

Women Trafficking In India: A Case Study of Punjab and Haryana



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Abstract

The Present study is an endeavour to analyse the trafficking in women and girl child at Pan India level. Major socio- economic reasons behind this chronic issue and the analysis of web of trafficking in Northern states, southern states, North eastern states and from outside of India have discussed thoroughly. Major traditions as Devdasis system in temples of south as a form of prostitution have also analysed. For this purpose, a case study of two major states of Punjab and Hararyana have selected .In addition to mentioned facts, socio-economic conditions of both these states as poverty, illiteracy, prostitution as a trade, lust for sex and baby boy, intermediates benefit, sequade sex ratio etc are also discussed. The border districts of these states which are majorly prone to trafficking are too part of this study. Lastly it is concluded that to raise awareness about worst consequence of trafficking among society, marginal groups of women, and poverty ridden areas, law enforcement and government should take proper initiatives. To provide opportunities to women as a major source of their empowerment ,implement proper facilitation of their rehabilitation, and societal mindset and individual responsibility should be determine.

Keywords: Trafficking, Prostitution, Devdasis, Rehabilitation, Communities, Advantage, Un-protected labour, Commercial-sexual exploitation, Documen forgery, Destinations, Traditional values, Hierarchies, Dehumanization, Balanced approach, Punjab and Haryana, Vedas and Upanishads.

Introduction

Trafficking in women is a longstanding issue globally. With passage of time, many social evils have emerged about women in Indian society as female feticide, domestic violence, dowry, sexual exploitation etc. Due to growth of commercialization of women in economy, the woman trafficking is also an added more to sum. Women and children have been trafficked for prostitution, forced marriage and other forms of sexual exploitation such as sex tourism and pornography. The increasing use of new information technologies in particular, the internet, has altogether added a new dimension to the problem faced. Trafficking is highly complex process involving many actors victim their families, communities harbor and use the labour of trafficked victims.¹

Women in ancient India were held in high esteem. The position of a woman in the Vedas and Upanishads was that of a mother or goddess (Devi). In the Manusmriti, woman was considered as a precious being to be protected first by her father, then by her husband and finally, by her son. With the passage of time, the status of women got lowered. Muscle power and money power dominated the society.²

Traffickers have taken advantage of the unequal status of women and girls in the source and transit countries, including harmful stereotypes of women as property, commodities, servants and sexual objects. Traffickers have also taken advantage of the demand for cheap, unprotected labour and the promotion of sex tourism in some countries. To the traffickers, people are highly profitable, low risk, expendable, and reusable and resell able commodities. Trafficking usually involves long term exploitation for economic gain. Organised crime groups profit from both the trafficking fees and the trafficked person labour.³ Women are pushed into trafficking by various means. For example, physical force is used or false promises are made regarding a legitimate job or marriage in a foreign country to entrap victims into prostitution, pornography and other forms of commercial-sexual exploitation or slavery and emotional abuse, threats against self and family. And wherever the trafficking trade

flourished, the rule of law erodes, corruption thrives, public health suffers and organized crime threatens the security of entire communities.⁴ In the 21st Century human trafficking has become a global phenomenon and proposes a transnational challenge. It is a criminal activity, a human rights abuse and an economic empowerment and social justice issue. It is the third largest crime next to weapons and drugs in the world. Anti-trafficking strategies require a multifaceted and multilateral approach. Governments all over have realized that they cannot combat such a complex challenge alone and this has to be tackled collectively.⁵ Trafficking also usually involves conspiracy, document forgery, visa, and mail and wire fraud. Even in the United State, Some traffickers have been known to supply the women with fraudulent state identification and social security cards. This involvement in a multitude of criminal activities and ties among various criminal associations only serves to increase the burden on local and federal law enforcement agencies. Trafficking into the sex industry also has serious societal consequences as it contributes to the spread of HIV and AIDS.⁶

India is also a source, destination and transit country for men, women and children trafficked for the purpose of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Internal forced labour may constitute India's largest trafficking problem. Women and girls purposes of sexual exploitation and forced marriages in particular states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, UP and Bihar where the sex ratio is highly skewed in favour of men.⁷

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the study of trafficking in India and at world level.
2. To trace the origin and reasons behind women trafficking in India.
3. To analyse the socio-economic conditions of states that indulged in it.
4. To comprehensively analyses the reasons and consequences of women trafficking in Punjab and Haryana.
5. To suggest measures to tackle societal problem, Rehabilitation and government initiatives.

