brothel. The stories of women being manipulated not only happen to Gangu but to almost all those who stay in the brothels of Kamathipura. Gangu's name changes into Gangubai after she becomes the leader of the brothel – replacing Sheela; bai is a title for a female adult, like madam.

The scene in this film starts with a teenage girl, Madhu, crying while some prostitutes make her up. Her mouth is stuffed with tissue so that her scream when her nose is pierced cannot be heard ((Bhansali, 2022) 00:03:25-00:04:30). This scene shows that being a prostitute, she must look beautiful and attractive, nose piercing is one of them. It symbolizes that she has to keep silent no matter how hard it is. Once she enters Kamathipura, her life ends there.

However, Madhu is a representative of a rebellious woman. She insists on returning home regardless of how her family treats her. She does not listen to Gangubai's suggestion that Madhu will be punished to death once she gets home. People do not believe in those who are from red-light areas; they must be sex workers. Their family are ashamed so they cannot accept the women's presence at home. Madhu is one of them. She was sold by her husband, the one she loves. For Gangu, the story always repeats itself making her not believe in love (00:06:25). However, Gangu respects Madhu's choice. Gangu takes Madhu out of Rashmi's (Chaya Kadam) brothel and compensates her for ten million rupees (00:48:45-00:50:00). She performs as Madhu's protector. Despite getting more money by having more sex workers, Gangu prefers to protect one's right to be free.

In the narrative, Gangu is presented as a powerful woman. She might not have a bright future for her dream of being a movie star, like Anand Dev, but she builds her capability to protect the prostitutes to be independent women. She struggles so the prostitutes are equal in getting public facilities such as law, education, and health. Among the sex workers, she is the most educated one. She studied until ninth grade. She stopped going to school after she was trapped in Sheela's brothel. As the daughter of a lawyer, she knows how to advocate for her friends in her surroundings. She knows how to press her opponents and she understands how to fight for justice. Therefore, she emerges as a surrogate mother in Kamathipura.

A surrogate mother in prostitution is not likely to be a mother to a growing baby in the womb who is pregnant because of artificial insemination or implanted by another woman's fertilized egg. In the diegesis, Gangu does not have her own child; she does not even experience pregnancy. Therefore, this research exhibits the definition of a surrogate mother in terms of prostitution and the implementation of the role of a surrogate mother in the prostitution area.

To understand Gangubai's thoughts as a surrogate mother for her community, this research employs the feminist-rational choice approach by Amanda Driscoll and Mona Lena Krook (Driscoll & Krook, 2012). This concept combines feminism and rational choice theory, focusing on gender, strategy, institutions, power, and change (Driscoll & Krook, 2012, hlm. 20). This approach is functional to expose Gangubai's role as a woman in a prostitution area who needs a strategy for her brothel and her workers to be legal so the sex workers there are independent and can develop a better life.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative method by applying a descriptive-analytic method. The findings are obtained from analyzing the film's diegesis by utilizing a description. There is no table or interview in the process of the analysis. This is library research since the primary data used is a film entitled *Gangubai Kathiawadi*. The data are taken from the dialogues, the body language, and the acts of the characters. The analysis also employs the camera angle to comprehend the psychology stressed by the characters. The secondary data are taken from film reviews, academic articles, books, and other related studies to find the gap from the previous research so that this research gains the novelty of scholarly research.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study utilizes the feminist-rational choice that Amanda Driscoll and Mona Lena Krook proposed. This concept combines feminism and rational choice theory, focusing on gender, strategy, institutions, power, and change (Driscoll & Krook, 2012, hlm. 20). This concept, initially, applies to political perspectives such as gender quotas and women's legislative behavior and core topics in feminist analysis; however, the narrative in *Gangubai Kathiawadi* matches the first idea of this concept. In the diegesis, Gangubai applies the feminism concept because she claims women's rights as sexual workers. She also advocates for the co-workers in the brothel to be treated equally either with the other women or the men. Thus, this theory is applicable in this analysis. The female protagonist uses the power as a woman and chooses a rational way to endure in the red-light area. She applies her rationality through gender position, particularly as a woman, strategic position as minority, the legal institution as a community, and women's power, ultimately all make a change in human life (Pongpan, 2023).

