

Red Light Nightmare; Gateway To Sex Trafficking In India

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Girls with dreams ride a bus into Delhi, the capital city of India. All of them are busy socializing and talking about their bright future in the new jean factory where they think they've been hired for their new job. The bus stops and there is a building covered in red light with half naked women in seductive poses leaning in the doorways. These girls are about to join them. Yes they are sex trafficked. Close to one and a quarter billion people are trafficked around Asia and Pacific, but no one knows exact number of girls trafficked in India ("ILO 2012 Global"). A large population and well organized crimes make it impossible for anyone to know the true face of human trafficking (Lahangir). By hidden traffickers, Indian women are pushed into prostitution, with several complex causes that are deeply seated in its culture. This problem has miserable effects on prostitutes and people around them, but like always, there are solutions.

For many reasons, every year thousands of innocent girls are dragged and pushed to the hell-prostitution. They all have their own story. Commonly it involves poverty. Many Indian families can't afford even basic needs for their family and for them selling their daughter is an option (Lahangir). Unless they sell their daughter, rest of their family will starve to death so rather than the whole family dying they believe a sacrifice of one girl is better. "This is their survival strategy" (DuPont). Poverty also influences their level of education. People in poverty are not educated well enough to be aware of traffickers, so they are easily tricked by them. Impoverished illiteracy also leads to unemployment. Job opportunities are rare for unschooled people so they try their best to catch any chance of being employed (DuPont, Kathryn). Due to their eagerness, they are open to anyone who can promise fine future. They are the finest victim. Krishna from Maiti Nepal, who worked in Delhi brothel, says all she wanted to do was to run away. She used to sell vegetables in the market which didn't make her a lot of money. So, she asked her close friend a good job recommendation and without careful thoughts, she decided to go to Delhi to sell jeans. At first, she was introduced to a man with other Nepalese who also want to join, but when they arrived, they were abandoned to a woman who ended up being their boss in the brothel (Zielenziger). This would have never happened if she wasn't so anxious about being employed. This isn't the only story. Next one is about demand for consumer sex. We sell what we buy, and just like other goods, prostitutes are sold and bought to numerous customers. In spite of numerous "Shoppers", they lack of prostitutes, and to fill the number, the quickest and the most manageable way is to traffic girls (DuPont). If they are the one who have sex for enjoyment, there are others who go to brothels for medical reasons. According to the viral Indian myth, sex with a virgin can cure AIDS, so many AIDS infected men try to sex with virgins knowing that they have will infect poor girls (Zielenziger). These people add extra numbers to the consumers but this is the least thing to worry about because there is a huge huddle standing tall called gender inequality. In strict Hindu society such as India,

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women are discriminated against and disliked (Zielenziger). They have less legal rights and even laws work differently for women, resulting in more girls being trafficked than boys. Also they get less education compared to boys because boys are favored in their family than girls. Lack of education causes the same effect as unschooled girls under poverty such as being tricked easily, attracted and enslaved because of less job opportunities (DuPont). Most of them end up in brothel making prostitution economy richer and causing more girls to be trafficked. Moreover, the problem of girls being trafficked with these reasons result in faulty effects on girls of India in countless ways.

