

Traffickers Feed on a Daughter's Emotional Vulnerability: A Gender Perspective on Human Trafficking with Special Reference to Patricia

McCormick's *Sold*

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Abstract:

Patricia McCormick explores the horrific world of sex trafficking through her character Lakshmi in the novel *Sold*. Several reasons help the traffickers to thrive, one among those factors is poverty. This paper focuses on the role of gender in the victimization of the marginalized community.

Keywords:

Human trafficking, Sex trafficking, Gendered ideology, sexism, exploitation.

Slavery was fundamentally tied to labor... The slave was an investment through which accomplished, and coercion could be used to force compliance with particular orders. The slave

was told what to do and, if he or she did not do it, he or she was punished, often severely.

(Lovejoy 40)

Paul. E. Lovejoy, a Distinguished Research Professor at York University has published several articles on Africa and the African Diaspora, says that slavery is a deep trouble in history of almost every civilization: Greek, Roman, African, Atlantic, Asian. In the article, *Slavery in Africa*, he explains various definitions that are available to comprehend 'slavery', several methods of enslavement in Africa, how slavery turned out to be form of labour. He defines slavery as,

Slavery is a form of exploitation, whether in Africa or elsewhere, historically or in contemporary times. Its definition derives from the idea that slaves are property, and that slaves are outsiders who are alien by origin or who could be denied their heritage through judicial or other sanctions. With slaves, coercion could be used at will, and their labor power was at the complete disposal of the master. They did not have the right to their own sexuality or, by extension, to their own reproductive capacities and gender options. Enslaved women separated from their children and eunuchs are examples of this complete subordination. Slave status was inherited unless provision was made to ameliorate that status. Slavery was fundamentally a means of denying outsiders the rights and privileges of a particular society so that they could be exploited for economic, political, and/or social purposes. (Lovejoy 36)

Though chattel slavery is abolished throughout the world using foreign policies and law, globalization and materialization have promoted modern forms of slavery. Academicians, abolitionists and historians try to draw a definite difference, with the help of external scrutiny, between classical and modern slavery. A familiar form of modern slavery and transnational crime which is developed in a rapid manner is human trafficking. Human trafficking involves several forms of exploitation: trafficking of children, for the purposes of commercial sex, forced labour, removal of organs, begging, child soldiers; sex trafficking, an organized movement of women for sex work; forced marriage, sometimes lead to sex or labour trafficking; labour trafficking, coerce people to work in varied industries against their personal choice; trafficking for organ trade, compels vulnerable people to sell their organs for no/low cost. Based on the economic, social, political conditions of the present world, there is an increase in both demand and supply of labour in all streams which directly help traffickers thrive.

Sex trafficking, a dominant form of human trafficking could be explained as enforcing adults and children to involve in commercial sex, mostly with false promises to provide job opportunities worldwide. Majority of the victims are girls and women who face innumerable psychological and physical health hazards. Share Hope International, an organization of Christian Abolitionists, which envisions to end sex trafficking through three-dimensional approach: 'prevent', 'restore' and 'bring justice', says,

Sex trafficking occurs when someone uses force, fraud or coercion to cause a commercial sex act with an adult or causes a minor to commit a commercial sex act. (Share Hope International)

More than statistics, studies on environmental and personal experiences of victims suggest that trafficking of people for commercial sex is deadlier than exploiting the vulnerable in labour trafficking. Through force or coerce, women, men and children are victimized for sexual activities and rarely it involves volunteer participation also. Marginalized people experiencing absolute poverty fall a prey to the violent trafficking networks. The United States appears to be the most reported country for being the destination of opportunities for many poverty stricken vulnerable communities worldwide. In South Asia, Bangladesh and Nepal remain two important origins for trafficking whereas, India and Pakistan are assumed to be the destination of victims, also help traffickers in moving their targets to other parts of the world. The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), an independent organization, founded in 1921, that aims to help everyone comprehend the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries records the status of slavery in India as,

India abolished its caste and bonded labor systems decades ago, but social stratification remains pervasive. Families remain enslaved for generations, working in dangerous conditions without the means to pay for their freedom.

(Council on Foreign Relations)

Humanists at all levels work to end various forms of slavery in many parts of the world: officials depend law and government, historians use archives and statistics to document slavery, sociologists, through their field work, activists create/develop non-governmental organizations, writers protest through their literary works. Literature receives its expression from different standpoints of humanity and predicts every purpose of life

through powerful words. Activist writers also play an essential role in indicating the violence on human dignity, exploitation of the vulnerable, abuse of the marginalized in the name of modern slavery i.e human trafficking.

Patricia McCormick's *Sold* published in 2006, with Lakshmi, a Nepali, as the protagonist, uses first person narrative style to record enslavement through sex trafficking. *Sold* is a result of McCormick's intense field work into brothels of India and several interviews with survivors of sex trafficking from villages of Nepal mountain range. *Combating Trafficking of Women and Children in South Asia*, a book produced by staff and experts of the Asian Development Bank, says,

In South Asia, Bangladesh and Nepal are the main countries of origin for trafficking, while India and Pakistan are considered countries of destination or transit to other regions, commonly the Gulf States or Southeast Asia. Kolkata in India, for example is regarded as a major transit point for other destinations. However, large – scale trafficking in persons also takes place within these countries. (Asian 18)

Globalization, poverty, gender discrimination, political instability, sex tourism, increase in demand for cheap labour worldwide are considered to be some major causes for human trafficking. Mary C. Burke, Founder and Director of End Human Trafficking, in the article, *Introduction to Human Trafficking*, explains human trafficking as,

Women, men and children of all ages can be trafficked for sex and labor. Those at risk of trafficking most often come from vulnerable populations including undocumented migrants, runaways and at-risk youth, females and members of other oppressed or marginalized groups, and the poor. Traffickers target individuals in these populations because they have few resources and work options. This makes them easier to recruit through deception or force and they tend to be easier to control. (Burke 9)

In the novel, poverty, irresponsibility of Lakshmi's step-father, Lakshmi's attitude to economically shoulder her family helps the primary agent to uproot Lakshmi from the mountain village of Nepal to the brothels of Kolkata in India.