In addition, this study also applies the concept of a surrogate mother as a leader in a brothel. Surrogate mother for prostitutes refers more to how a leader cares for and manages her workers in the brothel. Her existence should give benefits to the members of the brothel and find solutions for their future.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Ganga Jagjeevandas Kathiawadi was a ninth-grade teenage girl when she fled to Mumbai with her boyfriend, Ramnik, to be a film star. She adored Dev Anand, the famous Indian actor at that time. Ramnik himself worked in Ganga's father's law firm. He manipulated Ganga to be a film star in his aunt's film company; meanwhile, in fact, Ramnik sold Ganga to Sheela to be a prostitute. In her era, Ganga might have been a well-educated girl. She did not recognize the brothel's life and condition. In addition, she was from a prominent family. Her father was a lawyer. Thus, she was questioning what kind of film company they visited so she saw such a dirty place. Therefore, Ramnik yelled at her that not all people are like her family (00:14:46). As a newcomer in Mumbai, Ganga followed what Ramnik instructed her. The film narrative needs Ramnik, an educated and trusted employee in Ganga's father's firm, to defeat Ganga's ego on her rationality and prosperity.

The setting of this film is in the 1960s in Kamathipura, Mumbai. This place is known as a red-light area—sex workers in this neighborhood work either in brothels or on the street. There are no houses for families. The girls enter this community mostly because of being manipulated by the ones they love like husbands or boyfriends. Therefore, there is no place to return once they come to the site. Their families trust their husbands since they are under their husband's responsibility. They are blamed for their mistake of being involved in the red-light community. They will be punished to death because they humiliate their families. In addition, particularly in diegesis, the ones who work as prostitutes are also transgenders like Raziabai (Vijay Raaz).

Prostitution is considered an ancient profession as old as human civilizations (Gathia, 1999). Kamathipura itself had been settled since 1795 (Karandikar dkk., 2014). That is, the existence of prostitution in Kamathipura has been more than a hundred years since Ganga was presented in this area. In the film narrative, Kamathipura is getting bigger and filled with many uneducated girls. Thus, once they entered this location, they could not escape since the other bad men would catch them again. Ganga realizes that. Thus, she must accept her fate while thinking about living better in a 'bad' life. Then, she tries to help her friends, who are her co-workers, in the brothel not be exploited by Sheela. Her advocacy leads her to be a surrogate mother in Kamathipura.

### A. A Surrogate Mother for Sex Workers

A surrogate mother is a term in reproduction that is used to describe a woman who helps an infertile woman to have a child. Nensi S Inanaj states, "The surrogate mother is seen as an instrument and not as an end to herself" (Sinanaj, 2022, hlm. 273). That is, she sacrifices her life by letting a new life grow in her womb and it will be taken by the parents when the baby is born. Indeed, it is their fetus that is sown in another woman's belly. Thus, a surrogate mother cannot claim the baby as her own. Her job finishes once the baby is delivered into the world. For this work, she gets paid well based on the surrogacy contract. Inanaj also highlights the reasons some women do surrogacy; it can be because of altruistic motivations, or it could be for financial reasons (Sarkar & Rai, 2022)

In the context of *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, Gangubai as a surrogate mother does not sacrifice her body to be pregnant for another infertile spouse. She sacrifices her life so the children and the (female) parents in the brothel are able to live worthy. Gangubai has a lot of children in Kamathipura; they are not only children who were born as the result of their mothers' profession as sex workers but also the mothers themselves who are unmarried. Thus, the children are fatherless, and the mothers remain single until they die.

Gangu accepts this position because she experiences being a prostitute. Living as a prostitute is unstable and always in danger. The prostitutes need a patron to protect them. In this case, Gangu does the surrogacy for altruistic motivations (Sera, 1997). On the other hand, Gangu also does it for money. Although the surrogacy contract is not written formally, after Sheela's death, her co-workers ask her to be their leader; she no longer needs to work as a sex worker (00:46:51-00:48:02). They even give her a white saree, so she looks like a real leader.

