

## **Woman trafficking in Nepal**

Women in Hindu culture represent strength-patience-grace. She is a mother, sister, daughter and she is a better half in the married life. Unfortunately, these words for women are restricted only to the textbooks and literatures. In reality, our women are exploited and discriminated by the nation, society and the own family.

The worst form of discrimination and crime against women is trafficking for sex trade. Trafficking does not always mean mere shipping of women from one place to another place for money. The illegal recruitment, purchase, sale, debt bondage, slavery, deception or coercion like acts against women are parts of women trafficking.

Every year around 5,000 to 7,000 young Nepali girls are trafficked to India and other neighboring countries, including the Middle East. The women who go abroad through legal channel for respectable jobs are not counted here. The illegally trafficked women are exploited in sex trade. There are around 200,000 Nepali girls and women currently working in sex industry in India (UNIFEM 1998).

Poverty, illiteracy, and social discrimination had been the perennial reasons for women trafficking, but on top of all that the 10-year long conflict, political turmoil and wide unemployment spurred the trafficking of Nepali women. In villages, families with low or almost no sources of income see no alternative but to handover their girls to pimps without being convinced that the girls would find a respectable jobs in India or abroad. The parents hardly get Rs 1000 for their girls, and the pimps manage to sell them to brothels and sex industry for 30,000 and above. "Girls are priced like commodities and sold at Majnu ka Tila in Delhi" says Anuradha Koirala, Chairperson of Maiti Nepal.

The urge to live and the curse of illiteracy drag these girls to sex trade in brothels in countries like India, Pakistan, and other Asian, Middle Eastern countries and even in Europe. Some of these girls are freed from these places by the help of lawmakers and law executers, but over 70 percent of these girls get rid from the hell only after being HIV positive.

Very few fortunate ones manage to return to Nepal after earning some money and get assimilated in the society. But most of them come empty handed, exploited. These unfortunate ones are even discarded by their own families and friends. Which left them with no choice but to return to the same hell where they managed to escape with so much of difficulty.

According to the United Nations, approximately 4 million women, children and men are victims of international trafficking each year (UN, 2000). Human trafficking in India is an organized crime generating a business worth USD eight million. The 1,740 mile-long open borders with India has made trafficking of Nepalese girls to India an easy task. It is an organized crime in which border police and even politicians are involved.

In regular intervals we get to read about the rescue of girls from brothels in India, the girls already penalized by fate become the victims of media exploitations, but the real victimizers are rarely exposed. There are INGOs and NGOs actively working together with the security departments to eradicate this burning problem of Nepal but the result is still not satisfactory. Nepal Government has a department under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare to look into this problem but sadly no substantial success has been achieved so far.

The exploitation of women is also rampant within the country. The conflict-afflicted people who are displaced from the villages land in the capital city and other big cities. As unskilled and uneducated men do not find any job, they become compelled to swallow all their pride and prestige and allow their daughters and wives to find means to meet their ends. These girls end up in cabin/dance/dohori restaurants and even in flesh trade.

Unless the government starts acting by forming an active task force and proper strategies Nepal will continue to remain the number one country for supplying girls and women to the flesh trade. NGOs such as Maiti Nepal, JIT, Sathi, are actively working to mitigate this problem. They have been fairly successful in spreading social awareness in remote areas to illiterate and underpowered women. Maiti Nepal and Sathi also have their people placed at the borders who work with the police to intercept the victims. But Anuradha Koirala complains that the government monitoring mechanism isn't strong enough. She feels that law should be made stronger for these evils of the society and there should be a proper team work between the government, NGOs and security forces in order to stop trafficking .

The trafficker even if held by police are not subjected to much penalty in our judicial system. Counting a day and night as two separate days, a trafficker is free from the jail in just half the time of actual sentence. Liaison with Indian Government is very important for the solution of this problem, despite blurry support from India it is the duty of our government to gain stronger cooperation in his regard. Opportunities should be generated so that no girl has to leave the village to earn money; that no father has to sell his daughter for money. Literacy programs should be promoted so that every girl is aware of the fraud, is capable of doing a dignified job, vocational and technical skill oriented programs should be promoted in villages so that a girl has skills to work and does not get sexually exploited. Strength-Patience and Grace should be given back to women and this has to be done soon.