Lakshmi's mother informs her of her stepfather's decision to send her to city as a maid. She jerks but feels responsible as a first born and takes pain to console her mother. She says,

This is good news. There will be one less mouth to feed here, and I will send my wages home. If I go, you will have money enough for rice and curds, milk and sugar. Enough for a coat for the baby and a sweater for you. Enough for a tin roof. (54)

In the book entitled, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* Louis Shelley says, “

The view in some societies that females can be used to advance a family's economic position results in girls many societies being sold off to repay a family's debt, provide cash for a medical emergency, or compensate for an absence of revenue when crops have failed. Often women are expected to go abroad to send remittances home to their families. Without the support of their families, some become victims of labor and sexual trafficking. Discrimination against women is a major causal factor of trafficking not only in Asia, where ILO data suggest the problem is most pronounced, but also in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. (Shelley 17)

Lakshmi's mother instructs her to follow certain rules, in her life, after puberty. Lakshmi's mother says that she won't be allowed to roam free, she should bow her head in the presence of men because this is the sign of modesty, should never look a man in the eye, never allow herself to be alone with a man who is not family, after marriage she should eat the remains of her husband's meal and his burp will show that she has pleased him, should satisfy the desire of her husband and beget a son. If she gives birth to a son, Lakshmi's mother asks her to feed the child till the age of four and at the same time, if she bears a girl baby, she is instructed to feed just for a season, so that your blood will start again and you can try once more to bear a son. If her husband asks her to wash his feet, she should perform it as a rite. Lakshmi questions her mother the necessity for all such behaviour, and this is the reply, “This has always been our fate. Simply to endure is to triumph.” (21) An epidemic of gender ideas are passed on from one generation to another. It spreads out in the vein and blood of every woman, become inseparable, so that one cannot even diagnose the problem.

Uncle husband, an agent in the trafficking network who owns Lakshmi at this moment, meets Auntie Mumtaz, a brothel owner, and bargains back and forth for Lakshmi and fixes up 10,000 as the final amount.

Lakshmi's custody switches over to Auntie Mumtaz. Mumtaz's servant takes Lakshmi to a tiny room in the upstairs and locks her up. Louis Shelley, in *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*, says,

In many regions of the world, women who have aged as prostitutes recruit the next generation of trafficking victims, often through networks of friends and family. Yet their involvement does not always end with recruitment. Women often train the trafficking victims, run the brothels, and maintain control of their victims through violent means. (Shelley 17)

Sex trafficking is definitely a violence against women at the global level, allows men to be the facilitators of commercialization of women's body through fake promises, force or coercion and physical abuse. Sexism promotes gendered ideologies: the society recognizes the desires of men as a biological need which in turn justifies the victimization of women for sexual purpose. Patricia McCormick has brought out the complex violent structure of transnational networks of human trafficking across Nepal and India and also an ideology that the identity of an innocent woman is destined to exploitation in a social institution.

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Human trafficking is a highly organised crime. Traffickers take people from one area of a country to another or across borders, and when they arrive, they force their victims into exploitation. Trafficked people are exploited sexually, placed in domestic servitude, agricultural work, begging, manufacturing, construction, and organ harvesting amongst a host of other exploitative purposes. It is not the same as people smuggling. In legal terms, human trafficking is "the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, using Keywords: exploitation; human trafficking; Trafficking and Smuggling Proclamation; UN Trafficking Protocol; vulnerability." Between '996 and '997, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women collected information on violence against women, including trafficking.⁶ The subsequent report highlighted that because trafficking involves cross-border movement it is an issue that should be addressed by international standards and consensus.⁷ it was agreed that adopting an international treaty to supplement the United Nations Convention on Transnational. Traffickers are increasingly exploiting legal migration routes by persuading non-EU nationals to apply for asylum or a residence permit. More than two-thirds of the identified victims were EU nationals, with the largest numbers coming from Romania, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Hungary and Poland." The MEP would like to see a longer period for recovery. Highlighting the plight of people sold into in sex slavery she said: "We are much better now at treating people who are raped and give them the protection of the law, but these girls have been raped night after night after night. I think we should be prepared to give them longer support of reflection and more support in rebuilding their lives." She also urged governments to get to grips with the migration crisis. Human Trafficking is caused by several factors that are put into two major categories, namely; push and pull factors." The truth is that child trafficking is such a heinous crime for sake of the satanic elite to sacrifice and devour children. It's a pure evil cult called "Ordo Templi Orientis". It's been a lot of news about this crime, and yet they have been hardly any convictions. Vulnerability, preventions and human trafficking: the need for a new paradigm. 7 7 8 11 15 15 17 19 23 23 25 27 33 33 34 36 39 39 41 44 56 56 55 52 59. I. Introduction . . . 1."Vulnerability: why does human trafficking happen? Human traffickers prey on people who are poor, isolated and weak. Issues such as disempowerment, social exclusion and economic vulnerability are the result of policies and practices that marginalize entire groups of people and make them particularly vulnerable to being trafficked." Current practices in the prevention of trafficking in human beings are analysed in this paper in order to understand why human trafficking continues to be identified as a grow-ing phenomenon.