The white saree becomes a significant symbol in Gangubai's leadership. She is presented mostly in a white saree in the film narrative. White is a color for men (Renault dkk., 2016). However, Ramya Arivanantham and Vineeth Radhakrishnan expose that for Indian culture, the white saree is to identify a widow to withdraw themselves from ordinary life by living a life of celibacy; it is also a symbol of mourning for their loved ones (Sarkar & Rai, 2022, hlm. 4). It means there are two meanings of the white saree in Gangubai's life: (1) she is ready to be celibate like a widow and (2) she is ready to be a leader like a man. Thus, a new beginning starts in Gangubai's life. She stops working as a sex worker although she still lives in Kamathipura. She emerges as a female leader for her friends and advocates their rights as humans. She dropped out of school because she was sold to a brothel by her boyfriend, she experienced working without a day off as a prostitute, and she got bad service in a hospital when she got attacked by a customer, Shaukat Abbas Khan (Jahangir Khan). All those experiences are common treatment received by the prostitutes in Kamathipura. Thus, she starts advocating for those prostitutes from these experiences. She implements her role as a surrogate mother in Kamathipura.

### **B. The Implementation as a Surrogate Mother in Prostitution**

Gangubai must regret her decision to follow Ramnik who robs her future and her family's wealth. However, she cannot return home. Her family had abandoned her. She tries to call her mother and her mother gives her a limited time while mourning her father's death (01:43:08-01:43:45). It indicates that her family forgets her regardless of her merit for people in Kamathipura. What she does is still something embarrassing to her family's name.

Despite her sorrow in facing her fate in Kamathipura, Gangu thinks rationally. She seems to realize her bad condition, but she wants to do something better in worse situations. According to Amanda Driscoll and Mona Lena Krook, Gangu is a rational feminist in choosing her decision by focusing on gender, strategy, institutions, power, and change (2008, p. 4). She also knows to prioritize her role as a decision-maker (ibid., p. 5). Thus, despite being a desperate and pathetic woman in the red area, Gangu plans to change Kamathipura's condition. She does it not frontally, but she has done it since the first day she became a part of Kamathipura and started it by herself. These are some of her efforts for her people as a surrogate mother:

#### **1. Claiming the fixed Working Hours.**

Being a sex worker means being exploited by the owner of the brothel. Gangu who works in Sheela's brothel has to do her job to pay back the money Sheela spent on Ramnik. Luckily, Gangu is the favourite among the customers. After a year of her profession, Gangu claims her day

off. She tells Sheela that every office gives weekly holidays to the employees (00:24:50). So, that day she invites all her co-workers to watch a film in the cinema. She ignores Sheela's order to serve the customers who wait outside; she even tells Sheela to work by herself if she wants. Strangely, all her friends obey Gangu's instructions. It shows that Gangu has the power to arrange her co-workers, she is more powerful than Sheela. Gangu uses her value that Sheela uses to get customers; Gangu comprehends that Sheela does not want to lose this value. On the other side, her friends support her; she is accepted in this community.

In the liberal feminism concept, sex work is a profession (Karandikar dkk., 2014, hlm. 2). Like other professions, sex workers have to serve the clients well with their skills and get a 'salary' for the service. Therefore, prostitutes have rights as employees as the consequences of their jobs. One of their rights is getting days off to refresh their body and mind to start working the following week. That is, Gangu applies the liberal feminism concept for she considers prostitution as a job. She starts showing this argument in the first year of her job. In the narrative, after Gangu becomes the president of Kamathipura, she holds Navratri, a Hindu festival, and gives a day off to her employees. This is another way to evict the customers from the brothel; the workers have free time.

In the concept of feminism with rational choice, Gangu applies this concept through her power. Although she is an employee in Sheela's brothel, she has power to make the business run well. As the favourite prostitute, she can force Sheela to give her workers free time as an office worker who has a weekly holiday.

