**Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation: A gender based substantiated terror in India**

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**Abstract**

Trafficking of human beings has become the third largest foundation of profit for organized crime after drugs and arms, engendering billions of dollars each year. As a result, the trafficking of women who plays one of the significant parts in the trafficking of human beings’ business leaves no country untouched. Driven by poverty, unemployment, and media images of Western lifestyles, women accept risky offers of employment and marriage in hope of finding a better life. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) report that in many cases, once a woman decides that the solution to her problems is to go abroad, she will try every agency or

Strategy, regardless of the risk. Although some women may find the jobs, romance, and opportunities they seek, many become victims of violence, sexual exploitation, and sex trafficking. Trafficking violates all known canons of human rights and dignity. In this world of tragic and complex human abuse, women form a particularly vulnerable class. With no freedom of choice and options for a life with dignity, these hapless women are merrily trafficked and exploited forcing them to lead a life crippled with indignity, social stigma, debt bondage and a host of ailments including HIV/AIDS. Trafficking in its widest sense includes not just exploitation of prostitution of others or forms of sexual exploitation, it also includes forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery or trade in human beings for removal of organs. Trafficking clearly violates the fundamental right to a life with dignity. Unfortunately, there is little awareness of the ramifications of trafficking as a transnational organized crime. The purpose of my paper is to highlight the major reasons behind the origin of this problem with special reference to trafficking of women into forced prostitution. Women community are been more susceptible to it after intermittently incorporated with covid-19 in the new parameters of the changing paradigm shift. The paper will also discuss that how the sex trade has converted itself into a business of power house and its effect on society. It is unfortunate that the infrastructure for rescue and rehabilitation is grossly inadequate. Both the law as well as administrative policies has not addressed these issues adequately and with imagination. As a result, many rescued victims are re-trafficked.

**Keywords: Exploitation, prostitution, trafficking, human rights, covid-19.**

**Introduction**

As Indian society moves towards fuller development, it experiences some pulls and pushes. Some social problems emerge and some are accentuated. One of the emerging social problems concerning women in India is trafficking. Every year, millions of women venture to new pastures from the village to the city and sometimes to another country, driven by poverty, social exclusion or civil unrest, with a goal to survive and earn money for their families. However, their journey ends catastrophically, as they fall into the hands of traffickers. 50% of the populations of the world are women, who have been going through different kinds of pains and sufferings and beyond this they are also being sold and held captive against their will in inhuman slave like conditions. This has led to various other kinds of exploitation of women which is physical, economic, political and social. For example, recently women are sold into the ‘global sex trade’ for the purpose of prostitution, sex tourism and other commercial sexual services as well as into forced labour situations. The study focuses on the trafficking of women into forced prostitution which is the most significant human rights violation that has now been exacerbated by the process of globalization, legalizing some of the norms as trade and commerce.

Since the first cases were reported from the People’s Republic of China in late 2019, Covid-19 has spread to almost every country in the world India is not an exception. The pandemic has taken over 4million lives and shattered livelihoods, and has had ramifications on political and economic structures across the globe. The massive disruptions associated with lockdowns and restrictions on movement have pushed many countries into recession, and the global economic fallout. The pandemic has shaken liberal democracies by demonstrating a clear correlation between economic security and national security, as well as the limits of collaboration with illiberal players. Unlike national security human security is perceived to be secured from vulnerability. Although vulnerability means often not clearly identifiable linked to a complex interdependence amongst related issues and doesn’t always require immediate response. Now the covid-19 pandemic has sent global economies into a tailspin leaving millions of people poor and vulnerable. Estimates vary but 580 million people are predicted to fall into poverty and 40- 60 million into extreme poverty.

In the changing world today, the women are still generally excluded from economic and crucial political activities and their roles as wives and mothers compel them to remain dependent on men. A girl child is still perceived as a burden of the family for daughters require extreme financial investments with no material returns. This form of perceived inequality that exists everywhere is gender based which results in the subordination of women to male authority, binding them to their reproductive and domestic functions – isolated and undervalued. These differentiations between male power and female suppression have thus made the society to remain motionless and lifeless.

