

## **Women Trafficking in Darjeeling and Dooars**

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**Abstract:** Trafficking in women has been emerged as the most vulnerable social problem in the contemporary world. It is an international, organized and criminal phenomenon which violates the basic human right. Media report ranked West Bengal at the top list of largest trafficking state in India. Situation of its northern region is more vulnerable and witnessed the high rate of rural out-migration due to various socio-economic and political factors and they often get into the trap of the traffickers who are mostly the known persons. They have been trafficked to the major towns and cities of India and abroad as well. Thus, the present paper is an attempt to understand women trafficking in Darjeeling and Dooars region of North Bengal.

**Keywords:** Women Trafficking, North Bengal, Causes and Nature of Women Trafficking

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Trafficking in women has been emerged as one of the most vulnerable social problem of the contemporary world. It is an international, organized and criminal phenomenon which violates the basic human right. Article 3, paragraph (a) of the 'United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime' (UNTOC) of the Protocol 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 services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs[1,2]". Thus, the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation or any other forceful activities is called women trafficking.

According to a report published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), West Bengal ranked second in India in terms of women trafficking. The media reports ranked West Bengal at the top list of 'largest women trafficking states' in the year 2006-2007[3]. According to a report released by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in response to a Right to Information (RTI) query filed by a Delhi based anti-

trafficking organization, *Shakti-Vahini*, the number of missing people in the country has gone up to 6514 from 196 between 2001 and 2010 [4]. West Bengal recorded only 3 missing cases in the year 2001 but it was increased to 1089 in the year 2010 [5]. Situation is much vulnerable in the northern part of West Bengal commonly known as North Bengal which constitutes of seven districts viz. Darjeeling, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Malda, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Alipurduar.

Excluding few towns and cities the entire North Bengal region dwells in tea gardens and villages where social problems like poverty, illiteracy, students drop-outs, unemployment and under-employment, frequent closing downs of tea estates and cinchona plantation in Darjeeling Hills and Dooars of Jalpaiguri district, decreasing agricultural production, lack of cold storage, fragmentation of land holding, mal-nutrition, political disturbances, industrial backwardness etc. underlying the region. Death of workers due to starvation in the locked out-tea estates like Dheklapara, Redbank and others in Jalpaiguri district is not a new phenomenon in the region. Directly or indirectly due to these factors the entire region witnessed a high rate of rural out migration. And many of the migrants get into the trap of the traffickers who are mostly known person like relatives, and lovers etc. Data and case histories provided by the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) and newspaper reports shows that under-development is not only the sole factor behind women trafficking but it has been caused by a multi-faceted

factors like aspiration for the good life, consumer culture, frequent clashes between the parents, lack of proper information of migration risks, unwanted behaviors of the parents towards the girl child etc.

Newspaper reports and activists those who are working on women trafficking stated that the girls are trafficked almost everywhere whatever may be the place and time. It is a universal phenomenon but the rate is much higher in rural areas. It is not always for forced prostitution. The demand of fair and attractive dancing girls in the orchestras for marriage party and others is very high in the states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The minor boys and girls are preferred almost universally as the domestic helper. The tea estates of Dooars and Darjeeling hills, rural part of Coach-Bihar, Malda and Sikkim are the major sources in North Bengal and Sikkim. The data provided by the non-governmental organizations (NGO) and few researches on women shows that the girls are trafficked by known persons, relatives, lovers and even by the family members. Kidnapping, false promises of job, false marriage are the nature of women trafficking [6]. It is much higher among the young girls particularly below 18 relating with the male of below 16 years. According to Kanchanjungha Uddhar Kendra, a Siliguri based

NGO among the rescued 600 girls and children, 60 percent has been found at the age group of 15-25, 30 percent of 26-35 and only 10 percent has been at the age group of 35 and above [7].

One can easily understand the nature of women trafficking after going through the case history of Ramesh Biswakarma (name withheld), a kingpin of trafficking racket of North Bengal and Sikkim. He was arrested from his Kalcheni (Jalpaiguri District) residence on 2011 in trafficking case. A case history recorded by one of the non-governmental organization working on women trafficking shows that he trafficked around 30 girls from North Bengal and Sikkim into the major towns and cities of India. He used to dial randomly from his cellular phone and whenever he caught with a female voice he used to establish rapport. In all the cases he purposed the girls and in mostly he pretended to be a man associated with the Indian defense. Once the girl was fully convinced he used to commit false marriage. He was not alone as he was accompanied by many members and they work together. After staying couple of days in the major towns of India he used to sell the girl mere for Rs. 75,000 to 1, 00,000.