## **2. Advocating Prostitution as a Job.**

Some or even many people agree that sex work is a job. However, the commoner does not see it as an ordinary job. Prostitution is considered a disgraceful job. The one who works as a sex worker cannot confidently declare her job. She is just like a criminal. Therefore, liberal feminists advocate decriminalization and confirm that the prohibition of sex work is an interference with the individual's right to control her own body (Karandikar dkk., 2014, hlm. 2) This advocacy indicates that this job exists because of demand and supply; there is a customer or client who demands the job and there is a sex worker who provides the demand. There is also a pimp or the brothel owner in the middle. Thus, this business has a long process.

In the film narrative, a man in the cinema humiliates Gangu because she is a prostitute. He treats Gangu with sexual assault. Gangu fights against him for her respectability. She slaps and hits the man until her friends separate them (00:25:40-00:26:05). The scenes validate people view prostitutes as bad people. They consider the sex workers as humans without values. They can objectify prostitutes anywhere as they think that sex work is a job without working hours and working place. They can employ them every time and everywhere.

However, in Gangu's perspective, the man is abusive. He does not respect a woman regardless of her profession. Gangu shows that a job means a job; she uses her right of free time to watch a film as human recreation. She also fights for her dignity as a human, a part of right or wrong. It exhibits that Gangu educates society to differentiate sex work as a job and sex as harassment. In her victory speech for her presidency, Gangu stresses three things to the sex workers in Kamathipura: (1) be honest in a dishonest profession; (2) do the profession with full integrity; and (3) be human in dignity (01:39:32). Gangu's statement shows that she requires equality. She compares men's and women's positions; it proves that she is a feminist.

In the concept of feminism with rational choice, Gangubai emphasizes gender equality. She highlights that the profession of sex workers exists because of men's demand. Thus, society cannot blame the prostitutes without blaming the customers.

### 3. **Being the President of Kamathipura.**

Gangu's presidency in Kamathipura has been predicted by her first customer, Mr Govind. Although Sheela thinks Mr. Govind has lost his mind, Gangu remembers that prediction in her life (00:23:37-00:23:47). She is even confident that she will take over the ownership of the brothel in five years (00: 24:14). Gangu's dream to have Sheela's brothel becomes true when Sheela passes away. Gangu's friends in the brothel support her to lead them since she is the only one who knows them better than the others. She is also the most generous one among others. Gangu is the most educated person in the brothel; however, she does not treat her friends as those with lower status than her.

Her friends' support for Gangu starts when she experiences sexual abuse by Pathan (Shaukat Abbas Khan) while she is doing her job. This incident is suspected to have been orchestrated by Sheela since she feels bothered by Gangu's courage in the brothel. Before Gangu's presence, no prostitutes challenge Sheela's instruction. They do not have any choice but to follow the brothel owner to survive. Gangu's coming into the brothel changes Sheela's authority. The sex workers demand their rights on their own bodies as liberal feminism claims (Karandikar dkk., 2014, hlm. 2). As sex work is a profession, they work when their bodies, as their asset, are ready to do the duty. They reject the activity if their bodies do not support them. This condition makes Sheela feel at a loss since the sex workers cannot work any time optimally because of Gangu's influence. Thus, Sheela hires Pathan to abuse Gangu. She lets Pathan commit violence to Gangu; Sheela does not listen to other sex workers there to help Gangu. While accompanying Gangu lying on the bed, Sheela presents innocently in the hospital. She feels that she has contributed to providing them with a living. She rejects her workers' advice to make a report to the Police Station. She argues that the police will ruin her business.

As an educated girl, Gangu demands justice. Despite reporting to the police who require a lot of money - they love bribing, Gangu meets an influential person in the city, Rahim Lala (Ajay Devgan). Rahim is a don who works as a mafia boss in Kathiawadi. Pathan worked for him in his warehouse in Antop Hill before vanishing; Gangu reports what Pathan did to him. Rahim knows that Gangu is a prostitute who utilizes her body for her work. Pathan had broken it; it did not only break the body but also break the rule. Both prostitution and the mafia are hard and cruel; Pathan knows it. They should work together and respect each other. It is wrong to abuse one another. Furthermore, Rahim understands that it is not easy for a prostitute to recover from the injury since she does not get hospitality service in the hospital. Gangu does not have good access to healthcare. Thus, Pathan almost put someone else out of the work. In this case, Rahim advocates the legalization of sex work as radical feminism does (Karandikar dkk., 2014, hlm. 2). In the narrative, Gangu, who respects Mr. Govind for his good vision for Gangu's future, turns down this customer for health reasons. Gangu gets a fever on that day (00:43:17). It shows that Gangu cares about her body. She, as a prostitute, does not want to be exploited. Sickness is a human reason to take a rest from her routine.