Woman Trafficking in India

Although trafficking in women is a major issue, but today has become more serious in the concerns of Indian states. Women within Country are trafficked to the middle-east India for commercial sexual exploitation. In India, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu are considered 'High Supply Zones' for women in Prostitution. Districts bordering Maharashtra and Karnataka are known as the '*Devdaas/ Belt*' have the trafficking structures operating at various levels. The women here are in prostitution business because of their families deserted them by coercion and deception.⁸

Delhi in recent times has emerged not only as a major destination but also as a major transit point for the trafficking of girls from the North Eastern and Eastern States. The supply State in North-East are mainly Assam, Nagaland and to some extent Sikkim. Among the Eastern States the major Supply States

are West Bengal, Jharkhand, Orissa and some parts of Bihar. Some amount of trafficking to Delhi as a destination and a transit point and then to other destinations such as Bombay, Haryana and Punjab is also visible from states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The trafficking of North-East girls directly into brothels and Punjab is also visible from Bombay in sense that the maximum number of girls finally land up there in course of time. From North East region the girls trafficked into coerced marriage in Haryana and Punjab come from Assam and are brought mainly through the Northern Route.⁹ Women are abused, misused and exploited and satisfied for male pleasure. It is not only that the society treats them generally unfair but they themselves have come to accept this treatment as a natural law within time. They grow up and constantly live with a sense of being weak and in need of protection whether physical, social or economic.¹⁰

A Case study of Women trafficking in Punjab and Haryana

Punjab and Haryana are amongst the top developed states of India. The development indications of the two states, specifically the per capita income, level of literacy, life expectancy support the argument that these two are the better off and the growing states and with respect to human development index they enjoy better ranks. From amongst the 15 major states Punjab as well as Haryana have been able to maintain their HDI rank as 8th and 13th respectively since 2017. It is expected that economic development leads to social development and forward change in society. The theory of demographic transition states that as the economy moves towards economic development it has an impact on social dimensions and overall change in attitude towards life.

It helps overcoming traditions and outdated social set-up and adopting new modern and update life-style and norms. Traditional values are replaced by updated knowledge, thinking and ideas backed by new technology.¹¹ The process of economic globalisation extension of market system have resulted deteriorating socio-economic situation for females, particularly in rural areas. This is especially true in the northern states of Punjab and Haryana where the success of Green Revolution has pushed their woman back into the private domain.

For the past few years, media and voluntary organizations have increasingly been reporting about the increasing number of girls getting sold & being trafficked from other far away and poverty ridden states to Haryana, Punjab and Delhi region. Assam, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh & Himachal Pradesh are such prime states from where the trafficking in guise of migration for coerced or forceful marriage, domestic servants and agricultural labour is taking place. Every year, thousands of young women and girls in Northern India are lured or sold into involuntary marriage. They are bartered at prices that vary depending on their age, beauty and virginity, and exploited under conditions that amounts to a modern form of slavery.¹²

Faridabad, Hissar, Rewari, Karnal, Rohtak, Kurukshetra districts of Haryana and Mansa, Nawashehr, Jalandhar, Gurdaspur, Bhatinda districts of Punjab, there are women from the Assam, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttrananchal, Himachal Pradesh who have been lured through deceit for a better living or have been bought through the traffickers or sold by their poor parents. Although trafficking in women and girls has become a lucrative and expanding trade in these regions, it routinely escapes effective administrative and social sanctions and the general response is to out rightly deny the existence of any such problem.

The number of trafficked victims in the states of Haryana and Punjab is enormous. While the magnitude of the problem of trafficking into coerced marriage and labour exploitation is enormous in the area and depends upon the various socio-economic, political and cultural factors such as family and community hierarchies, cultural, traditions and values that encourage gender discrimination. In Haryana and its surrounding area in Punjab, the buying of women for marriage is directly fueled by and result of adverse sex ratio. The widespread unemployment especially in Haryana and the discriminated status of women in above states have only added to the problem¹³

In the economically prosperous 'Doaba' region of Punjab including Nawashehr, the problem of trafficking and exploitation is equally grave and the magnitude here is comparatively greater in number. The major purpose behind the cause here in the region, is altogether different from that in the state of Haryana and Districts of Punjab adjoining Haryana. In the Mansa and the district of Punjab adjoining Haryana the major purpose behind the trafficking is coercive marriage other for poor peasants. And other socio-economic and cultural factors in the economically prosperous districts of Doaba region in Punjab.¹⁴

