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Human Trafficking: Conceptualization and Global Perspective

Dr. Sabrin Arifa

Assistant Professor,
Department of Sociology,
University of Science and Technology,
Meghalaya, India.

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Abstract:

The present study gives us an idea of the concepts related to human trafficking. It also focuses on the outlook of this issue around the globe, in Asia, India and finally in the state of Assam. The study will give a clear description about how as human beings and specially as social beings, we tend to turn away from such issues thus alienating ourselves from it. But in one or the other way, we are all a part of it. Asian Countries along with other Third World Countries have remarkably provided human beings to be sold out as commodities for any form of work at the cheapest price. They have forever gained the title of 'Source Countries of Human Trafficking'. In India, the foremost reason for the existence of this issue is severe Poverty along with lack of resources, social insecurity, discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, class, social exclusion, lack of governance and its outdated policies, marginalization, corruption and nexus between police and traffickers, child marriage, unemployment, preference of marriage over education, cheap child labour, selective sex abortions, flawed migration policies during conflicts and lack of awareness. In the year 2015, as per the NCRB report, around 1494 cases of Human Trafficking has been reported in a single year with the highest case of child trafficking- 1317 cases in Assam. This marked the state of Assam with the highest trafficking number in the entire country. With the increase in the number of trafficked victims, this issue has soared as one of the most dangerous crimes with no proper authentication, awareness and scrutiny.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Source Countries, Global, India, Assam

Introduction:

Imagine having all of your freedoms taken away, being forced to work against your will, and constantly living under the threat of violence- in short, being forced to live as a slave. Sadly, this situation is a reality for millions of children, women and men each year as part of the global human trafficking industry (Flores, 2014).

The quote leaves us with an aura of imagination to the pathetic and inhumane condition a person has to go through in life when they are in a trafficked situation.

Human Trafficking, 'Modern Day Slavery' or 'Trafficking in persons' are all some of the fancy terms given to this heinous crime where human beings are bought and sold in Flesh Trade Market as mere commodities just like animals or vegetables.

Human trafficking is an entire process that starts with choosing a person in any vulnerable situation. They are being recruited and harbored for various purposes which serves the need of the recruiter physically, economically, socially, morally, psychologically, etc. The chosen person builds an abstract picture of a glorified and improved future living-condition while they are being transferred. But then they get the horror of their life when confronted with the truth of being trafficked. This makes them land up in a helpless situation that can be as extreme as a threat to life. In this process, many victims go through barbaric torture which leaves them shattered for the rest of their lives. Even when they are rescued from this kind of situation, the severe pain and torment they underwent, continue to haunt them perpetually. Very few people are able to overcome this while others end up in miserable death. This violates the basic Right to Life. The whole situation shows how cheap any human life can be in the entire process of Human Trafficking.

We have built the illusion that Human Trafficking is a foreign term or something which is alienated from us. But then, being the world's third-largest crime after Drugs and Arms Trafficking, sadly it shares a direct-indirect relation with each one of us in one or the other way.

This issue has gained wide proliferation in the global perspective in the recent time, immense research is going on, feminists have raised their voices against it, quite a good number of non-government organizations both in global as well as national and state-level are constantly fighting against Human Trafficking. But it seems that this problem is operating even at a higher and extensively organized way with the addition of more and more people in the entire system.

Objectives:

- To understand the concepts of Human Trafficking
- To know the authentic scenes of human trafficking around the world

Hypothesis:

The fancy word of Human Trafficking is a very popular term yet unknown and confusing concept for the general public.

Methodology:

For better analysis and information, the paper is mainly qualitative research with secondary data. The design is conclusive and descriptive. This topic is very sensible and deals with human understanding on a ghastly issue where human beings are bought and sold as commodities. This is why it is very important to gather data in a sensitive way.

Result and Discussion:

Human trafficking is not a modern problem of the society. This has taken shape in various

forms and names and has been practiced for hundreds of years. It is basically a more demand and supply market of human beings. (Cho, 2015). The history and origin of human trafficking can be traced back to the dawn of civilization and the ancient practice of slavery and its concomitant: the slave trade (Jordan, 2002). The trade, in slaves, began in the mid-15th century with Portuguese explorations on the west coast of Africa and since then it got established and passed on to generations by the Europeans, Americans, Middle East, Africa, etc. (Ball & National Center for History in the Schools (U.S.), 2011).