As a mafia boss, Rahim Lala does not need to ask for the Police's support, he only asks one of his employees, Bilal, to observe Pathan's coming to Sheela's brothel. With his own hands, Rahim hits his ex-employee in front of Gangu. This indicates that Gangu has power; she even has a

connection with the powerful mafia in the city. This connection is a big asset for Gangu's campaign for the presidential election.

On the other side, the death of Sheela makes Gangu's leadership in the brothel becomes easier. Sheela dies a day after Gangu rejects Mr. Govind. She dies on her bed with her wealth beside her. Gangu tells her friends to share the wealth since it is theirs now (00:44:22-00:44:55). The death of the brothel owner might lead them to be homeless. Thus, they can use the wealth for their living. However, Gangu pretends to be the new madam in front of the police in the brothel. She does it since her friends need advocacy for dwelling. She uses the name of Rahim Lala so the police cannot evict them from the brothel or require an increasing tax for the business. This is Gangu's way of strategy to survive. As a prostitute, Gangu comprehends that leaving the brothel means being homeless for the rest of her life as it also happens to her friends.

Gangu's acting to the police leads her friends to position Gangu as their real new madam. The prostitutes in the brothel present her with a white saree that indicates Gangu to stop working as a sex worker; in her white saree, Gangu must act as their protector. Gangu is just 27 but she must agree with her friends' requirements. Thus, Gangu becomes the madam of the brothel and the leader of Kamathipura not because she is ambitious of the leadership. She becomes the leader because other people ask her. Since that day, Gangu wears a white saree as her uniform (00:48:14). She appears as the surrogate mother for the sex workers in the brothel.

Her candidature to be the president of Kamathipura starts from this brothel. Although some people including Rashmi (Cchaya Kadam) do not like her, many people particularly those whom Gangu has helped, support her. When she saves Madhu, Rashmi mocks her that even Gangu is always in her white saree, she is always a prostitute. Gangu's costume in white shows that she is ready to lead, and it is a part of her campaign to be the leader of Kamathipura. However, for her employees, the way Gangu releases the innocent girls to their homes costs much money which can make her bankrupt. Gangu realizes that her rival is Raziabai, a transgender who is rich. In her campaign, Raziabai often distributes a lot of money by throwing it into society (01:02:20). Gangu cannot compete with her wealth. Therefore, she meets Rahim Lala to be his business partner in selling alcohol; she is not an alcohol seller, but she wants to increase the prostitutes' value by forcing the customer to buy the alcohol before getting the sexual service (01:05:00-01:05:07). Through this transaction, Gangu helps the sex workers financially. She believes the prostitutes are happy with having extra money. Gangu also believes she will win the presidency if her employees are happy. In addition, Gangu shows films to entertain the citizens when Raziabai is scheduled to give a speech. Nobody comes to Raziabai's speech. The only audience at the event is Gangu. She competes her campaign strategy with the old money, Raziabai; Gangu succeeds in this competition (01:21:00-01:24:08). Unpredictably, the one who helps Gangu prepare the films is Mr. Govind, the one who predicts her to be the president of Kamathipura. It shows that Gangu interacts with the citizens based on their needs. She knows that the citizens are bored with conventional campaigns such as speech. Thus, she fulfils the needs they want. Marginalized citizens like those living in Kamathipura need more entertainment than the promised program; entertaining them is how they relieve their stress.

