



## Tragedy of Trafficking in Odia Women

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Yet another half an hour for the bus to arrive. The village is in its dawn slumber. The people those have to go to the town gather at the village end bus stop. This is the only bus going to town. Amari, a young girl of twenty is also waiting the bus. She is the third daughter, out of five daughters of a drunkard father and a daily labourer mother. She is the daughter of this dust, but other three girls waiting with her are from nearby villages. All are ready for the same destination. Along with other people, two middle aged men are walking restlessly in a distance. Both are talking with each other that, after this bus journey they have to take another bus for Bhubaneswar and from there, they can travel by train. Everything is to be done very secretly and carefully. Amari's grandmother, mother and few neighbouring siblings are standing and sobbing silently by pressing clothes on own mouths. They are staring Amari with tear brimming eyes. The solitude is speaking only ! The atmosphere is warm like a bridal farewell. But Amari is silent, speechless as well as tearless.

The bus approaches. The grandmother burst out into crying ... "You may or mayn't return, but I am sure no more I can see you !" Amari for the last time looked at her grandmother's face and closed her eyes. The bus starts moving.

Amari is married ?

Amari is sold out ?

Amari is trafficked !

This is the usual story of many of the poor girls of Odisha. In Technical language, this is called women trafficking. For last twenty years, this has become a trend and near about 48 thousand women are being trafficked in last ten years from rural Odisha. Young girls or women are being sent away from their flora and fauna to an alien place in search of livelihood. An Odia synonym of daughter is 'Duhita' - which means, a girl is good for both sides parental and in-laws side. But today a girl is treated as a curse. She has no place in the society, if she hails from a poor, uneducated background. Normally, the women from poor and backward social hierarchy are more vulnerable to this trend. Our rich cultural heritage advocates that where women are worshipped there resides the God. Women are considered as honour of society and Lakshmi of family. She cradles the generation inside her womb. Thus woman is a carrier of culture. Then why this insulting business of women like cattle ? The answer is many faced.

The causes of women trafficking is deep rooted. Firstly, the socio-economic condition of our society is responsible for this inhuman trend. Poverty makes man helpless. As a hungry man can do anything, likewise a poor man can



compromise with his conscience. The poorness has a multi-dimension effect. No parent wants to send away own daughter in pleasure; because our social system is such that, children are considered as old age asset of parents. The sons are treated as essential and immediate as in old age parents stay with sons. But daughters are considered as elegant and emotional asset because, daughters become more caring and sympathetic towards own parents than the son and daughter-in-law. But the cruel hand of poverty forces them to send the daughter with trafficker. The second, but most immediate cause of trafficking is dowry system of our society. It is the social responsibility of parents to do the daughter's marriage. But the cancer like dowry system has crippled them. Neither the poor parents dare to afford the dowry market and buy a bride-groom nor they can keep the daughter at home. Thus marriage becomes a mirage for a poor girl ! Our society consider an unmarried daughter a family's failure, a stigma. So the family becomes blamed and tries to get rid of the daughter as soon as possible. Old people say that, daughters are like 'ghee', if kept for a long day would spoil and stink ! So the parent of a daughter is almost compelled to marry the daughter wherever possible, but if that is not possible then send her with traffickers. Thus family men save their social position. And afterward, if any wrong happens, they would say, it was the girl's luck !

And thirdly, the mostly practical cause of this trend is the lack of knowledge or awareness. These victims of trafficking are not educated or exposed to different developmental programmes of the government. Today, the government is shielding a girl from her mother's womb as a female foetus up to her full flourished womanhood. But the rural uneducated women are not aware of these facilities and become easy prey to traffickers. Such girls only dream of marriage as

an end of life, if it couldn't be materialized for any reason, they feel frustrated and assume own self as a dry leaf before the fortune's west wind. They lose their firmness, determination. In the meantime, the village level broker of this trafficking network meets the girl's parent and gives hope of employment and marriage. The worried but innocent parents agree with the proposal as they assume it as a ray of hope. By accepting these offers they can safeguard their social image and leave the daughter in hand of her destiny. The broker gives some money in advance and assures a lump sum amount on departure. Thus the family is scapegoated and a girl's fate is finalized. Then a date is fixed, the broker comes, pays the rest amount of money and takes the girl like the bridegroom never to return.

Once the woman leaves her native, she is under the captivity of the broker. The woman loses her identity and like a puppet she goes on obeying the broker. No more she is treated as human being. Like slaves, she is sold out to other brokers. In Odisha, mostly women are trafficked to Uttar Pradesh, Jhansi, Mumbai and Delhi.