However, definite laws were passed for the abolition of this practice back in 1807 in the Parliament of Britain. It was an Act for the Abolition of Slave Trade. This did not work since it had considered the ban in transporting and trading of new slaves from Africa but not for the existing slaves (Archives, n.d.) Hence, in 1823 the new and old abolitionists came together to gradually abolish the state of Slavery in entire British Dominions in a more institutionalized manner (Kaye, 2005). The Thirteenth Amendment Act in the Constitution of The United States of America marked the legal end of slavery in United States in the year 1865 by declaring that, 'Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime where of the party have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction' (Carter & William, M., 2012).

While the year 1865 remarkably ended slavery in a global context, this system left its root deep impact even in the modern times where human beings are bought and sold as mere commodities against their own will for personal gains. This age-old slavery system took a new form in a more complicated and disguised manner which now got the name of Modern Slavery or Human Trafficking (Havnen&Tønnessen, 2016). This became more like a creditable way of life while using human beings as movable goods for personal gains. The master-slave relation turned to become more of illegal control over human life in recent times (Manzo, 2006).

Human Trafficking from a Global perspective:

An exact measurement or numerical value is very difficult if not impossible to derive, for the people affected in Human Trafficking. This is because of the clandestine nature of the crime. Although a lot of global reports give us a glimpse of the quantitative value of the victims of trafficking but these numbers are very uncertain and doubtful (GAO Report, 2018). The number is increasing continuously and rapidly. However, only from the early 2000s, much attention was given by the State Governments of different countries along with raising alarm by feminists, this issue started to catch notice in a global phenomenon by the media, policymakers, scholars, researchers and received public condemn (Pourmokhtari, 2015). With the rise in globalization, this issue is also taking an expansion. This is mainly due to easy access to global economic human demand and supply which erases the social cohesion of the Third world countries.

A Report from ILO estimates that in the year 2016, there are almost 40.3 million victims of Human Trafficking globally, out of which 75% are women and girls (Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, 2017). Again, around 51,919 cases of human trafficking is reported to National Human Trafficking Hotline and Polaris BeFree

Texline since 2007 to 2018 in the United States (2018 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics | Polaris, 2019)

Human Trafficking in the Asian Context:

Asian Countries along with other Third World Countries have remarkably provided human beings to be sold out as commodities for any form of work at the cheapest price. They have forever gained the title of 'Source Countries of Human Trafficking'.

This has eventually increased with the mass displacement, violence in all forms, abductions upon the Rohingya people of Myanmar (Wells, M., 2018). As per a report of The Asean Post (2018), a large number of abandoned camps and mass unmarked graves were discovered in the year 2015 in the Thai–Malaysia border. This left a disturbing blow in the entire world. Almost 800 victims were suspected to be held captive in tiny crude wooden cages that had barbed wire. There were children's items, a pink teddy, metal chains and remains of almost 150 children were disinterred whose autopsies revealed death due to starvation, torture and disease.

The 2016 Global Slavery Index Report (Minderoo Foundation, 2018) gives an estimate of 24.9 million victims of trafficking in the Asia- Pacific region. It has second-highest prevalence of modern slavery in the world.

This finding gives us a figure that 49.3% trafficking took place due to Government Issues such as Conflicts, Lack of Security and Basic Facilities, Corruption, etc.

Human Trafficking in India:

The Human Trafficking process runs on the equilibrium of availability and need. The foremost reason for the existence of this issue in the country is severe Poverty followed by a variety of causes. These include lack of resources, social insecurity, discrimination in all forms be it on the basis of gender, caste, class, social exclusion, lack of governance and its outdated policies, marginalization, corruption and nexus between police and traffickers, child marriage, unemployment, preference of marriage over education, cheap child labour, selective sex abortions, flawed migration policies during conflicts and lack of awareness. Even in India, Globalization has become a very important aspect for the increase of human trafficking. It has made trafficking an easier task to perform (Najar, 2014).

Gahlot, a New Delhi based journalist commented that there are more modern-day slaves living in India than anywhere else in the world. The Global Slavery Index 2016 report estimates 18.3 million victims of human trafficking are present in India. Again, the NCRB report of 2016 indicates

around 8132 reported cases in the country whereas 15,379 people have been trafficked out of which 9034 victims were minors (India | Global Slavery Index, n.d.)