Though all over in Haryana and Punjab there are women and minor girls from all the source states i.e. Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh & Uttar Pradesh there is a marked change in their proportion in different region of destination states, In Mewat region of Haryana there are about 10,000 women, maximum number of these women are from Assam and West Bengal. The proportion of West Bengal women increases moving towards the surrounding areas of Mewat though the number of West Bengal girls in total remains less than those from Assam. Moving towards Punjab in the districts adjoining Haryana the numbers of girls from West Bengal surpasses the number of girls from Assam. In the Doaba region of Punjab the maximum numbers of girls are from Jharkhand while there are also girls from Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In the Mansa and surrounding region of Punjab alone there are more than 5000 women and in the Mewat area of the Haryana there are around 5000-1000 women.¹⁵

As the whole process of this bridal migration is increasingly gaining momentum. The sale and trafficking aspects involved in, it needs immediate

attention. The shortage of brides in villages and towns of Haryana and Punjab is being addressed by buying and trafficking of women from distant and poverty-ridden states like Assam, West Bengal Jharkhand, Bihar and Orissa.

In Haryana and Punjab now have many women brought in from other states and many of these "imported" women are treated as slaves, subjected to sexual and physical abuse. If the under 6 years sex ratio data from 'Census of India 2011' is any indication the importation trend will increase manifolds in coming years and more and more youth will be buying a bride for themselves. It is time that the central and state governments step in and enforce existing laws & put up a mechanism to prevent a social tragedy.¹⁶

Activists discovered inter-state trafficking in teenaged girls from poor families as in Punjab and Haryana for false and fake marriages and for male baby. After the girls was taken from her home village she would be sold for Rs. 2,500 to Rs.10,000 depending of the number of middle men involved. Those who escaped said the girls were watched all the time and not allowed to speak to anyone outside their room. Any attempt to resist resulted in brutal torture all their 'earrings' was taken away by the so called husbands or mistresses. 'The "husbands" would occasionally write from fake addresses to their parents to avoid arousing any suspicion.'¹⁷

There are approximately 10 million prostitutes in India. More than 100,000 women in prostitution in Bombay, Asia's largest Sex Industry centre.¹⁸ Every day about 200 girls and women enter prostitution particularly in Punjab, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Maharashtra.¹⁹ There are many dhabhas or small-scale brothels which provide women as an additional service to truck drivers and motorists in Punjab particularly. One women who runs a dhaba had previously been in prostitution with a shed, two cots and a few girls from nearby villages. She owns the brothel, She said, "I rented this place for Rs. 1000 a month and take Rs.20 per man from the girls."²⁰

Reasons behind Inter-State Women Trafficking in India

Prostitution

Within the country, women from economically depressed areas often moved to big cities seeking greater economic opportunities and once they were often forced by traffickers into prostitution. In many cases, family members sold young girls into prostitution. Extreme poverty, combined with the low social status of women, often resulted in parents handing over their children to strangers far what they believed was employment or marriage? In some instances, parents received payments on the promise that their children would send wages back home.

According to the Indian 'Centre for Indigenous and Tribal peoples', more than 40 thousand tribal women, mainly from Orissa and Bihar, were forced into economic and sexual exploitation, mainly came from tribal areas. As the findings show generally money exchange is involved in almost all

Remarking An Analisation

the cases and the links for it are provided by agents and sub agents who himself/herself makes a part of fortune out of it.²¹

Illiteracy is main reason behind women trafficking. Most of these girls are illiterate or very less educated and can not write or read and have to depend on others even for procuring a letter, writing and posting them. Such kind of economic exploitation is done both through cheating and by forcibly. While a very small percentage of the "sold for marriage" women are found to be living a married life, there are majority of others who are missing and are untraceable or are forced to live a life of sexual slave and duplicate as domestic servant or kept women.

Lust for Sex in modern societies within youngest has increased due to the impact of westernization. There are some cases where the girls have been sold to several persons commonly to be sexual slave for them.

Cultural dimensions involved in the problem are more serious. Innocent girls under the grave poverty are being forced to move into a total different cultural setup unseen, unknown to them. The situation becomes more serious when these marriage relationships remains one of the major factors behind female infanticide & feticide and has lead to adverse sex ratio in the demand states.

Though poverty seems to be the major reason in first sight, the underlying '*Gender discrimination*' and '*male dominance*' in societal structure and general insensitivity and apathy towards the sufferings of the women is also contributing at large for the dehumanization, commoditization, and exploitation of women at homes as well as outside. The burgeoning trade in women and girls is thus fundamentally linked to women's unequal status, poverty, lack of education, development and access to markets and essential services within the local social setup or government schemes. Women and girls who have been trafficked can rarely escape or negotiate the conditions of their employment or marriage.

