

# “Untrained Beautician Haru” a short story by Sanjay Bista :A glance into women trafficking amidst Darjeeling and Dooars area

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## ABSTRACT

Human trafficking is a crime against humanity and is the second biggest crime in the world after drug trafficking. It is a \$150billion industry. Article 3, paragraph (a) of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) of the Protocol defines Trafficking as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring 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. The present paper is an attempt to comprehend women trafficking in Darjeeling and Dooars region of North Bengal in nexus with the Nepali short story “*untrained beautician haru*” from “*Astachaltira*” written by the eminent author **Sanjay Bista**.

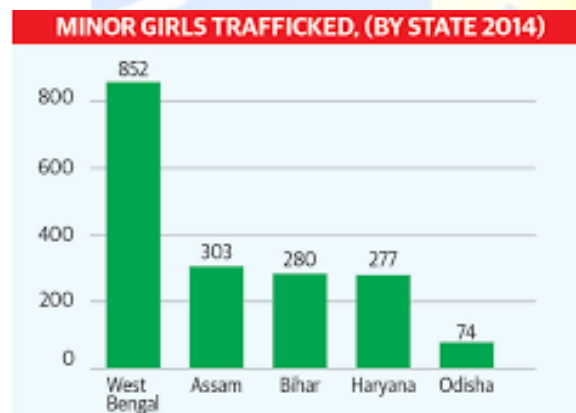
**Keywords:** Women trafficking, Darjeeling, Dooars, Causes of women trafficking, Sensitization.

## INTRODUCTION

This piece of nepali literature highlights one of the burning issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Men, women and children anyone can become its victim. Not so surprisingly it happens to be one of the biggest organized crime of the world after illegal dealing of drugs. It is also feared that very soon the illegal trafficking of humans will outdo the illegal drug business. In brevity it is modern day slavery. It is a global phenomenon fuelled by poverty and gender discrimination.

Most households in Darjeeling hills and the Dooars Terai region located in the foothills of the Himalayas depend on the 300 old plantations located here. In the late 1990’s tea prices dropped, many owners cut wages and in some cases abandoned their plantations altogether. By 2003-04 many tea estates were shut down. Newspapers then reported starvation deaths and the condition remains no better till to date. While tourism

is a growing industry in this area, the economy in general is in poor shape owing to the decline of the once flourishing tea estate. In this hilly terrain people live in scattered hamlets and villages. Reach of television and newspaper is poor in many of the areas. 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 plantations, decreasing agricultural production, fragmentation of land holding, mal-nutrition, political disturbances, industrial backwardness engulf the region. Directly or indirectly due to these factors the entire region witnesses a high rate of rural out migration. In Darjeeling men have traditionally migrated to work in the army, civil service and as security guards in big cities like Kolkata, Delhi and Mumbai. Women have also migrated to these big cities to work as maid, baby sitters, waitresses and beauticians. But tragically many of the migrants get into the trap of the traffickers who are mostly known person like relatives, parents, husbands, lovers etc. As per the statistics of the government in every eight minutes a girl child goes missing in our country. In 2011 about 35,000 children were reported missing and more than 11,000 out of these were from West Bengal. Furthermore it is assumed that only 30% of the total cases are reported so the actual number is pretty high. A 2013 annual report of National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) identified West Bengal with the highest number of cases of human trafficking in the year 2012-13. Significantly, three regions — Sundarbans in South and North-24 Paragana, Darjeeling and tea garden areas of Terai and Dooars region— are believed to be the most vulnerable in terms of human trafficking. According to police reports, 316 minor girls were missing in 2014 from the Terai-Dooars region, of which 280 have been recovered.



## OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to identify the driving factors leading to increased vulnerability to trafficking and to evolve with community participation ways of combating this menace.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Sex trafficking by Jenny Quy Ton:** Sex trafficking makes up more than half of all human trafficking and it is important to note that most victims are women and young girls. Sex trafficking affects people of all backgrounds, but its effects are most prominent on women and girls from poor families.

• **Untrained beautician haru by Sanjay Bista:** is a short contemporary story where the protagonist Arjun Kumar suppresses his desire of having a daughter seeing the plight of girls who has moved out of the village to work in beauty parlours.

• **Trafficking in women and children in India: A situational analysis in Maharashtra by Renu Sharma:** The present paper is a case study of Save the Children India's (STCI) project titled; "Preventing Trafficking amongst Women and Children through Community Participation", in four rural districts (Latur, Osmanabad, Beed and Nanded) of Marathwada region in Maharashtra.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for making this paper is completely based on the available secondary data.

## DRIVING FACTORS LEADING TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

➤ **Poverty** is a major cause of vulnerability to human trafficking. People who are impoverished are more motivated to seek better conditions that make them an easy prey. Vulnerable people seeking better condition for themselves and their families may be trafficked on the pretext of job, training, marriage and false economic opportunities.

