

GIRL TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH ASIA AND A POSSIBLE REMEDIAL MEASURE

BHAWANI M. MUKHERJEE, BILASPUR (INDIA).

Introduction:

Women in general continue to suffer from a number of socio-economic problems in the entire region. More particularly they are subjected to drudgery and exploitation of various kinds in smaller countries like, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan and also from a country as great as India.

The major cause of suffering appears to be social and economic and also due to the growth of mechanical relationship in the last two decades. That has given rise to zero intolerance towards female and having aspiration for begetting male child only. As a result, crime committed against women are increasing day by day. There is least institutional security for girls and women in the society. Human values are decaying very fast with the rise of get rich quick urge. Male-female inequality has been found to be responsible for woman trafficking apart from other factors. Corruption, accumulation of black money, mafia organization, illegal migration and booming of female in service sector have largely contributed to this state of affairs in dealing with women sexuality and their illegal transfer for the sole cause of sensual pleasure and servitude.

The author has proposed some possible measures to be taken for protecting girls against their exploitation and illegal migration with evil intention. Social, political and religious institutions need to be adequately strengthened. The State shall also work with all commitments to prevent this menace in close association of applied social scientists and social activists. Family-based and village/neighborhood-based awareness campaigns/awareness camps are required to be held so that the girls and women are able to collectively fight against trafficking.

Materials, methods and approach:

The paper is based on the study of some seventy females who were the victims of exploitation. With them we had long discussions, held interviews and also collected information through focus group discussion. The working team had contacts with victim's families, neighborhood and had street-corner meetings. Our representatives arranged short tour programmes, travelled long distances by train with

some of the rescued women and the peer group who shared their nightmarish experience with our people.

Held more and more organized meetings with some NGOs who are working hard in this field of study.

We were able to identify a good number of agents(pimps) both male and female employed by traffickers with whom we had informal interviews and deliberations. Media and newspaper reports provided baseline data to proceed further into the crux of the problem. A few published as well as unpublished reports from different sources gave us an idea to study the subject following narrative method. The primary data were collected deploying conventional anthropological tools and techniques. We also made an attempt to take help of case history and prepare some personality profile so as to understand how the innocent and simple girls got enticed and seduced to their plot. We largely used observation/interview schedules, genealogical technique with theoretical directives drawn from kinship systems, cultural types and gender issue. Local persons as interpreter-cum-guide had to be involved in making a good rapport, especially for this job youths proved to be more convincing and dependable. These people helped us more as cultural interpreters.

Backdrop: In this study the mobility of people and role of capital was considered. The notorious pockets in metropolitan cities with special reference to Kolkata were explored from inter disciplinary nature of urban studies. Urbanism was perceived as a 'heartless entity' made up of brick and stone where trading of human being and virtues and services of women as material objects are hardly enquired into. Urban people and society are becoming indifferent to social pathological conditions prevailing in the city. We have to be essentially concerned with the understanding of the post- industrial, advanced capitalist, post-modern city. The manifested social changes in the movement of different groups towards an outward circle is required to be studied.

This may be helpful in understanding the role of ethnicity and persistence of extended kinship relations in human trafficking. The following main features largely contribute to the continuity of human exploitation in cities:-

1.Urban poverty 2.Rural Urban migration 3.Commodification of art, culture, sports, beauty etc.

Kolkata is a gendered city. Historically, the city has been perceived primarily as a male bastion. The other gender has never been granted full and free access to the streets. The feminists see the city as a place of work, struggle and strife for women. With rising inequality in metro cities like, Kolkata, there come the private police guarding the wealthy. The control of media, seizure of land, busting of unions exclusion of various types of minorities and blocking the access to basic amenities have resulted in the destruction of public place-----the essential of city life.

The religious symbols, icons, festivals and related beliefs and practices have made this traditional city even more paralyzed. As a result, the human ecology has become conducive to the perpetuation of different type of crimes, lawlessness, atrocities and delinquencies.

The problem:

South Asia is the second largest venue for human trafficking in the world, after East Asia, according to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime(UNODC). Over 1,50,000 people are trafficked within the region every year—mostly for sex work but also for labour, forced marriages and as part of the organ trade, according to UNODC officials. Every year, as many as 20,000 girls from the poorest part of Nepal are trafficked--lured by the false promises of the traffickers. These girls, some are as young as nine, end up in Indian brothels or as domestic servants in countries as far away as the Middle East. In either case, they are slaves. Many are HIV positive within two years, and dead before they reach twenty.

Human trafficking is a multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise targeting vulnerable people for labour and sexual exploitation, destroying lives and tearing families apart. Once trapped they are subjected to duress or inducement in the long interim period.

Agents take the girls to Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, other parts of West Bengal, Maharashtra, Bihar red light areas, slums. From many beauty parlors, massage parlors prostitution is operated. There are many pimps who work as broker. Also many call girls operate independently through the racket. There are more stories of illicit flesh trade all over these countries. A large number of minor girls were untraced till 2011(as many as 7917 girls). 2149 adult females were untraced till the end of last year as reported by the Crime Record Bureau.