**The position of women**

 From the medieval period, extending from the 5th to 15th century women were observed as the objects for the expansion of future generations only. They were deprived of rights- natural, social, economic and political as they were subjugated by the male power in the society. Oppression of the females originates from the family itself and is prevalent in all fields of life. Male domination existed since the beginning of the time and is still prevalent inside the society i.e., the rule by the dominant male and subordinate female. A society that operates on this basis cannot be called a just society. Women and men should not be judged by their sex, but as an individual and as a person. The biological factor that is most frequently linked to women’s social position is their capacity to bear children. Child bearing without doubt is unique to the female sex, but the domestic responsibilities could be undertaken by the husband, or they could be shared equally between man and wife. As a matter of fact, such type of biological factor was not so much prevalent in the earlier times as there was no system of marriage. Marriage is an established institution of the civilized society. Generally, it was said that marriage defines a woman’s place, whereas it had got very little or no effect on man’s status and as there was any system of marriage, family life was not practiced. But as the concept of family was developed the complications and the dominations started to take root. Patriarchal rule evolved and the subordination of females started taking place.

Therefore, it was only after the evolution of male domination on society that the liberty and freedom of the women got curtailed and they came under the rule of the chauvinistic male. Women’s right to live life in their own way is being thwarted in the society. A pertinent question arises as to why should curtailment of freedom happen with women? Are they not bolding enough to challenge and raise their voice against the injustice or are they afraid to do so, as even now many women are financially dependent upon the earnings of the men? The deprivations of the women occur due to their own fault as they remain silent and do not raise their voice of protest against the culprits. Therefore, the position of women even in the welfare state of India is full of paradoxes and contradictions even now.

In the last few decades, the speedily increasing sex trade has been massively “industrialised” worldwide. This process of industrialization, in both its legal and its illegal forms, generates profits amounting to billions of dollars. It has created a market of sexual exchanges in which millions of human beings mostly women and children have been converted into sexual commodities and the intensity of human trafficking has been increased more due to this pandemic but the extent is not known to any of us as it is carried on through the ‘layers of silence’. Trafficking is a coercive mechanism to proclaim one’s will over another, in order to prove or feel a sense of power. It can be perpetuated by those in power against the powerless or by the powerless in reprisal against coercion by others, to deny their powerlessness.

In this age of globalization countries like India ride the ebb in the flow of the global share markets. All such development such globalization of economy and glitz are concentrated within the metro cities. Even in this age of development without borders there exist villages in India where the villagers can’t even dream about a square meal a day. Alone electric lights cannot drive away darkness where even basic education remains an elusive dream. Lack of awareness is the primary reason for trafficking to remain a problem at the root.

The four important metropolitan cities of India including Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune and Delhi – all have red-light areas. In addition, other major cities and urban areas are also having the red-light area and they are close to the river or navigational water ways e.g., Varanasi and Nasik. In the past the rulers of the state and later the British Government utilized navigational water ways to mobilize troops and trade purposes across the country, and reasonably enough they established rest houses by the side of the water ways. To provide entertainment for these troops and merchants and travellers, the sale of humans specially women and the red-light areas were established such as Kamathipura of Mumbai, Sonagachi, Kalighat of Kolkata, Budhwar Peth of Pune etc. One of the primary reasons of India becoming a nerve centre of sex- trade is its geographical location.

So, from the above exposition, it can be said that India is by far the more suited place to conduct the business of trafficking. Although trafficking is such an issue which is often been misunderstood and distorted. Trafficking does not mean prostitution always. They are not synonymous. In understanding trafficking, one should delink it from prostitution, and this is one of the prime reasons why the human rights violations inherent in trafficking is not correctly understood, while the traffickers who are the actual ‘criminals’ go scot-free. We should remember trafficking is a process and one of the purposes of exploitation is ‘prostitution’.