**Following table shows the number of missing cases between August 2010 and January 2011 recorded by one of Siliguri based anti-trafficking Non-governmental organization.**

6 months data	No of missing cases	Average age	No. of girls rescued	Place of origin of the victims	Nature
Aug to Jan (2010-11)	30	18	12	Rural parts and tea estate of Darjeeling and Dooars, Nepal	23 employment 3 marriage, 4 runaway children

*Source: Kanchanjungha Uddhar Kendra (Siliguri)*

Among the 30 missing cases recorded between August 2010 to January 2011 by a Siliguri based Anti-trafficking NGO in which 29 (87 percent) of them were from under-developed and remote places of North Bengal like Naxalbari and Matigara (plain region of Darjeeling district), Kurseong, Tindhari, Jaldhaka and Bijanbari (Darjeeling hills), Namchi (South Sikkim), Chalsa, Malbazar and Banarhat (Dooars region of Jalpaiguri District). The average age of the victims was 18 years. 23 (70.66 percent) of the total victims were trafficked by false promise of employment, 3 (10 percent) by false marriage and rest 3 (13 percent) were runaway children from Nepal. 12 (60 percent) of the total victims were rescued by one of the Siliguri based NGO. The rate of missing cases has been much higher in reality than that of the police records because people rarely report in police station. There are major problem associated with the rescued victims as well because they are looked down by the Society as unwanted and impure to give shelter even by their own family members and relatives. From the part of the government also there is no such initiative taken to look after the victims.

Siliguri (gate way to North East India) is the transit point from where the victims have been trafficked to the bigger towns and cities of India and abroad. The major destinations of women trafficking in India are kamitapura (Bombay), G.B Road (New Delhi), Sherampur (Gwalior), Budhbarpeth (Pune), Sunagachi and Lachipur (Kolkata). Internationally women are trafficked to the Arabian countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Thailand and others, mostly through fake passport via Nepal. Large numbers of girls are trafficked from the neighboring nations Nepal and Bangladesh. The ministry of women and child development reported the presence of 8 million sex workers in India who entered into the flesh trade before the age of 18 years. There are more than 300,000 Bangladeshi women and 200,000 Nepali women (particularly from the rural places of Nepal) are working in Indian brothels.

At this juncture it is very hard to draw a conclusion with a scanty of knowledge but one thing is very sure that the issue of women trafficking is not simple as it appears. It is a global problem faced by the

whole world. Almost all countries are involved in women trafficking. The question which happens to disturb regarding this major issue is how many of us are really serious to stop this heinous crime? Is it only the responsibility of a Non-Government Organization

(NGO), International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO), political society, civil society or it still remains only as a good hunting ground for the academicians and Students like us?

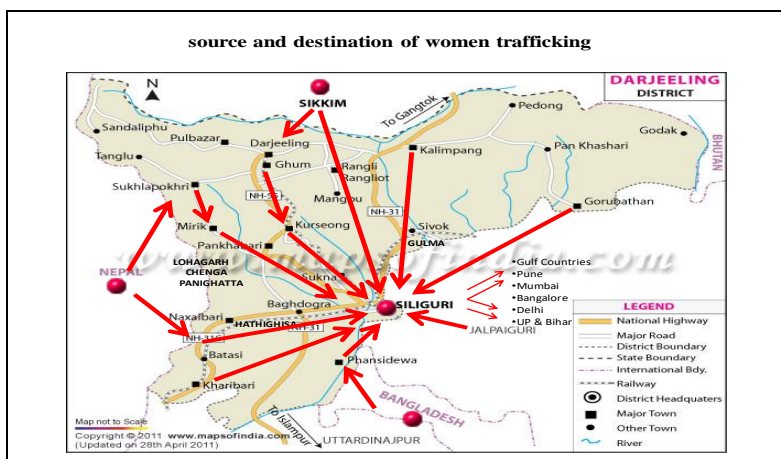


Fig-1: Map of Darjeeling District [8].

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