WOMEN TRAFFICKING: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEM IN ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

A woman trafficking is an ecumenical problem that involves both sexual and labour exploitation of its victims where the primary victims worldwide are females of any age and the majority of them duped for abusing sexually. It is becoming the world’s largest growing menace and a great threat to the humanity. If trafficking of women upholds at such an alarming rate throughout the country, then the greatest Democracy in the globe will itself get into jeopardy. In this light, the paper intends to present a theoretical understanding over the concept of women trafficking and its causes and consequences in Assam.

Keywords: Women Trafficking; Gender Discrimination; Socio-Economic Problem; Forced Labour

INTRODUCTION

Women’s trafficking is the largest growing illegal activity throughout the world. Trafficking of women in its form is a major threat to humanity and the so-called human rights. Trafficking of women not only include sexual exploitation, but it also violet several human rights. It includes violation of the very right to life, right to liberty and human dignity and security of persons, the right to freedom from torture or cruelty, inhuman and degrading treatment, right to home and family, right to education and proper employment, the right to health care and everything that makes for a life with dignity. Therefore, there are terms like drug trafficking, arm trafficking and human trafficking. Despite these, the term ‘Trafficking’ itself means trade, buying or selling. Thus, increase in demand for commercial sex, forced labour leads to an increase in the supply of victims, and creates a worldwide market for them. The trafficking in women is a very lucrative and low risk business. Patterns of it generally flow from poorer to developed countries. In many cases supply countries have, high rate of poverty, violence and corruption and the traffickers uses such disadvantageous conditions. Therefore, women trafficking have been posing a major socio-economic problem globally. Socio-economic problems are mostly dynamic in nature and this is because society itself keeps on changing with time, place and geographical territory. A situation, which is visualised as a social problem in one country may not be as such in other parts of the globe. For example, prostitution is regarded as one of the major socio-economic problem for many countries but for Thailand it is one of the most lucrative and legal business. Thus social problem involve some value judgments. The value judgments are like a feeling of realization that a condition is detrimental to a society and it requires some change.
Significance of the Problem

With regard to Women trafficking, Assam has witnessed as one of the most vulnerable regions for victims. There is a rapid increase in the number of missing persons across the state. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its report entitled, “Human Trafficking and HIV” states that about 300,000 to 450,000 people are trafficked within Asia every year, of which more than half of the people were from South Asia. Another important point behind selecting Assam as an area of study is that, Assam has severely affected by various social problems such as sexual abuse, violence against women and child, conflict and insurgency related cases etc. Political disturbances in Assam also made it poor and people living under BPL (Below Poverty Line) consequently become more vulnerable to the traffickers. Floods affect almost all the districts of Assam every year. Floods and erosion cause thousands of people go homeless. Due to this calamity, people lose their houses as well as livelihood and notably who are primarily dependent on agriculture. The peculiar geographic location of Assam makes it more vulnerable for the traffickers. Over the decades, Assam witnessed a large-scale migration of the local people to the comparatively resourceful states having plenty of job opportunities. The growing need for better livelihood and employment has transformed Assam into a fertile land for human traffickers. In the last few years, thousands of young men and women of the state have fallen prey to the designs of traffickers and exploited as cheap labour. Gender discrimination and feminisation of poverty also contribute greatly to the vulnerability of women and children, who often could not find jobs to support their families. Extreme poverty produces the victims. Globalization of socio-economic structure coupled with the much-needed economic opportunities serves as a key to the process of trafficking. Most of the victims choose to leave their community, country of origin for economic and political reasons. During the period between 2004-2007, Kamrup district registered the highest number of human trafficking cases, which is 49, followed by Dhuburi district with 12 cases, Kokrajhar with seven and Lakhimpur with five cases.,

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this paper are-

- To study the meaning of women trafficking.
- To explore the causes and consequences of women trafficking in Assam.
- To examine why women trafficking is a socio-economic problem.

METHODOLOGY

For any scientific research, it is necessary to have a proper approach of the problem, an efficient tool for collecting data and systematic method of analysis; it is so, to derive accurate results and conclusions. The area under study for the present paper is various districts of Assam. The study makes use of secondary data. The sources are mainly newspapers, articles, journals, books, internet etc and for research purpose, ‘Content Analysis Method’ is used. The content analysis is a method of social research that analyses both quantitative and qualitative documents, books, newspaper, magazines and other forms of written materials. This method was for the first time used by Barnerd Berelson. According to him, “Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantities description of the manifest content of communication”.