It is also found that many police officers and other local government officials facilitate and profit directly or indirectly from the trade in women and girls, they ignore abuses that occur in one time affair involving girls migration for once and forever. There are *well established networks of traffickers* in the source as well as the states. There is a less investigation by State Authorities to find this trade in human beings and to see the misery and plights of these poor women, yet there prevails a shrewd and mysterious administrative apathy towards the problem.

Parents in poor and under-developed area also are a source of such procurements of minor girls and their daughters. That are conditioned by object and absolute poverty and struggling to meet basic needs, parents also sell their children into some form of debt bondage, either domestic labour, coerced marriages or Prostitution and they are exploited economically, mentally, physically and sexually. These women are subjected to abuse, harassment, rape and torture.

Children in North India are vulnerable to trafficking due to uneven economic development. Many of these children who are as young as 12 to 14 years of age are procured, sold and purchased or trafficked into labour, begging or prostitution. Most Trafficked children belong to families which are not in position to provide care and support due to factors such as poverty, alcoholism, domestic violence. '

Lack of equal Opportunity also reduces the status and quality of life for many girls in these source areas. Although the customary practice of providing a dowry is now illegal but is in prevalence as ever and with the growing materialistic culture and its effects has increasingly become more deep-rooted in traditional castes structure. The institution of marriage under growing materialistic influence is losing its moral-grounds and ethnicity. It is seen as on occasion to improve financial status and condition of the family by he money received in dowry. Due to demands of dowry the impoverished parents of a young girl are tempted to abandon or sell their daughter for fear that they will be unable to pay such a dowry. The some is their jurisdictions, protect the traffickers, agent, subagents buyers and recruiters from arrest and serve as facilitator in the process. In some cases, police demand sexual services, threatening them with arrest if they do not comply.

Most notably in rural Areas, women girls have fewer educational opportunities than males. The problem of trafficking is more in the sub-urban areas or the regions having frequent linkages to the comparatively developed urban areas, rather than in deep rural areas, in both the source as well as receiving states. The attraction of a big city, better-paying jobs, and a better life, causes women and girls, with very few options at home to accept alleged job or marriage offers, for away from their native places.

No Support Services and programs, absence of gender insensitive laws, poor law enforcement and apathy of welfare officials and the migration of local population to developed countries has created a vacuum for work force in the region which in turn is attracting the work-force from the less or under developed states of the country.

The National commission for women reported that organised crime played a significant role in the country's Sex trafficking trade. Indian men, women and children are trafficked for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. However, the number of women being trafficked to other countries is comparatively low. Around 5,000-7,000 Nepali girls are trafficked to India every year. India is also a growing destination for sex tourists from Europe, the United States and other Western countries, numerous studies show that the vast majority of trafficked females in Indian sex industry are currently the victims of sexual servitude modest but uneven improvements in anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts have been seen in many part of the country. Coordinated and well-planned efforts are needed to address to trafficking in woman particularly in forming a national law enforcement response to inter-state and transnational human trafficking crimes.

Conclusion

A brief state wise analysis concludes that the rate of recognized crimes against women was highest in Andhra Pradesh, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Assam. Even in Kerala 20.3 per Lakh cases were reported, which is the state known for best human development and Gender Development indicators. On the other hand the lowest rate was found in Bihar 6.7, Punjab 7.6 and Haryana 6.9 per Lakh. The contribution of Punjab & Haryana to total crimes is 1.3 percent and 2.7 percent in 2005 where the Sex-ratio is reported to be the lowest.

There are major complex factors such as: Poverty, illiteracy, circumstantial pressures, exploitation, lack of risk awareness, unjustified adventure, craze for settling in developed cultures, weekend value system, negative impact of the media, falling female sex ratio within economically advanced states, defective parental handling, inadequate educational system unjustified lust for money and strained inter-personal relations, which may needs to be handled with a highly balanced approach. It is also important to raise awareness about trafficking among the government, law enforcement agencies, medical profession and the media. Each of these groups should play key role in both the prevention of trafficking and re-integration of those who have been trafficked. From above view-points the following interventions are proposed to check women trafficking nationally, internationally and transnationally as legal frame work should be strengthened level. A common National frame-work should be devised to tackle women trafficking. The prosecution process and anti-trafficking legislation to prosecute and punish traffickers and customers should be updated. Cross-border and within states traffickers control should be strengthened and strict screening should be introduced at various levels. NGOs also should develop policy guide lines for the investigation and prosecution of women trafficking. There is also a need to understand at wider level the societal set-up, mindset and attitudes of the people towards Gender relationship.

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