A distinct feature of India is the predominant existence of the caste system. According to Hindu society, this classification has been in practice since the Vedic age and is still one of the most influential practices in the present society. Here the system of caste followed is the Varnas that divide society into four social hierarchical groups such as Brahmins (Priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders) and Shudras (unskilled workers). From ancient India, the Shudras who belong to the lowest category have faced discrimination from other caste people. These people got the title of 'impure' or 'pollutants' and often segregated from mainstream society. In present Indian society, the term 'Dalit' came into popularity, which was coined by Jyotirao Phule, giving it a more descriptive and sympathetic meaning (Szczepanski, 2020). They are considered as Untouchables and do not even fall in the Varna system. In a simple way, these people are not considered Human Beings and it is believed that they are not created by God (Illiah, K., 2016). Although the conditions of exploitation against the Dalits remain the same but the terms and forms of abuse have changed in present time.

The Dalit Freedom Network in India estimates around 200 million Dalits out of which 10% are trafficked and work in slave-like conditions. They are the most vulnerable group to get victimized into Human Trafficking because they are dehumanized and desperate. Since the Dalit families are at a crisis point so they tend to sell away their children (Nicholl, 2016). In India, approximately 70% of the trafficked victims belong to the Scheduled Caste or Tribe, which is the Dalit class (Watson, 2018).

The two very well-known occupations in India which is formed out of caste-based and bondage falling under the conditions of trafficking are manual scavenging and the system of forced prostitution (Pasic, n.d.-a). Again, Devdasi and Jogini System is not a new phenomenon in India. It has been practiced rigorously under the guise of religious sanctioned sexual custom where mostly young Dalit girls are pushed into prostitution and sexual abuse of the dominant caste. They become stigmatized by the community and are prohibited from getting married (Pasic, n.d.-b).

Black (2007) in her study found that 93% of Devdasi were the Dalit girls and 7% from scheduled tribe belonging to the indigenous groups of India. These girls are tied into the bondage of prostitution. India is a destined, source and transit country for human trafficking.

Human Trafficking in the backdrop of the state of Assam:

In the year 2015, as per the NCRB report, around 1494 cases of Human Trafficking has been reported in a single year with the highest case of child trafficking- 1317 cases. This marked the state of Assam with the highest trafficking number in the entire country. This figure is only the reported ones while others go missing without any official records or undocumented.

Kailash Satyarthi¹ states that Assam has become the hotbed source and transit state for traffickers, that can no longer be ignored (PTI, The Economic Times, 2015).

Hasina Kharbhih² commented on the trafficking issue in Northeast India. She said that it has always existed but after a lot of researches and studies that are conducted recently, people sensed out the problem and became a little aware of the same. This is profusely in practice and convenient due to the sharing of borderland with many foreign countries and traveling without issue of legal migration (Kharbhih, 2017).

With the increase in the number of trafficked victims, this issue has soared as one of the most dangerous crimes with no proper authentication, awareness and scrutiny. Very less empirical study is performed in the state and this issue needs more importance and notice from the Government as well as common people.

Conclusion:

The state of Assam is connected to the rest of India through a thin area called Siliguri Corridor or more commonly as Chicken Neck. This makes Assam geographically more prone to slow development due to which people move out of this region to capitally richer places with hopes and aspirations for a better living and livelihood, sometimes in the lure of false promises given by agents, middlemen and traffickers who cheat and sell them for exploitative work.

The simplicity of the people of Assam, traditional outlook, cultural traits, tribal society, poverty-stricken, jeopardized situations in every odd day make these people vulnerable to getting traffic easily.

Further again, the states' ignorance to reach to the downtrodden communities, tea tribes, communities living in the riverine areas, those affected and suffering from ethnic conflicts, displaced people due to flood or civil unrest, militancy conflict zones become fertile places for traffickers who are making easy target to thousands of men, women and children while selling them off, very cheap for various purposes giving false assurance and showing glory pictures of bigger cities.

Unprepared and benighted, these people move out of their homeland making themselves pursuing and the label of Northeast, easily approachable, open mindedness, sense of alienation, feeling of otherness, separatism, the illusion people carry about this part of India make them face multidimensional complications right from sexual abuse to racial discrimination, verbal as well as physical attack.

¹ Kailash Satyarthi is a renowned Child Right Activist and Notable Nobel Peace Prize Winner. He is the founder of Bachpan Bachao Andolan which relates to save enslaved children from the trap of Human Trafficking.

² She is the Founder and Team Leader of Impulse NGO, a Meghalaya based organization working against Human Trafficking in Northeast India.

The present paper tries to establish a definite linkage on how trafficking is going around the world and in the remotest places. It can act as an eye opener for the common people to understand that human trafficking is not a foreign term rather we are all part of it in one or the other way contributing towards its growth because of unawareness.

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