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Women Trafficking: Analysis of Four Cases

Floods have been affecting almost all the districts of Assam every year. Floods and erosion causes thousands of people go homeless. The people, who lose their houses and livelihood, are mostly agriculturally dependent. Floods severely affect Baska districts, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Majuli of Assam. Because of this, disadvantageous conditions prevailing in Assam people involuntarily become poor and vulnerable to migrate in order to get rid of the problems. Traffickers make use of such disadvantageous conditions to bring victims into the vicious circle of trafficking world. The paper presents a detailed study on the subject matter by taking into account various cases relating to women trafficking across Assam. The cases under study are as follows-

Case 1

A Non Governmental Organization (NGO), Shakti Vahini, rescued a girl of 16 years of age from a Haryana village in a joint operation with the anti-human trafficking unit of Haryana police and Bhiwani police. The girl, a native of Assam’s Kamrup district was lure out of Assam. The girl told counsellors that Abdul, the trafficker used to follow her; she ventured out from home and gradually convinced her to elope with him. On the day she was trafficked, Abdul took her to a restaurant and allegedly gave her sedatives mixed with the food. He then took her to a Haryana village, saying that they were going to their sister’s house. Instead, he took her to one villager of Haryana and sold her off for Rs 45,000. The girl learned this from the villager where she was kept. Ajit abused her in all possible ways. The girl’s family had lodged a missing complaint with Noonmati police on October 5, 2012.

Rashi Kant, a member of the NGO said that Shakti Vahini had received the information by email.

Case 2

NEDAN, a NGO rescued 200 girls of which 73 were minor girl’s from a train at Kokrajhar railway station in 2004. While Mumbai police repatriated six ethnic women to their respective native villages of the Kokrajhar district in 2005. The NGO rescued as many as 66 ethnic women and girls from the Kokrajhar railway station in BTC area.

Case 3

Women continued to be victims of violence across Assam. In 14th November 2011, police rescued 18 people, most of them minors including two-year-old child. Among those 18 people, 12 were minors and six women. The people were from Hasrobari under Sefanguri Police Station in Kokrajhar, they were missing from 6th November. Traffickers took the victims to Bihar with promises of jobs in a brick factory. A person named Sharak Ali was taking them to Bihar with the promise of high paying jobs. They were even paid Rs 2000 as advance.

Case 4

An Assam police team rescued two-city girls from Rajasthan and Haryana. Traffickers allegedly lured them away by promising of jobs with high remuneration. The two girls from Fatasil Ambari, aged 14 and 20 years respectively, were missing for three months. The victim’s mother lodged an FIR on February 27, 2013, as she failed to contact her daughter for more than two months. The Police subsequently arrested a woman in Barpeta on 27 February and she revealed during interrogation that she had sent the girls to Delhi and Rajasthan for jobs. Based on her revelation, a six member police team led by sub-inspector
Abani Sarma went to the place located in Delhi, Rajasthan and Haryana. They rescued the girl’s from Bikaner in Rajasthan and Bhiwani district of Haryana on March 8. According to the victims, traffickers took them first to Delhi with the promise of job and later did take to Haryana.

**FINDINGS**

After taking a close look at the cases, it is observed that the roots of the problem of women trafficking lies in the society itself. The people, who encounter such problems, primarily are the poor sections of the society, who are the most unprivileged ones in the societal setup. Lack of proper awareness plays a vital role in making them an easy access to the traffickers. Under such backdrop, the people themselves have to try for an upliftment. Authorities, Non-Govt. Organisations (NGOs) and the security forces have to step forward hand in hand to combat against such a universal socio-economic menace.

**SUGGESTIONS**

From the above analysis, the following suggestions can be pointed out-

1. Since victims are belonging to poor families, strategies thus need to be so devised that could address their livelihood options and prove useful in eradicating poverty and illiteracy. Vulnerable groups must have to be empowered by education and proper capacity building.

2. Gender discrimination and patriarchal mindset gives rise to various socio-economic problems. As, these are vulnerability factors that trigger trafficking prevention, strategies need to be oriented accordingly.

3. Natural calamities and manmade disturbances also pave the way of trafficking. Thus, the authority should make some pragmatic policy revisions to fight against such a menace.

4. To fight against and to make society free from worst sceneries of trafficking, joint efforts of police with society members and media is the need of the hour.

5. Existing laws relating to crime against women should have to make stricter.

6. Intellectuals all over the state should make special awareness programmes to acquaint people and to save them from such dupery.

**CONCLUSION**

Over the years, one of the worst socio-economic problems that any society faces is the women trafficking. The paper attempted to figure out the concept of women trafficking and its causes and consequences. It carries a critical study on the nature of women trafficking with four particular cases from across Assam by following the Content analysis methodology. The cases studied, indicates some of the very interesting facts, where victims mostly are belonging to remote and backward areas from economically unsound families. Under such circumstances, poverty and illiteracy has been playing a vital role in the process. A trafficker generally tries to put a veil by luring of the victims to provide lucrative jobs with high incomes. Many a times, victims do not want to spare such great opportunities and inadvertently penetrates into the business of trafficking. This study also fruitfully reveals some of the gender perspective. Thus, from this paper revels that trafficking in women is a pervasive socio-economic problem.
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