

EFFECT OF GLOBALISATION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND FORCED PROSTITUTION IN INDIA

(Pawan Surana)

India is a country full of contrasts. On one hand we find the noblest examples of humanity and peace, whereas on the other hand there are many instances of inhuman actions and cruelty. In India multifarious images of women prevail: women working as scientists, teachers, doctors etc. - or women bringing water from far away, women who have been denied even the right to be born; women burnt alive because of dowry or women thrown forcibly into flesh trade.

Various adverse effects of Globalisation can be seen specially on people from rural India and on people who live below the poverty line. Women and children are more adversely effected. Rural economy is mainly based on agriculture and small scale industries. In the globalisation process small-scale Industries are disappearing. Most of the work done in small-scale industries and on agricultural fields is done by women as unskilled workers.

A very accurate, comprehensive picture of prostitution in India is not available since sexual exploitation and sale of women and children are mostly unreported crimes; since many cruel episodes are caused by middlemen and procurers who act secretly and in a very organized, criminal manner. However, some intensive project studies and research work reveal following facts:

According to a recent publication on trafficking there are about 2.3 million¹ prostitutes in India. This data may seem to be on the higher side but authentic data of a survey of Bombay (Mumbai) city alone indicates an alarming figure of more than 0.1 million prostitutes in its 12000 brothels. Approximately 20% women in prostitution are under 18. A sample survey of 12 states and 2 union territories reveals that women who are sexually exploited and sold are usually children (under 18 years) at the time of their initial exploitation or abduction.

AGE OF WOMEN PROSTITUTES IN PERCENTAGE²

Age	Women Crimes Percentage
Below 18 years	53.2 %
18-21 years	23.3 %
21-30 years	4.4 %
30 years and above	0.01 %

¹ The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Asia Pacific. www.catwinternational.org

² Sr. M. Rit Rozario R.G.S.: “Trafficking Women and Children in India.” A Joint Womens Programme Publication Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi

Data not available	19 %
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There are more than 2000 brothels spread all over Delhi. There are more than about 20,000 Nepali girls into prostitution in Bombay.

Besides, prostitution with socio-religious sanction is still prevailing. There are girls dedicated to goddess Yellamma. Besides being sexually exploited by the rural rich, minors are sold or taken to urban areas, where they are often exploited by the urban rich. According to an article on child prostitution by Shanker Sen, Director General of National Human Rights Commission, these children are kidnapped, taken directly from parents or other relatives, or thrown into prostitution by faked marriages. These children, mostly girls are transported from one place to another to keep their identity unknown and close the opportunity to rehabilitate. A survey by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development reveal that only 4.9 % of the prostitutes in Calcutta are born within the city. More than 70 districts supply prostitutes to Delhi. The survey also revealed that two third of the original families of prostitutes lived below the poverty line and 60 % of the prostitutes covered in the survey belonged to Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes. A study³ of 12 states and 2 union territories reveals that the majority of rural girls are forced to take up prostitution. One can conceptually see that these prostitutes are mainly from two groups. Either they have no education and belong to the lower income group or they belong to castes, which are lowly placed - they come from a backward community with little education.

Girls and young women living below poverty line or belonging to Schedule Castes or Scheduled Tribes or Backward Classes are comparatively more vulnerable to this evil. Globalisation has also made inter-state and international trafficking easier.

In rural India women are facing hard life, which is full of scarcity. They don't even have the minimum facilities of regular drinking water, water toilets and bathing etc. By one study⁴ rural women walk on foot on an average of 5,400 kilometers in a year to collect firewood and drinking water. This distance is more than twice the distance between Delhi and Calcutta.

It is interesting to compare the pre- and post-globalisation scenario in rural India. Prior to Globalisation, i.e. specifically between 1989-1991 35.37 %⁵ people were below poverty line in rural areas. In the post reform period i.e. from July 1995 to December 1997 rural India had 36.47 % people below poverty line. This is an increase of 1.1 %. An increase in the rural poverty must have led to greater exploitation and it definitely has affected the women. According to the census 89 % of the women workers are engaged in rural agriculture sector. In unorganized sector 82 % of these women actively participate. Rural women make a significant but silent contribution to the economy and family welfare. They hold up more than half the sky. The economic contribution made by women is abjectly recognized - or when taken note of, it is qualitatively unprotected. They are after all mostly unskilled workers. In this era of Globalisation in India trade is accompanied

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rajasthan Patrika 25th February 1998

⁵ National Sample Survey Organization Rounds

with technological change which promotes and protects technical, skilled work. Globalisation is usually biased against unskilled workers. Rural women, mostly engaged in unskilled labor have to suffer because their unskilled work is invisible and unprotected in the word 'economy'. Their impoverished situation is making women more vulnerable to a social evil like prostitution.

