

Trafficking of Women and Girl Child in India with Special Reference to the North Eastern States

Devaraj Dutta

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science

U.M.K. College, Majuli, Assam

Email Id: dmdevaraj18@gmail.com

Abstract

Human trafficking is a global issue involving almost all countries. It constitutes a contemporary form of slavery. Trafficking has taken place in almost every sector and society with huge population. Victims of human trafficking are generally women & children. Trafficking is increasing day by day. It is a serious threat to state sovereignty as it breaches immigration laws & legal provisions against exploitation. In India also trafficking of human being has become a matter of serious concern for all. Every year many women and children are trafficked for a range of purposes and day by day this problem is taking a very serious form. The North-Eastern part of India is emerging as a rich source of victims of trafficking. In North-East India the common sources of victims of trafficking in are the women and girls from the tea tribes and tribal communities. As per a study, "India has emerged as a source, destination, and a transit country for various forms of trafficking" (Begum, 2019, p.7). In the light of this, the present study is an attempt to discuss about the issue of trafficking of women and children in the Indian context.

Key Words: Trafficking, Women, Girl Child, India.

Introduction

The problem of human trafficking is a global problem. It is not only the problem of a particular society. It is the problem of almost all societies of the world. Amongst all sections of people, the victims of human trafficking are generally women & children. At the present time, it is considered that between 8, 00,000/- & 4, 00,000/- people largely ladies & kids are confined and trafficked across international borders annually (Nerlikar, 2018).

Trafficking is a kind of worse crime that prevails in society. For several countries of the world the immoral trafficking of women and children has been a serious problem over the years. In India also the problem of trafficking of women and children is a very serious problem. Amongst all sections of society women and children are the most vulnerable group. This vulnerability is the result of discrimination in the environment of our establishment, patriarchal system, low status, etc. "India has emerged as a source, destination, and a transit country for various forms of trafficking". Every year millions of persons are trafficked in India. "The Global Slavery Index (GSI) 2016 estimated that India is one of the top 5 countries with the highest prevalence of modern slavery by the proportion of their population as well as absolute numbers" (Begum, 2019, p. 7). "Though India did not rank in the top 5 countries, the 2018 GSI data claimed that there are almost 8 million victims of

trafficking in India” (Begum, 2019, p. 7). It is estimated that ninety per cent of India’s trafficking problem is internal and mostly from disadvantaged groups in the social strata such as the Dalits, tribals, religious minorities, women, and children.

“Trafficking is a crime that occurs virtually in every country, in every region of the world” (Begum, 2019, p. 3). Many a times the victims are trafficked close to home, within the country or the region. In most of the cases victims are exploited by someone known to them and many victims are sold more than once to different buyers. Victims those who are detected are mostly subjected to sexual exploitation. As per a recent report, about 34 percent of victims were found to be trafficked for forced labour, and 59 percent were trafficked for sexual exploitation while other forms consisted of 7 percent (Begum, 2019, p. 4).

Importance of study

1. The present study will help to identify why women and children in India are trafficked.
2. The study will also help to determine whether the trafficking of women and children is related to the victim's socio-economic status.

Objectives of the Research Study

1. To find out why immoral trafficking in women and children is increasing in Indian society.
2. To give suggestions.

Research methodology

The present study is based on secondary sources of data which include textbooks, articles, web sources and others.

Immoral trafficking of human being in our society, as a practice, has become a source of sorrow and grief for the family concerned and especially the deprived family. In India also it is a very serious problem. Immoral trafficking mainly involves with the selling and purchasing young girls, child and women who forced into commercial trafficking for illicit purposes. At present trafficking of women and children is the third biggest industry in the world. It is a matter of great concern that these trafficked women and children are being used for prostitution and for other illicit means of exploitation. The traffickers lure the children and women (girls) or their parents, to leave home, and promises them a more successful life. Sometimes children are also sold to the traffickers by the desperate parents. “It is estimated that after drugs and arms trafficking, human trafficking is the third largest illegal business in the world” (Chopra, 187).

A large number of women and children in India have been trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, and for other forms of exploitation, including servitude of various types as domestic work, entertainment and industrial work. The traffickers carried out almost all illegal activities against the victims trafficking in a dramatic way like commodities. As a result of physical abuse, poor nutrition, untreated health problems the traffic victims suffer long lasting health problem and suffer irreparable psychological damages caused by abuse and fear. In most severe cases traffickers also place victims the victims in life threatening situations ranging from extreme violence and exposure to communicable disease.