Another strategy Gangu uses is making a bank account for her employees. This is so weird because the bank manager rejects this idea. Sex work is not a job; thus, prostitutes do not have any jobs to save. However, the money round in the brothel spins very fast. Banks can collect a lot of

money from prostitution. Gangu thinks about the girls' future in the brothel. Their job is not for good. When they are old, nobody hires them. Thus, the money in the bank will help them.

This situation is suitable for strategy, power, and change in the concept of feminism with rational choice. Gangu applies a good plan to win the vote. She does not use a conventional method in her campaign. She follows the citizens' requirements. She also uses her power to compete with a strong candidate like Raziabai. Gangu's power influences many people in Kamathipura so she wins the election. In addition, Gangu's ambition to be the president of Kamathipura is to change people's lives, particularly the prostitutes.

#### **4. Arranging Roshni and Afshan's Wedding**

Gangu has changed to Gangubai since she took the responsibility of being the leader of the brothel. She never wears colorful clothes for this new position but a white saree that shows her celibacy (Guéguen dkk., 2016). However, Gangu is a young woman; she is not a widow. She also does not engage with other men. Her interest in a young man does not wane. In this case, she falls in love with Afshan (Shantanu Maheshwari), a tailor's nephew to whom Gangu usually sews her saree. Afshan also loves Gangu. They sometimes spend their free time together. Afshan is the one who advises Gangu to wear the white saree that is white as a swan (00:54:25) to exhibit "her mental chastity, beauty, and her ability to guard the subalterns" (Arivanantham & Radhakrishnan, 2023, hlm. 6). It means Afshan understands that Gangu must remain pure as a woman; she cannot have a relationship with a man to maintain her purity. Furthermore, the white saree is a symbol of fighting that Gangu does to advocate for marginalized people as sex workers. However, Afshan still insists on having a romantic engagement with Gangu. He ignores Gangu's position as the future leader of Kamathipura who has to stay single. It seems that Afshan takes benefit of Gangu's condition. Besides being beautiful, Gangu cannot be reached by other men. Thus, Afshan is the only man who can touch her. His workplace is in front of Gangu's brothel. They often have secret communication while they are doing their job.

Their romantic liaison is so clear that people who work under Gangu's employment know this love relationship. Therefore, it is startling when Gangu visits Afshan's uncle's home to propose to Afshan for Roshni. Roshni is Kusum's (Mitali Jagatp Varadkar) daughter. She has no father since she was born from her mother's profession with any men. Her mother gives her marijuana to make her sleep all the time; it saves her from being a prostitute like her mother. Kusum locks Roshni up in a cage so no men see her. Roshni is in the age of marriage; thus, her mother plans to marry her to a man. Kamli (Indira Tiwari) laughs at her since there is no marriage in Kamathipura (01:25:15-01:26:44). For Gangu, Kamli's comment on Kusum gives her an idea. She must change Roshni's life by giving her a groom; the groom is Afshan.

Despite rejecting the valuable dowry, Afshan's family accepts the proposal. Roshni is a virgin; the impossible thing happens in Kamathipura. Afshan may be disappointed since he cannot continue his romantic engagement with Gangu, but Gangu's power is above all. Gangu can put aside her feelings for Afshan because she is more rational than emotional. There is no private matter with a feminist with rational choice. Personal means political (Okin, 1979); (Squires, 1999). Thus, Gangu uses the wedding of Afshan and Roshni as her campaign for her election. She creates a new history in Kamathipura that there is a real family among prostitutes. All citizens in Kamathipura celebrate their wedding; Raziabai cannot compete in this achievement. This action leads Gangu to win the election. Kamathipura is in her hands. In addition, this marriage saves Gangu's virtue as a leader.

Related to feminism with rational choice, Gangu uses the wedding of Roshni and Afshan as a strategy to change people's lives in Kamathipura. The wedding party shows that Kamathipura does not only consist of prostitutes. Kamathipura has a real family inside.

##### **5. Sending the children of Prostitutes to School.**

Having fatherless children because of their jobs as prostitutes is very common for women in Kamathipura. However, some of them decide to abort the fetus. Thus, choosing to be a mother is on their own. Kamli decides to have the baby after three months of pregnancy; she had abortions many times previously (01:45:15). This time she believes that Gangu will do the same thing as Gangu did to Kusum's daughter, Roshni. In her smile, Kamli imagines Gangubai will find a groom or bride for her child. Kamli also wants to break the chain of prostitution. That is, she wants to see her child grow normally.