Their miserable story doesn't stop, but goes on leaving somber marks on their bodies, emotions and mental states. To begin with, prostitutes are emotionally and physically hurt. "I was pushed and hit and told I would have to entertain men. I was beaten until I was forced into prostitution" (Zielenziger). Krishna was told to do things that she hated to do and thought was wrong. The fact that it was happening to her came as emotional suffering and as well as physical hardship from regular beating up. It doesn't end there. Those torments result in low self-esteem, physical handicap and mental issues. The most common of all is trauma. Usually, they develop a fear of all men because they are the ones who force girls to have sex with them (Zielenziger). Another mental issue, Stockholm syndrome, occurs when they feel empathy for perpetrators like pimps, bosses, and customers, because of great fear. Just like emotional and physical suffering, mental issues bring low self esteem. In fact, Ms. Marr who helps run a group called Survivors Connect, and encourages sex- trafficking survivors to take a primary voice in the anti-trafficking campaign, says "You bond with people who are hurting you, to survive. Most women in prostitution have no other place to go. They don't have a safety net.... And after a while, it seems like it's the only thing you're good for" (Hanes). Finally, the most devastating influence of prostitution is HIV/ AIDS. When the aforementioned virgin hunters actually want to spread their AIDS in an attempt to clean themselves, it results in young AIDS infected virgins (Zielenziger). Blindfolded by their benefits, consumers don't see prostitutes' distress of living hopeless life with no future. Once they are infected, in first six weeks, they will get fever, sore throat and other minor diseases but as the time passes, there will be dramatic drop in immunity. This drop will weaken prostitutes making even small illness become deadly (□□□ □□). Because of their low life expectancy, many AIDS infected worry about their life and left family members. In fact the AIDS infected woman in India who lost her husband because of the same disease, says that she is worried that she might die before her children grow up, leaving them to stand by themselves (Ahart). For parents who care about their child, it's more than a lot to worry about. Perhaps, they might have nightmares or even get depression. Fortunately there are possible solutions to end this tragic tale.

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The stories of prostitutes seemed endless, but little by little, the bright light from the exit comes closer. The Indian government has come up with solutions, but sadly, they have proven ineffective. They thought making anti-human trafficking units, targeting traffickers in the middle of the process, and helping local places to raise awareness would hopefully stop traffickers from their actions. Yet, they did a poor job enforcing the law and subsequently, only one man has been punished until today (Lahangir). No matter how interesting ideas are, they have failed to consider the population and the land area of India and to demand the rule successfully. However, there are possible solutions like educating adults and growing children. In Bhagalpur, parents selling their own daughters are neither strange nor odd. It is believed to be their tradition, passed on from generations to generations. Anil Kapoor *an Indian actor who is fighting human trafficking back* feels that education is the only solution to this problem. He says "They (the girls) are not exposed to the world. They are not exposed to what is happening around. Educating them and educating the parents can bring this practice to extinction"(Zielenziger). He believes education will make them realize how pitiful their tradition was and break it themselves. Following to this solution, there are additional ones that victimized women or any individuals can do since all Indian citizens have a role to play in solving this problem. Above all, sex trafficked women can fight traffickers back. One reason for girls not accusing traffickers is because they don't want others to know what have happened to them. Those women are considered defective in Indian society so letting people know that they were trafficked by accusing the cheaters is nothing more than pushing themselves off the cliff (Ahart). And as usual, there is economic factor. Certain amount of money is needed to accuse anyone. In rare case, a girl with a coal miner father accused the trafficker. It was obvious that her family would go through financial difficulties so she spent hard time making this decision (Bhattacharjee). Unlike her, most of the victims quits while deciding. However, if no one takes an action they will continue on committing crimes and breaking girls' hearts. One of the things that any citizens can do is raising awareness. Indian government and their citizens are not fully aware of this situation. Their underestimation result in careless of the problem. In other words, getting more attention towards problem can bring more supports from government. On Monday, 19th of November 2012, women from different places, but with same goal gathered, in Mangalore to raise awareness against sexual exploitation. They believe their action can bring more attention from the government which can provide more support. Also, care from normal citizens will help them handle the situation better when traffickers come to hunt. ("\$40 billion changes") This may seem like weak suggestions compared to others, yet these can be much more effective with supports from citizens. When these clever solutions and great effort from Indians meet, hopefully, the problem of sex trafficking can be solved.

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The problem of sex traffic caused by financial and cultural difficulties in India hurts victims and people around them emotionally, physically and mentally. To end this problem the government, the victims, and even ordinary citizens have to take actions. Waking up in the morning to good morning kisses and home-cooked meals with family members around a small table is a daily life cycle. Still there are girls who are being forced to give up this lifestyle and spend their time in unpleasant places with penurious strangers with dirty motives coming and going from their own private bedrooms. Yet with effective solutions from organizations and the government, someday those buses into Delhi will vanish, and no more girls will arrive to shattered dreams and sobbing stories hidden deep inside their hearts.

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