Trafficking of Women and Girl Child in India with Special Reference to the North Eastern States

“Women and children together constitute about 67.7% of the country’s population, as per 2011 Census. Empowerment and protection of women and children, and ensuring their wholesome development is crucial for sustainable and equitable development of the country” (WCD, Report 20-21, p. 3. https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/WCD_AR_English%20final_.pdf).

“As per the 2011 Census, India has 158.7 million children in the age group of 0 – 6 years, comprising about 16% of the total Indian population” (Law Commission of India, 2015, p. 2). As per a study, 12.6 million to 100 million children in India are reported to be child labour. More than 44,000 children go missing annually, of which only about 11,000 get traced. Again, about 200 girls and women enter prostitution every day of which 20% are under the age of 15 years (Chopra, 193).

“The Constitution of India accords highest priority to safety and well-being of children. Children constitute about 39% of the total population of India” (Census 2011). “It has been widely accepted by policy makers of our country that investments made for the survival, education, protection and overall well-being of children helps in breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and ensuring inclusive growth of the country. In a vast country like India, children face multiple vulnerabilities in terms of accessing quality nutrition, healthcare, education and other services. Moreover, new challenges are emerging every day, such as online exploitation of children, climate change, natural and man-made disasters which add to vulnerability of children”. (WCD, Report 20-21, p. 49. https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/WCD_AR_English%20final_.pdf).

“Trafficking is the exploitation of basic rights of a human being”. “It is not new; in early days people were trafficked across countries as slaves and were forced to work in inhuman conditions with very little food and basic rights” (Begum, 2019, p.1). In today’s world, globalisation has led to increase in trafficking due to the increasing demands for cheap labour as well as the improvement in the means of communication.

In India although intra-country trafficking forms a major portion of trafficking but cross border trafficking is also seen to be increasing. Studies reveal that a large number of boys from Nepal and Bangladesh are subjected to forced labour in coal mines in the state of Meghalaya. Burmese Rohingya and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are also subjected to forced labour in India. Similarly, children from Nepal, Afghanistan and Bangladesh and woman from China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, the Philippines and Uganda are subjected to sex trafficking in India. These victims of trafficking are frequently exploited in Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, Gujarat and along the India-Nepal border. Thousands of young Nepalese women are also lured or abducted to India who experience sexual exploitation. “It is believed that thousands of Nepalese women are presently working as prostitutes in India” (Begum, 2019, p. 8). “It is also estimated that there are about three million prostitutes in the country of which 40 percent are children” (Begum, 2019, p. 8). Chopra states that in India, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are the states in which the problem of trafficking is acute. Although both boys and girls are victims of trafficking but girls are more vulnerable, especially to trafficking for sexual purposes. In India 60% of the estimated 2.3 million women and child commercial sex workers come from Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes (Chopra, 193).

It is to be noted that trafficking between Indian states is also seen to be increasing due to increased facilities of communication and growth in industries that use forced labour. Assam is one of the North-Eastern states from which girls are kidnapped for domestic servitude. Many unregulated

placement agencies engaged in sex and labour trafficking provide cheap and docile workers who are easily vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of exploitation (Begum, 2019).

To be specific, the North-Eastern part of India is emerging as a rich source of victims of trafficking. The main reason for trafficking in the North-East is the “combination of poverty, ethnic conflict, unemployment, gender inequality, inadequate legislation and law enforcement.” (Begum, 2019, p. 9). In North-East India the common sources of victims of trafficking in are the women and girls from the tea tribes and tribal communities. Metro cities like Delhi, Pune, Bangalore and Mumbai and states like West Bengal, Goa, Kerala and even Arunachal Pradesh are the largest markets for these traffic victim women and girls. Also, there is trafficking of women and girls from the North-Eastern region to South-East Asian countries. Dimapur and Pangsa in Nagaland and Morey in Manipur are the main transit and demand centres. Assam is one of the north-eastern states where trafficking is very high. As per a report, Assam is among the top 8 trafficking hubs in India (Begum, 2019) This rise in trafficking in Assam and the rest of the country has now become a matter of grave concern for all.

Child Trafficking

It is said that today’s children are tomorrow’s citizens. They are the most valuable asset of any society. No nation in the world can make progress without proper advancement of its children. Utmost importance should, therefore, be given by all to the all-round development of each child and at the same time it is the duty of every parent to provide their children a safe and protective environment. However, due to negligence of society crime is growing rapidly towards children day by day which causes a serious problem of child trafficking. Children are subjected to work in factories, as beggars, as agricultural workers, as carpet weavers, as domestic labours, etc. The children are being trafficked for a variety of purposes such as begging, domestic servant, hotel and bar work, agricultural work, dangerous chemical constructing factories and mines. In all south Asian country, trafficking is highly growing trade. The girls are sold for high income, particularly for modern sexual labour, bars and pubs and for other means of illicit purposes. Millions of children and women are trafficked especially from Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh not only for the purpose of sexual exploitation but also for 50 other forms of humiliations.