One of the main causes of exploitation of women and their abuse in the flesh trade is the age old ignorance and illiteracy prevailing among them. They don't even know that they have legal rights which protect them. Most of these distressed women think that it is their fate and they have to accept to live in this world of darkness. These young girls are tortured so much that they hardly believe that there is hope in life.

Although female literacy has improved, yet illiteracy is one of the root causes that makes rural and tribal women so weak - that they are rendered helpless to elevate themselves from inhuman humiliation and sexual exploitation. The female literacy in comparison to the male literacy rate gives alarming signals.

LITERACY RATE - ALL INDIA MALE-FEMALE LITERACY RATIO

Year	Male ratio	Female ratio
1991	64.2 %	39.19 %
2001	75.85 %	54.16 %

LITERACY RATE - RAJASTHAN MALE-FEMALE LITERACY RATIO

Year	Male ratio	Female ratio
1991	55 %	20 %
2001	76 %	44 %

In remote areas the literacy rate of women belonging to Backward Classes and tribal and hill areas is not even 4 %. Thus it becomes easier for the procurers and the middlemen to influence or coerce these women and girls into prostitution. Today, even after 55 years of independence out of every 100 girls taking admission to the 1st class, in rural India only one girl goes to the level of 12th class. Due to malnutrition about 25 % of the girls die before they are 16 years old. Although on 100 males 108 females are born in India but the sex ratio of females has become alarmingly low.

YEAR SEX RATIO PER 1000 MALES	
1901	972 females

1999	927 females
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These figures clearly indicate the prevailing gender discrimination in society. As mentioned earlier, a large number of females are denied right to birth in the womb itself. Women are seen mainly as child bearers and a female child in India is considered a liability. Parents want to dispense with the female child as quickly as possible. Poor parents organize fake marriages with wealthy foreigners or would also indulge in getting their child married to an older man to save their skin in the society. Facts reveal that later many of these girls are forced into flesh trade.

In patriarchal Indian society, the process of considering women as commodities begins with the subordination of women and de-linking of sexuality from human relationships and desired reproduction. It has reduced women to a tradable commodity. The most vulnerable sections of the society are persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes. Very poor children and minors, poor illiterates and the unmarried become easy victims of inter-state trafficking. If this kind of torture does not subjugate them and they resist, then other forms of subjugation such as sexual assaults, rape , gang rapes etc are inflicted upon them. They are even burnt with cigarettes , assaulted physically, locked up, forced to consume liquor or to take drugs. In few cases they are tortured so much that they commit suicide. The lowest price for a girl sold is about 400 Rupees and the highest could be 70,000 Rupees or more. One can distinctly see two major groups of these sexually exploited girls. One group of girls come from the rural areas. They are mostly illiterate and belong to the lower income group and they are mostly from castes lowly placed in society. Another group comes from backward communities with some education and little knowledge of English. These girls are exploited by men belonging to the upper class.

Due to globalisation the world has come nearer. Transport and communications have increased and tourism is developing rapidly. Enhancement of transport has increased the red light areas on the highways, mostly in the form of small restaurants etc. Globalisation has triggered a boom in the tourism industry. Through tourism a refined and secret form of prostitution is developing in the form of call girls. Opening of new hotels, resorts and guest houses for promoting inter-state and international tourism has increased the call girl racket. These call girls are educated. The sad part of it is that school going girls and college going girls of lower income group families are deceived or lured and forced to adopt prostitution as call girls. Television and films play an important role in the dissemination of glamour, especially amongst the impressionable youth. The temptation of easy money to attain a life style idealized therein makes the task of the middlemen, hotel receptionists, working girls already in the profession etc. easier, who manage to establish contact with these call girls. The activities of call girls is organized in such a secret manner that only occasionally does it comes to light when the culprits are caught red-handed. Singing and dancing societies are established to facilitate prostitution. Persons belonging to the lower income group take money and marry their daughters to rich men of gulf countries. Sometimes a minor girl is married with a man who is atleast three times older than her. Most of these girls are later deserted or are taken to Gulf

countries for prostitution. Exporting women for domestic work or for nursing is taking place but there are several incidents where these women are thrown into flesh trade. These women are sold and purchased like a commodity. Though they are a source of money for their families back home, but all this at what cost is a big question. Most of these women are working in shops, restaurants, gambling houses or at residential houses of the natives where they are mentally and physically exploited. A report of the human rights organization "middle east watch" says : In gulf countries 1/3rd of these women are being raped whereas 2/3rd of them are physically and economically exploited. Supplying girls to politicians, government officials by business groups in return for sanctions and favours is widely prevalent.