As a surrogate mother, Gangubai educates the fatherless children either informally or formally. Informally, she emphasizes dignity to those children; they were born in prostitution, but they are not prostitutes. Formally, Gangubai sends them to school. The second way of education is the hardest thing since the school principal and the religious leader reject them as students. The school board even plans to close the prostitution because it has a bad impact on the school (01:49:35). Thus, Gangubai argues the policy in a deconstruction way: prostitution in Kamathipura has existed for a hundred years before the school. It should have a good impact on those in prostitution, not in vice versa, the school is afraid of the effects of prostitution. School as a formal education has a good image in society, that is, it must have a great and strong influence on the neighborhood to change into a better society. On the other hand, prostitution has a negative image in society, thus, it needs education to change society into a better condition. Therefore, Gangubai laughs at the idea of closing prostitution in Kamathipura. It proves that the school does not make much effort to educate society. They educate those who have been educated so it is easier for them to do education. As educators, they refuse to educate the uneducated ones.

Gangubai registers her children to school in the middle of a people's strike to close prostitution in Kamathipura. For guarantee her children's acceptance at school, Gangu pays the school fees for five years ahead; she does a mother's struggles for her children's future. She even persuades the school to accept them for their future as educated ones. However, the school still sends them home. They cannot register without their fathers' names on the forms. It shows that patriarchy is applied in Kamathipura. The children must use their father's names to exist. Their mothers do not have authority although the mother is the one who bears them. For this reason, Gangubai invites Mr. Fezi, a journalist, to inform the discrimination they get in Kamathipura.

Gangubai's protest of their children's right to education is expressed in her speech in front of hundreds of audiences in Azad Maidan. Because of Mr. Fezi's support, Gangu has this opportunity that make her name more popular as a prostitute advocate. Her popularity allows her to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister (Rahul Vohra) with Mr. Patil's financial and connection support, a representative who needs big votes from Kamathipura. Again, Gangu uses his power and strategy to fight for the citizens' rights.

##### **6. Meeting the prime Minister to legalize Prostitution.**

Demanding education for children in prostitution is the agenda Gangubai plans to discuss with the Prime Minister. However, the main reason she meets the prime Minister is to claim the legalization of prostitution. This idea is nonsense for her country because in any country

prostitution is assumed as a crime, not a good profession. Meanwhile, for Gangu, the legalization means a lot. The prostitutes and their children will not be homeless because they still stay in the brothel, a home for them. They can empower themselves as women and support each other. Gangu's argument against the Prime Minister is successful. The government promises that Kamathipura will not be closed. On the other hand, they have to handle their problem, including having a hospital for their own health care. That is, they will not be marginalized in health care.

While Mr. Fezi interviews Gangu for the first time, she is making an herbal drink for Kamli who delivers the baby. As prostitutes, they are not supported by good health care. They must be independent in taking care of their bodies as the radical feminism idea. However, caring of their bodies does not mean without health facilities, particularly from the government. In this case, the health service in Kamathipura ignores two lives, Kamli and her baby. Finally, Kamli gives up. She dies after delivering her baby, Pampi. It seems that there is a double standard here: the prostitutes have a right to their own bodies, but they cannot access health services. Therefore, when Gangubai fails to legalize prostitution, she does not allow the sex workers to live on the street. Living in the brothel saves them from any crimes that rescue them from double violence: crime and sexual abuse.

Among other choices in feminism with rational choice, meeting with the Prime Minister is the only institutional method Gangu does. She follows the rules to legalize prostitution in Kamathipura. So far, she only relies on 'fellow criminals' like Rahim Lala to help her business. This time, she uses her power to discuss the problem in Kamathipura with the real decision-maker; the Prime Minister is the highest position in government who decides the existence of prostitutes in Kamathipura.