In India, child trafficking is a very serious problem. “Child trafficking is the worst form of servitude and India is a source as well as transit country for human trafficking” (Chopra, 183). Chopra stated that the traffickers take advantage of the dependency of young pre-pubescent children-for food, shelter and even emotional needs-to persuade the child to do as they are told. Traffickers use various forms of control and coercion such as beating or slaps; rape and sexual abuse; threats of physical punishment; threats to relatives; withholding food and starvation; and confiscation of identity among others (Chopra, 185-186).

According to Chopra, “Children everywhere are at risk of being abducted/trafficked. But there are groups of children who are more vulnerable than others These includes as follows:

- Children of poor parents,
- Children of unemployed unskilled parents,
- Children who have been affected by disaster or natural calamity,
- Children from strife and civil unrest prone areas,

Trafficking of Women and Girl Child in India with Special Reference to the North Eastern States

- Children living in communities where religious and cultural norms force parents to give children for prostitution,
- Children affected by transitory poverty in families,
- Children of bonded labourers,
- Migrant children and
- Children of prostitutes” (185).

According to Kumar (2019), “many cases of missing children may be linked to child trafficking” (Kumar, 2019, p. 113). He is of the view that children belonging to marginalised communities who are not adequately aware are more vulnerable to trafficking. Traffickers takes advantage of the poor socio-economic condition of parents and lured them as a result of which they send or sell their children for better living opportunities (Kumar, 2019).

Concluding Remarks:

Trafficking of women and children causes untold miseries as it violates the rights and dignity of the individual in several respects. From the victimological perspective, the trafficked person is one who suffers several crimes which are perpetrated on her/him. Human trafficking is an organised crime. In present time it has become a serious threat to civilization and freedom of individual. In India also trafficking of women and children has become a matter of serious concern for all. Every year a large number of women and children are trafficked for a range of purposes. Over the years this problem in India is taking a very serious form. The North-Eastern part of India is emerging as a rich source of victims of trafficking. In North-East India the common sources of victims of trafficking in are the women and girls from the tea tribes and tribal communities. Poverty, ethnic conflict, unemployment, gender inequality, inadequate legislation and law enforcement are the main reason for trafficking in the North Eastern States. Therefore, there is every need to lift our attention regarding the problem and build effective policies and strategies to arrest this threatening social evil.

It is to be noted that in the fight against trafficking, Government organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, civil society, thematic pressure groups, international bodies and above all victims of trafficking all have to play an important role. Law cannot be the only panacea for all problems. In India efforts are being made to combat this crime at all levels. However, there is an urgent need to address issues such as poverty, lack of development and education, lopsided effects of globalization, unemployment, gender discrimination etc. to the maximum extent possible in order to find out long lasting solutions to the problem of trafficking.

References:

1. Begum, I. (2019). Rehabilitation of Trafficked Women and Children: Case Studies of Sheltered Victims in Guwahati City. (Doctoral Thesis, Gauhati University). Retrieved from <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/302495>
2. Nerlikar, G. G. (2018) Human Trafficking and Its Violations. (Doctoral thesis, Shri Jagdishprasad Jhabarmal Tibrebala University). Retrieved from <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/252657>
3. Chopra, G. (2015). Child rights in India: Challenges and social action. New Delhi: Springer India.

Devaraj Dutta

4. Ministry of Women and Child Development. (2020-21). Annual report 2020-21. Ministry of Women and Child Development. Retrieved from https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/WCD_AR_English%20final_.pdf
5. Law Commission of India. (2015). Early childhood development and legal entitlements, report no. 259. Government of India. Retrieved from <http://lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/reports/Report259>
6. Kumar, S. (First edition, 2019). Role of duty bearers in child protection. Centre for Child Rights, National Law University and Judicial Academy.

Author's Profile



D. Dutta, Completed graduation in Political Science in Cotton College, Guwahati, Assam and post-graduation in Political Science in Gauhati University, Assam. Recently he has completed his M. Phil Degree. He poses 7 years of teaching experience. He has presented 14 papers in national level seminars. He has also published 13 articles/papers in different journals and research books.