**What is trafficking?**

In its dictionary meaning, the concept of trafficking denotes a trade in something that should not be traded in. Thus, we have terms like drug trafficking, arms trafficking and human trafficking. The concept of trafficking in people refers to the criminal practice of exploitation of human beings where they are treated as commodities for profit and after being trafficked, are subjected to long term exploitation. For the purpose of study, the working definition of trafficking which was adopted has been stated in the U.N. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000, to which India is also a signatory. It defines trafficking as: ‘… the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or service, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.[[1]](#footnote-1) This modern form of slavery is one of the worst violations of human rights. It has a devastating impact on individual victims, its impact also undermines the safety and security of all the nations it touches, as it is a global health risk and it fuels the growth of organized crime. According to the mentioned definition, the diverse means and ways of trafficking and being trafficked boil down to the involvement of anti-social and criminal elements into the trade of prostitution. These elements are termed as ‘the trafficker’. The natures of the traffickers are not well identified or who can be the one. Generally, the traffickers are the tradesman who considers women purely as profitable goods or commodities. The traffickers buy the women, sell them, and move them about within the same country or from one country to another (International trade) just as if it is dealt with animals for slaughter.[[2]](#footnote-2) ‘Traffickers - including family members can be part of an organized criminal network and beneficiaries of the business. Trafficking is an outcome of a process (when the individual lost his control over his life and occupation). It is an extreme form of exploitative practices. Constrained by lack of viable economic options, many women are formed to adopt survival strategies ultimately destructive to themselves and their families and communities. The global sex trade, which includes prostitution, sex tourism, mail order brides (the traffic in women as wives for foreign men) and pornography, is a billion-dollar global enterprise. One of the eminent factors that start the trafficking process is poverty, which cannot be eliminated by eliminating the poor; relatively it is not a disease that stems from laziness or heredity, to a certain extent it is a manifestation of social inequality, the other factors that comes after poverty are the low status of women, lack of literacy and awareness amongst girls, lack of employment etc. The traffickers identify the women in vulnerable situations, and then they approach the girls and lure them with various false promises of jobs, money, marriage, adoption etc. Sometimes the trafficker even drugs their victims and use force to get hold of the girls for trafficking purpose. Gender also plays an imperative part, as women and men are not trafficked in the equivalent way or for the same persistence. Women and girls as mentioned earlier epitomize an unduly high number of victims especially in terms of sexual exploitation.

Trafficking is an issue wrapped in layers of silence due to huge bribes, it is almost impossible for justice to prevail unless a trafficked woman is rescued and she is willing to testify against her perpetrators which seldom happens. The trafficking of women is much more complicated than any other trafficking business-like drugs or arms and the part of the complicatedness is the perplexing overlap between migration and trafficking. Migrant laborers’ or asylum seeker, and particularly illegitimate migrant laborers, often find themselves forced into unfair working circumstances. In this sense they are just like the victims of trafficking. Nevertheless, refugee laborers have not necessarily been tricked or betrayed during the migration process. Trafficking on the other hand refers to the transportation of people within countries or across international borders using force, trickery or the abuse of power.[[3]](#footnote-3) When women are trafficked, they are dominated because they are comparatively pitiable to start with and they agree to lower take-home pay and abide worse working conditions. By transporting the women from their homes, and often out of their original countries, traffickers make these helpless women even more defenseless, and they are being removed from their social hold up networks and are placed in an environment in which language, way of life and work pattern may all be different. These people are easy to be controlled and make use of because they are made to be dependent upon others. This is why the sex industry likes trafficked girls.

***Trafficking as a means of Discrimination on the societal ground in India***

For generations, India has had a prevailing tradition of the joint family system. It is a system under which extended members of a family – parents, children, the children’s spouses and their offspring, etc. – live together. Usually, the oldest male member is the head in the joint Indian family system. He makes all important decisions and rules, and other family members abide by them. India is a country of innumerous villages too, hence known as country of villages. Though rural India has contributed to the nation’s economic growth, it is especially noted for its culture and tradition inherited from time immemorial.