## CONCLUSION

Gangubai comes to Kamathipura because of her boyfriend's manipulation. She is becoming a sex worker not because of poverty which pushes her family to sell her into the brothel. She is trapped by man's power in a patriarchal world. She is an innocent girl who is forced to mature in a night. However, she insists herself on doing something good in not a good society. Thus, instead of mourning her fate, Gangu fights against marginalization applied in prostitution. She demands fixed working hours for sex workers because she thinks prostitution is a profession. She also argues that a prostitute is not a criminal. There is demand and supply in prostitution. It means, there is no prostitution if men do not need it. Thus, society cannot blame the women only, they also have to blame the men as the costumers.

Furthermore, Gangubai claims the leadership in Kamathipura. She struggles to win the presidential election for she wants to change people's life in Kamathipura. She provides the basic necessity the society needs. Later, she understands that living in a brothel for sex workers is important because the brothel is their house. The closing of prostitution makes the sex workers homeless. Being homeless means vanishes their future. They even cannot defend for themselves. Therefore, Gangubai demand the legalization of prostitution, so they are independent in managing their lives. However, she insists on being treated equally. She demands access to children's education, health care, and other public facilities. Prostitutes might be a bad profession in people's perspective, but they are still citizens under the government who have the right to be well served.

Thus, Gangubai emerges as a surrogate mother for the prostitutes and their children. She advocates for them to live normally and be treated in equity. She is willing to lead them by being celibate for good. She lives as a celibate at a very early age. She sacrifices her life for people in

Kamathipura. Her family has abandoned her for this embarrassing job, but she contributes to people around her. She is rational and her choice is also rational. She fights for women's life that makes her a feminist in Kamathipura. She is not a famous movie star, but she is more popular than just a movie star.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Arivanantham, R., & Radhakrishnan, V. (2023). Enclotted Cognition, White Solipsism, and Clothing Transition: A Study on Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022). *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208.2023.2295773>
- Bhansali, S. L. (Direktur). (2022). *Gangubai Kathiawadi* [Video recording]. Bhansali Productions.
- Driscoll, A., & Krook, M. L. (2012). Feminism and rational choice theory. *European Political Science Review*, 4(2), 195-216. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S175577391100018X>
- Gathia, J. (1999). *Child Prostitution in India*. Concept Publishing Co.
- Guéguen, N., Stefan, J., & Renault, Q. (2016). Judgments toward women wearing high heels: A forced-choice evaluation. *Fashion and Textiles*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40691-016-0058-9>
- Karandikar, S., Frost, C., & Gezinski, L. G. (2014). Patriarchy and Gender-Based Violence: Experiences of Female Sex Workers in India. *International Journal of Social Work*, 1(1), 1-14.
- Okin, S. M. (1979). *Women in Western Political Thought*. Princeton University Press.
- Pongpan, K. (2023). *Gangubai Kathiawadi* (2022): The Empowering Resistance. *Literature and Literacy*, 1(2), Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.21831/litlit.v1i2.26>
- Renault, L., Molemaker, M. J., McWilliams, J. C., Shchepetkin, A. F., Lemarié, F., Chelton, D., Illig, S., & Hall, A. (2016). *Modulation of Wind Work by Oceanic Current Interaction with the Atmosphere*. <https://doi.org/10.1175/JPO-D-15-0232.1>
- Sarkar, A., & Rai, I. (2022). *Suppression and Subjugation yet Daring and Dynamic: Representation of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Gangubai Kathiawadi as a Gendered Subaltern*. 7, 2456-2696. <https://doi.org/10.36993/RJOE.2022.7.2.51>
- Sera, J. (1997). Surrogacy and Prostitution: A Comparative Analysis. *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 5(2). <https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/jgspl/vol5/iss2/1>
- Sinanaj, N. (2022). Right to Dignity of the Surrogate Mother. *University of Bologna Law Review*, 6(2), 261-286. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2531-6133/14253>

Squires, J. (with Internet Archive). (1999). *Gender in political theory*. Cambridge, UK : Polity Press ;  
Malden, Mass. : Blackwell Publishers.  
<http://archive.org/details/genderinpolitica0000squi>