Many more girls and women are brought from different part of South Asia to Mumbai every year. They operate in bear bars, dance clubs, friendship clubs, slum brothels, flat brothels, bungalow brothels.

This is the state of affairs in human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation from many states and neighboring countries. In Kolkata there red light areas like, Sonagachhi, Kalighat, Kidderpore, Bowbazar and a few others. In these areas one can find women and girls in the trade brought from Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal, Bhutan. A large number of them get infected to STD and AIDS. Police estimate more than 15000 women and children are smuggled out of Bangladesh every year. 27000 Bangladeshi women and children have been forced into prostitution in Indian brothels. Forms of trafficking include fake marriages, sale by parents to “uncles” offering jobs, auctions to brothel owners or farmers, abduction. Traffickers and procurers pose as prospective husbands to impoverished families. They take the girls away and sell them into prostitution.

Modus Operandi :

Local middlemen lure girls from villages and sell them to traffickers. They would then bring them to city and decide whether they should be placed into the sex trade or be employed as domestic maid or sold as a bride in areas with skewed sex ratio.

The girls are sourced from state like, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Bihar.

Also a large number of women and girls are trafficked from Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal and north-east including Bhutan. Most of these girls are reported missing from their hometowns while some arrive in cities with the consent of their parents, propelled by endemic poverty. South 24 Parganas, a district in West Bengal is notorious in trafficking of girls. Children are most vulnerable as they know nothing about human trafficking. They can be subjected to exploitation. And the price at which they are sold depend on certain criteria. For instance, the younger the girl, she will be more expensive to buy. Illegal placement agencies make fake maid verification form so that the girls can be hired. Such placement agencies are mainly located at Shakarpur and Punjabi Bagh in Delhi.

Gullible village girls are easy prey of traffickers. To mention other kinds of trapping is middlemen (mostly women) will lure victims through force (drugging/kidnapping; or coercion via promises of fake opportunities or boyfriends who trick young girls into running away with them. Village men or women of doubtful integrity/neighbors/ distant relative often used to engage trust as agents need to be able to establish themselves quickly within community. Porous borders in Bangladesh and Nepal allow frequent trafficking to occur between it and India.

Possible Remedial Measures:

Girls education is essential for their empowerment. Villages where girls are in danger we should put them in school and give them counseling and mentoring. It is proven that longer a girl stays in school, the more valued she becomes by her family and in her own eyes—and the less vulnerable she is to being sold or lured into bondage. Following three basic components grassroots work be initiated as under—1. Learning 2. Livelihood 3. legal protection. We should volunteer to work to empower girls and women to resist and end sex trafficking in brothels, wine bar and all other places in collaboration with the NGOs like Shakti Vahini and social activists, academicians.

For combating human trafficking consultation should be held from time to time jointly With police officers, Central Reserve Police Force officials, representatives from Social Welfare/Women, Child Welfare and Social Justice Departments, NGOs and Civil Society. This movement must begin with the following objectives: 1. Towards the rescue of traffic victims 2. Rehabilitation of the victims 3. Repatriation and reintegration of victims of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. It was reported that sometimes some victims from Manipur get re-trafficked due to lack of rehabilitation services

back home or pressure of traffickers who operate in Manipur. Police sensitization programmes should be held on the issue of human trafficking. In Mumbai an estimated 100000 sex workers (more than 30% children) reside. In search of story details, I find myself sifting through heart breaking victim statements noted in the field diary. Every girl rescued from commercial sexual exploitation has a story uniquely hers, yet common theme runs through each one : crippling poverty, broken trust, abuse and violence. I learnt about their unbelievable sufferings during their enslavement. Despite deteriorating health a few girls were forced to continue servicing customers. Threats and verbal battering heaped on the girls by their oppressors. Women are kidnapped and trafficked by the local agents and pimps who may be just a neighborhood kin. So many women and girls are tricked and kidnapped and brought into the flesh trade in Mumbai. They are treated like animals. It is a disgrace to our society. It is a disgrace to humanity. Prevention of Immoral Trafficking Act (PITA) will always be by the side of the victims. In this field some NGOs are indeed doing good job. I mention two of them—PRANTAKATHA and APNE AAP FOUNDATION deal with the victims of trafficking in Kolkata. In order to stop and prevent this we have to work hard for increasing law enforcing capacity and public awareness. One should keep his/her eyes open for evidence of human trafficking or enslavement. For other cases contact trusted local police or anti-trafficking organizations (some of which also provide care and do advocacy for victims). We must tell our family, friends and community leaders about human trafficking and its impacts. We can ask them to join us in taking action to prevent it. All concerned should increase awareness through social networking sites. We must extend our support by making online donations to FREELAND FOUNDATION.