South Asia has achieved some progress in terms of economic growth and advancement in industrial sectors during 19 - 20’s. But at the same time, it has also seen the persistence attitudes, behaviour and practices projecting unequal gender status that continue to subordinate and oppress women and children. This attitude of the society has resulted in the monstrous act of trafficking of women and young girls from rural areas into metropolitan cities for pervasive co-modification and sexual exploitation. The phenomenon of trafficking of women and girls in South Asia is also widespread due to exploitative structure, lopsided development, iniquitous resource ownership, large-scale unemployment, extreme poverty, increasing disparities in wealth and cutbacks in spending for social sector. Trafficking of young girls for sexual exploitation is one of the worst forms of child exploitation gaining ground in spite of growing social responses as well as strict vigil by the authorities against it. United Nations has accepted trafficking in women and children as one of the worst and most brazen abuses of human rights, which needs immediate global support. In India, sexual exploitation of children even has its roots in traditional practices, beliefs and gender discrimination. In fact, research shows commercial sexual exploitation of children is a socially acceptable norm in certain sections of the Indian society (Several forms of Devadasi/ Jogin system in South and East India and among Bedia and Rajnat Community in Rajasthan). There is no firm data to establish the extent and magnitude of trafficked women for commercial sex industry in the country. However, several studies conducted by NGO organizations in metropolitan cities of India, confirm the presence of tens of thousands of girls, which are being forced into the commercial sex industry. The girls are often supplied by middle men/ women and pimps to brothels, through coercion, deceit and compulsion inflicted by trafficking mafia on parents and victims. There are no definite estimates of commercial sex exploited women and children in India, but the figure range between 70,000 and 100,000 and could even be higher.

Despite more than 50 years of post-colonial democratization, legislative enactment and a superficially dramatic westernization, social change processes remain mired in the same construct as a century before. If one probes deeper one realizes that a major component of the status- quo is the entrenchment of patriarchal mores in the Indian societal system; and the collaboration of women themselves with such a value orientation.

India has the world’s largest number of efficiently qualified women. India has largest population of working women in the world. India has a large number of female doctors, surgeons, scientists, professors than the United-States. Today Indian women have excelled in each and every field from social work to visiting space. There is no arena, which remained unconquered by Indian women, be it politics, sports, entertainment, literature or technology. But still in India violence against women is a common evil. Not just in remote parts but even in cities women bear the brunt or impact. Every hour a woman is being raped in India and every 93 minutes a woman is burnt to death due to dowry problem, One out of every three girls are being Sexually assaulted by the age of 18 sometimes below the age, One out of seven women is being Abused every day, but how many do we know? We cannot afford to ignore it also. Boys and girls are born out of the same womb. They eat the same food, drink the same water, breath the same air and wear the apparel made out of the same fibre. The same WBC and RBC flow through their veins and arteries. Then what is the rationale for erecting an artificial wall of division between them? They are as intelligent, as imaginative, as ingenuous and as resourceful as men. As a matter of fact, it is inestimable. But sometimes we find that a woman or girls’ contribution are looked down upon- we must not forget that their unpaid labour to the family, community and society is much higher than that of men. Then why they are being socially undervalued and underestimated all the time? Why do we take recourse to trafficking of girls for commercial sexual exploitation, for forced labour, for performance in circus etc.; being fully aware of the fact that by doing so we are carrying the victims who are our succeeding generation, our hope, our asset and most precious resource to the brink of their near total destruction? It’s time for us to realize the fact that women or girls are not “Commodity”, she is also entitled like that of men to be treated with dignity, decency and civility.

The birth and growth of both human and sex trafficking are often tied to the rise of globalization, which occurred started in the end of World War II and really took off at the end of the cold war, a period ranging between 1945 and early 1990’s (Farr, 2005,p.10). However, it should be noted that there are several types of slavery that existed pre globalization. The first being chattel slavery, in which slaves were legally owned as property. Owners were given the ability to buy, sell, or transfer slaves similar to any other good owned (Ōkubo & Shelley, 2011, p. 181). This was the method in which slavery was practiced in the United States of America during the period of early 1600’s to its abolition in 1865. Indentured servitude is a second form of slavery in which a labourer agrees to work for a specific term in exchange for passage to a country believed to promise a better life (PBS, 2014). There are numerous examples throughout history of chattel slavery for the purpose of sexual exploitation. For example, during Ancient China’s domination over Vietnam, thousands of Vietnamese women were sold to Chinese men as ‘brides.’ Specifically, during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) Vietnamese women served as fuel to the Chinese sex trade (Forbes & Henley, 2012). These women were later exploited and continuously exchanged across China. This exploitation of Vietnamese women in China continues today, as thousands of women have been trafficked to china in the globalized era (BBC News, 2014; Forbes, 2007).