The cruelty of prostitution is so complex and immense in Indian society that few efforts done by various NGOs to eradicate prostitution or to rescue and rehabilitate the victims have proven to be only a drop in the ocean.

Through the efforts of NGOs and humanists the amendment in the Immoral Traffic Law of 1956 took place in the year 1986 whereby the legislation of 1956 was amended and retitled as 'The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1986'. Under the amended laws prohibition of prostitution in its commercialized form continues to be an offence. It has defined 'child' as a person who has not completed 16 years of age. In the preventive laws there are provisions of stringent punishments in cases of child prostitution. Hotel licenses are liable to be cancelled if hotels are allowed to be used for prostitution. Though families of such victims have no qualms about accepting money from their sold girls, but they don't accept them back in their family as a member due to fear of social censure. The act includes directives to states to establish corrective institutions or rescue homes, so that when such victims are rescued they can be put in these homes, so that their rehabilitation is easier. Women homes run by the government are in pathetic condition due to lack of funds.

Sometimes through the intervention of NGOs conditions in these homes are improved. NGOs are also making efforts at the micro level, for example to help wash away the feeling of guilt in a girl if she is forcefully raped. With the help of the Ministry for Human Resource Development few NGOs have opened short stay homes for the distressed women where such victimized girls can get free boarding and lodging and facilities of vocational training are provided to them so that they can be economically independent and can be rehabilitated easily. The Ministry gives financial help to run these homes but this help is inadequate. The NGOs collect funds to run these homes properly. Our NGO, 'Rajasthan University Women's Association' runs a short stay home in Jaipur since 1987 which has so far given shelter to 804 children and women. Most of the women have been rehabilitated. In the wake of the enormity and acuteness of this problem and exploitation, this facility is too inadequate. An NGO called "PRERNA" in Bombay is working for the last 14 years for the children of these women engaged in sex trade. This NGO runs night care centres for these children. Some NGOs are running schools for the children of prostitutes. These schools are a necessity to make the children know that it is not imperative to be absorbed in flesh trade because their mother had to do it.

NGOs all over India are working in a scattered way. They need to have comprehensive networking among themselves so that they can help each other in solving the problems of the distressed and exploited women in that particular city. NGOs should make more efforts to run awareness programs specially in rural areas. Job opportunities have to be shown and self help programs should be run more effectively and sincerely. A network of specialized police squad like that of the Central Bureau of Investigation should be established to watch and prevent kidnapping, fake marriages, sexual exploitation and to counter trafficking in women and children. Women NGOs are demanding compulsory registration of all marriages in India so that fake marriages can be prevented and victims and culprits are easily traced. Crises intervention and counseling services should also be provided to girls in distress. Genuine local committees must be established for the protection of the vulnerable sections of the society. NGOs must make rigorous efforts, so that victims are accepted in society without any stigma. Positive traditional family values which are being eroded due to Globalisation should be re-established. Rigorous awareness campaigns about trafficking at local, national and international levels must be conducted to mobilize people. NGOs must promote intensive and effective gender sensitization in society. A co-ordinated effort in this direction should be strengthened. There is an acute need to sensitize the police personnel in women issues.

The Government must implement programs for sustainable livelihood and poverty elimination in rural areas, so that the rural youth is not forced to migrate to the seemingly greener pastures of urban areas, live there without their women folk and thus further promote prostitution. Multi-disciplinary reintegration programs like health care, counseling, education, training & social integration must be seriously strengthened. Lastly I would emphasize that prostitution is an undesirable evil, not an inevitable one. Its elimination would require restructuring social setup, which would give greater sexual freedom to men and women in which women's identity is respected as a human being. Education and economic independence of women will counter their vulnerability and lead to the recognition and respect of women's dignity as that of a human being.