The fields of work of these women are not equal. They are employed in different fields of life. Their future is determined by the type of broker who entraps them. The broker and their network will determine how and where they will be employed. In context of their field of work these women can be divided into different categories. Firstly, the most painful and pathetic of all is the work of sex-workers. As we know that, those simple and simpering women of rural background come for employment. They are not exposed to the job of sex-worker. They think this is an immoral job. While entering into this job, they die mentally and spiritually many times. To prepare them as sex workers, they are sexually exploited by middlemen on the way. As they have



no way to return, no other choice to protect own self, they unwillingly and forcefully enter into this heinous job. Sex trafficking victims are generally found in dire consequences. They lead a nasty humiliating life. They become prostitutes - realizing the society's sexual urges. Sometimes after few years these women are seen affected by deadly AIDS and die a dog's death.

The second category is the women who are trafficked for forced marriage purpose. There are some places where girl child ratio is declining in comparison to boys because of girl child foeticide. In some cases, the marriage becomes a peculiar marriage. The man whom the woman marries, sometimes have his own full flourished families. But they marry the trafficking woman as a guard-cum-servant of their framings. Because they think, wives are cheaper than servants. Again in some cases, the man who marries is an inactive or disabled person who is not able to support own self. So he marries woman who will earn for him. And the third category is the work of house-keeper or maid servants. These group of women work in rich people's houses and stay as a slave in modern age. Sometimes, these women are prey to sexual violence or domestic violence. After all whatever they do, almost none of them able to return to own native. These trafficking girls or women are sometimes used by human organ transplantation racket. But mostly young boys are preferred for this purpose than girls. And some times they are used for cross border narcotic business.

Trafficking of human being is not a new thing. It is an offence against humanity. This is the trade of people for the purpose of reproductive slavery, commercial sexual exploitation, forced labourer or a modern day form slavery as Wikipedia. The free Encyclopedia says, "The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime

(UNODC) explains this as Human trafficking is a Crime against humanity. It involves an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harbouring or receiving a person through use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them. Every year thousand of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers in their own countries and abroad. Every country in the world is affected by trafficking, whether as a country against transit or destination for victims. UNODC as guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the protocols thereto, assists states in their efforts to implement the 'Protocol to prevent' suppress and punish Trafficking in persons especially women and children trafficking in persons protocol. This was adopted by 'United Nations in Palermo, Italy in 2000 and there an international legal agreement attached to the United Nations "Convention against Transnational Organized Crime". The trafficking protocol is one of the three protocols adopted to supplement the convention.

Article 3, paragraph (a) of protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in person's defines; Trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, 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 services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

On this meaning of trafficking, it has three constituent elements.



1. The Act (what is done) - Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons.
2. The means (How it is done) - Threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim.
3. The purpose (why it is done) - For the purpose of exploitation which includes exploiting the prostitution of others sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices and removal of organs.

The UNODC offers practical help to state is drafting laws and creating comprehensive national anti-trafficking strategies. Apart from this, it also assists with resources to implement them states receive specialize assistance including the development of local capacity and expertise as well as practical tools to encourage cross border cooperation in investigations and prosecutions.

In view of the global concern about the trafficking, the government of India prohibits some forms of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation through the Immoral trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA). The prescribed penalty under ITPA ranges from seven year to life imprisonment. Section 366(A) and 372 of Indian Penal Code prohibit kidnapping and selling minors into prostitution respectively for awarding a maximum of ten years imprisonment and fine for this crime. State Government regularly conduct campaign through their welfare departments along with police raid on brothels and sex rackets. Section 8 of the ITPA permits the arrest of women in prostitution.

Worried over increase of women and children trafficking the Government of Odisha framed comprehensive policy to prevent the crime. 'Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) are to be set up at Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Rourkela and Berhampur. Each unit will be headed by DSP rank officers, one inspector and two sub inspectors and six constables will be part of this unit. This unit will look into the trafficking of women and children in respective regions. Other Departments such as Labour Department and Panchayati Raj Department help the Women and Child Development Department to end this crime. These Departments will identify vulnerable areas from where women are trafficking from weak financial background, prone to trafficking would impart training to make themselves economically sound. The Chief Secretary of the State will be heading the state level committee to check trafficking. Then the District Collectors of different districts are asked to look after the rehabilitation of rescued women and children.

#### **References :**

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