 Recent newspaper articles, magazines and films have lifted the screen on the underworld of sexual abuse in India today and predominantly on the auction of young girls for prostitution. Although these media have only been able to give a quick look of a whole institution which is tremendously complex and reinforced by age-old historical and religious attitudes as well as modern day consumerism, tourism and migration patterns. Modernization is, at once, a process of breakdown and construction. Societies passing through comprehensive, multidimensional changes invariably face structural and institutional breakdowns, disunification and socio-economic erosion having ramifications at both, the societal and the individual levels. Individual s fall prey to violence, crime, neglect and indifference. They resort to a number of behavioural forms ranging from asocial, metaphysical solutions to anti-social behaviour. At times it is intended towards other individuals in the form of crimes. At other times, it is directed towards the society in the form of revolts and uprisings. The Indian society has witnessed all such forms in the last few decades.

 It is not uncommon in the history of India that rulers often brought women to their court for their own entertainment from faraway lands, and it is known that the custom of Harem in the Mughals period where many women used to stay just to serve the king. Often the king married the women of the harem. But in these harems no other man was allowed; only the king could access the Harem. History also reveals how people who dared to love women from the Harem of the king were punished. If someone was caught accessing the Harem of the King in his absence the defaulter was brutally punished; often shackles were put around their hands and foot and they were beaten severely in public. So that people would not dare to try and access the Harem in the absence of the King. Hence those special women later used to wear symbolic ornaments and vermillion to speak out their status of inaccessibility. Which custom later got popularized in the form of wearing vermillion and “sankha” around the wrist to signify their marked status? This symbol of in-accessibility became a major tool at the hands of those who run the business of women trafficking. They forced the women to wear these symbols while they could easily move around with them and on reaching their consumer would sell them off.

 Later during the British period, the Britishers would rule and run monopoly business for two hundred years. They transformed India into the plantation land of Indigo. As Indian soil could produce the best quality Indigo in the whole world the Britishers lured the poor Indian farmers with false promises and then oppressed them. The Britishers pay the Indian farmers a meagre amount which often did not suffice their necessary needs of food, water, shelter and in return they were made to cultivate huge amounts of Indigo which the British planters sold at a high price. There was no saving, the poor farmer’s girl from the hands of the cruel British planters who often picked up the women whom they found attractive and forcefully abused them and raped them. The Britishers tortured the Indians in a number of ways throughout the two hundred years of colonization.

 Only after a lot of blood sheds India earned its freedom on 15th August 1947 and now we have already passed sixty six years after the country gained its freedom. After India achieved its freedom the system improved manifolds through education and reforms that the new government brought in. The countrymen felt the raising waves of modernity slowly inundating their lives, and modernity finally brought in the tidal waves of globalization and its rippling effects. The only disturbing fact that remains is that even today in this world of globalization women and child trafficking and sex-trade are flourishing like ever before. Who can be blamed? No one, but the society for the cause itself. A few selfish individuals who have buried their “Humanity” deep within the coffin do not mind selling the body of a child or the women in exchange of bank balance.

 It is being said children are our future yet we ignore and often overlook the oppression they suffer in this human trade. We have heard that prostitution is the oldest profession and sex trade is the oldest trade. But as an individual we wonder if only ‘women’ have bodies.

 Bengals biggest event is the Durga Puja. But when this society itself trades with the body of the women and sells her body for consumption they violate it and the same society celebrates the idols of women as Gods and Goddesses’. The idols are being respected and worshipped by all irrespective of being a man or a woman. But unfortunately, they cannot give half of that respect to living women. Many who fold their hands in reverence to ‘Maa - Durga’ often violate many women with the same pair of hands; either by asking for dowry or by torturing her or by killing her by calling her a witch hunt or by selling of the body of a woman (perhaps the man’s own daughter or wife) to a consumer in same red-light area.

 Kolkata is the cultural capital of India while Mumbai is the commercial capital or hub. In all these metropolitan cities of India hotels have emerged and a new industry of adult entertainment has been established. In these industries dance bars, singing bars are the main attraction. People mainly drunken males enjoy songs being sung by scantily clad women, most of these women are trafficked from all over the country. A majority of them come from either Nepal or Bhutan or Darjeeling districts. Dancing revelry and merry making goes on till late and at last these merry making parties became platforms of sex trade and prostitution. Especially during the New- Year’s eve such trading becomes even more visible. Advertising hoardings, newspaper magazines and even television ads display the gala show of carousing. All such revelry views the real purpose. The singers and performers work as escorts after the show. Legal papers and permits are always in-order as the administration has full confidence in such practices. As this nexus of organized flesh trade gives the administration a major cut to allow them the space. Even if someone raises a question answer are always ready so are evidences. Most of such organized crimes occur with the consent of the hotel owners. The hotel owners allow such practices because it escalates his/her sales and generates business. The other kind of business which generates a lot of revenue for such hotel owners is a massage parlour. Massage parlours often charge 500-3000 rupees for 1hr of full body massage. Men are messaged by women. Massage parlour owners say that girls from Nepal and Bhutan are well suited for such work. Instead, they are forced to work as prostitutes by the parlour owners. They are even sent to hotels and the homes of consumers to satisfy them. The business of massage parlours is so visible these days that we can find thousands of them in the classified section. Often, we will find that the owner of such as establishment is a woman itself. It often puzzles us; it only shows that in this age of globalization money and wealth has become the only pursuit. It is a competition to have man with bank balance. These days it is not uncommon to find advertisements saying ‘want to become friends’ the ads continue as they say that along with friendship one will find mental and physical satisfaction and also earn handsomely to live a comfortable life. It is not strange for we all know that in today’s world everything sells even friendship.

It is observed that the despicable condition of women in society, and this is what American women came out on the streets to protest against in the year 1850. Hundreds of women wanted to assert their rights for the cause of equality of gender, equal pay for some amount of work irrespective of their sex. This is how women movement started. The patriarchal society’s chauvinism was what the movement protest. The movement was lobbying for a change in people’s outlook. The fact that both men and women are human beings irrespective of their physical appearances and that the mind is independent of such differences was being brought forth. Even today the household is regulated and controlled by the male members. This patriarchal dominance is reflected through the action and words of the women. In many circumstances the women themselves call such fate upon themselves while in some cases it is their fear in others their deep rooted normatively that keeps them from protesting. Most of the times it is the elder female members like grand-mothers, mothers and aunts who are the proponents of this hegemony. In the yester years and even today, whether it is a rural or an urban household the status of unmarried girls remains the same. They are nothing but a burden for the family which must be gotten rid of (married off) at the earliest. There is a proverb; we lay eggs and then we hatch them at our leisure. It is people like this who constitute the society. The society needs a revolution where everything will be annihilated and where everything needs to be re-constructed from the scratch. Though men and women are said to complement each other’s, even in today’s progressive society women don’t enjoy equal rights. While although the patriarchy in India is pretty regressive it has failed to limit women from achieving what they want to. They are travelling far and wide striving to make their dreams come true. Today there are some men who have emerged out of this hegemony and treat women as their friends and equals; they are matching steps with the women in their movements. However there still continues to exist, such men who abuse, violate and traffic women for flesh trade, and still some more patronize this trade and subscribe to it. A change in mindset should be brought forth, for men of healthy thoughts make a healthy society. But unfortunately, few individuals lack this healthy mind set and hence they oppress. All such men need is a body of a woman. No matter what their age is, who she is doesn’t really matter; the female body is treated as an object of pleasure whether it is on the road or within closed doors. On the other hand, if someone with alternative sexuality discloses her orientation in the family, his or her orientation is treated as if it is a disease. People try to cure his or her problem; they often fail to respect a person orientation. It is also common to find instances where the dominant male members forcefully subjugating such individuals. Rape and forceful sex are common phenomenon. Such incidents are common but they as remain hidden. They are not reported in newspapers.

The struggle for women’s rights doesn’t necessarily mean a full-scale revolution or an armed struggle. It is about protesting every instance of denial of such rights and about addressing the problems in both the public and the private. This struggle will be a life long struggle that’s what women’s movement is all about. It is not an event full revolution but a self-sustaining movement that will continue to protect the rights of women. This is the age of women empowerment and women from our country are not lagging behind, they have conquered every field that is belonged exclusively to ‘men’.

**Preventing trafficking**

Trafficking, both for commercial sexual exploitation and for non- sexual exploitation is a complex process as it is known as an organized criminal activity and is an extreme form of human rights violation. However illegal trafficking is very difficult to stop, it can only be checked and for this it is imperative to designate and empower a national law enforcement entity that will carry out investigations and law enforcement operations against rampant trafficking with nationwide jurisdiction. Although there exist a number of laws, for instance Article 23 of the Constitution of India, Article 20 of the Constitution of Nepal and Article 18 and 34 of the Constitution of Bangladesh contain provisions prohibiting trafficking and forced labour. Despite the amendments, the legislation falls short of objectives and not proved to be very effective measures to check the commercialized flesh trade. Without striking at the root-cause of the problem, the legislation can only aim at suppression and not prevention.

 There seems an unwillingness among the governments to recognize trafficking of women into forced prostitution as a problem and had they shown a little bit of consciousness then the whole business could not have been running so successfully. ‘Experts in the field say that one of the most difficult realities in the trafficking issue is the propensity of governments worldwide to treat trafficked persons as criminals or as unwanted undocumented workers rather than as people with human rights that are being violated’. [[4]](#endnote-1) Apart from the governments, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide a wide range of services and are highly active in advocating limiting trafficking and resolving some of the bottlenecks of the problem. The NGOs tend to be specialized in addressing trafficking, their activities include awareness rising through mass information campaigns, rallies, street theatre, seminars, and educational camps- like aids awareness programmes etc. Other programmes focus on rescue and repatriation of trafficked persons, followed by reintegration. The story of Anita, a young girl who grew up in Bihar, is important to mention here because through one of the supportive NGO only she was rescued and rehabilitated. Her story of survival was so stirring that she even had the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister.[[5]](#endnote-2) At present, the NGOs function separately and there is a need to have co-ordination among them within states, across states and across national borders. Trafficking of women, especially transborder trafficking, leading to forced prostitution can effectively be addressed only if a proper institutionalized network is established by involving governmental agencies and NGOs.

**Conclusion**

The issue of prostitution and trafficking has consequently caught international attention once again since the 1980s, generating vociferous and sharply polarized international debate. Both prostitution and trafficking is an old culture, which is generally responsible for the exploitation of women in every way i.e. financially, psychologically and sexually. It has enhanced to a great due to globalisation. Thus, the solution to the problem cannot be sought in isolation. Yet one reason why this kind of violence against women is so difficult to eradicate is precisely because it is socially sanctioned to some degree. The government of South-Asia as well as of Southeast –Asia never considered looking at women trafficking as a major problem area of the future, they always turned blind eye towards it, which is one of the worst violations of human rights, and which certainly is not possible without their connivance, and the laws will always remain ineffective unless they are enforced properly by the government agencies. This gap in information should be addressed along with studying the factors which change accordingly with the change of time and leads towards trafficking phenomenon. It is time to dispel myths, superstitions and misconceptions about women and her duties and adopt a rational attitude towards woman as a human being. The women who are in prostitution, are never asked to describe how their condition can be changed. Rarely they have been accorded respect, much less acceptence, by a society that, even while benefiting from their services, demands their banishment to the fringes.[[6]](#endnote-3) It is a problem that violates the rights and dignity of victims and therefore requires a human rights perspective while working on its eradication, otherwise our society has to bear the shame, that as yet, it has not been able to offer these mothers any other option but to sell their bodies to provide food for their families.

1. “Trafficking in women and children in India”, study was conducted by the research team of the Institute of Social Sciences, Orient Longman Private Limited-2005(Chapter 1, pg.2). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “The world of prostitutes”-vol-2, S.K. Ghosh, A.P.H. publishing corporation New Delhi1996(Appendix45,pg1024) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Marjan Wijers and Lin Lp-Chew, Trafficking in women, Forced labour and slavery- like practices in marriage, domestic labour and prostitution (Utrecht: Foundation against trafficking in women, 1997), pp. 36-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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