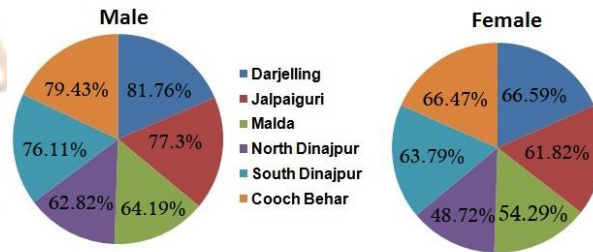
➤ **Industrialization and globalization** has destroyed the viability of traditional livelihood especially in rural areas. The erosion of livelihood in the source areas and the availability of better livelihood opportunities in other areas initiate migration of poor people towards high-income areas. People migrate all the time for various reasons from personal and professional development, usually middle class professionals to semiskilled, unskilled and low skilled workers. However, the chances of migration turning into trafficking are higher for those who are at the bottom level in terms of skills, who also happens to be poor. Women and children form a large group of poor unskilled labour due to systematic gender and social discrimination against them. Internal and international movement of women into the labour market has exposed them to the vulnerability of sexual exploitation. Women and children amongst migrants are coerced and deceived at the place of their origin, during movement and transit and at their destinations.

➤ **Corruption/ lack of income opportunities** is another factor contributing to trafficking as is very much evident from the following lines in the short story "untrained beautician haru" ----- *"ICDS ko khichari pakaune kam ko lagi pani nikkai koshish gareko thiyie. Hola hola jasto halla phai li haleko thiyi, kam tara panchayat sadasya ki bhanji kai bhayo."* (pg 62).

➤ **Age old child marriage** which is rampant in North Bengal is also one of the important reasons of trafficking of young girls.

- **School dropout children** easily falls into wrong hands with the greed of earning easy money. Amrita is a character in “untrained beautician haru” who later goes to work in a parlour after failing to get a job as an ICDS worker. She is also a school dropout. *“Aathh ma parthi. Fel bhayi. Pardina bhani school chari”* (pg 61, 62).
- **Gender discrimination in terms of educational opportunities** limits the women from getting better earning opportunities, making them more vulnerable to exploitation.

### Literacy in Rural North Bengal



- **Unemployment caused by closing down of many tea gardens** in Darjeeling and Terai-Dooars have added fuel to the fire causing malnutrition and diseases ultimately leading to death. Even where the tea gardens have been operating wages stand merely at Rs 122. This is also irregular in certain tea gardens making women and girls more vulnerable to trafficking.
- **Lure for earning easy money in big cities** also attracts young girls. The following lines in the aforesaid short story by Sanjay Bista is a proof to it ----- *“Pohor barkha ma pa ra suryaman ki chori euta sanu jhola bokera gayeki barsha din pachi thulo dharke bag ra thulai sutkes pani bokera aayi. Aayeki parsi palta bag jhundiayera bazaar gayi. Beluki Samsung company ko chaudha inch rangin T.V, dui bundle chadar, ghar ka sabai lai k k , k k ra anuhar bhari garva misrik , harka,liyera pharki.”* (pg 64)
- **Frequent political turbulence in Darjeeling and Terai Dooars** regarding the agitation for Gorkhaland has been resulting in out migration of youths resulting in some form of exploitation or other.
- **Girls of mongoloid ethnicity in high demand because of their looks.**
- **Lack of proper information of migration risks.** There is a famous nepali saying *“muglan ma ta chiya ko bot ma pani paisa phalxa aree”*. With this concept people flock to big cities without taking into consideration the risk of being trafficked.
- **Unwanted behavior of parents towards girl child** forces many of them to run away from home in search of a better future. Traffickers lure them with smart phones, gorgeous dresses and fancy gadgets.

➤ **Sex tourism flourishing in Darjeeling, Terai Dooars n Siliguri.**

➤ **No preference for a girl child / female feticide.** Arjun Kumar the protagonist of “untrained beautician haru” initially has a desire for a daughter but then seeing the condition of the girls of his village who has moved out senses something fishy and drops the idea. If every father comes up with such a decision it will be precarious for the society as the female sex ratio will get skewed up. “ *Swasni le hija asti samma ta chori chori bhanthiyou ta pani bhani .Manxe ko sabai ichha pura hunu parxa bhan ne pani k cha ra. Bhanera Arjun Kumar le bati nibhayo*” (pg 67) Fundamental theory of demand and supply becomes applicable to this situation. Glaring example is that of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh where demand for brides is very high due to female feticide. These states import brides from poverty stricken states such as Assam, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha. According to 2013 National Crimes Records Bureau ( NCRB) report 24,749 children and women between the ages of 15 & 30 were kidnapped and sold into marriage across the country.

<b>Current Sex Ratio in India 2016</b>	<b>944 females for every 1,000 males</b>
<b>Sex Ratio in India (Yearly)</b>	<b>943 (2015), 942 (2014), 941 (2013), 940 (2012)</b>
<b>Total No. of Males in India</b>	<b>668,760,678 (668 million - Jan, 2016)</b>
<b>Total No. of Females in India</b>	<b>626,283,237 (626 million - Jan, 2016)</b>

**Source: census 2011**

➤ Men for work generally migrate to commercial cities and from here the **demand for commercial sex** is created. To fulfill the supply all sorts of efforts are made by the suppliers like abduction etc. Hence young girls and women belonging to poor families are at higher risks.

**VULNERABILITIES**

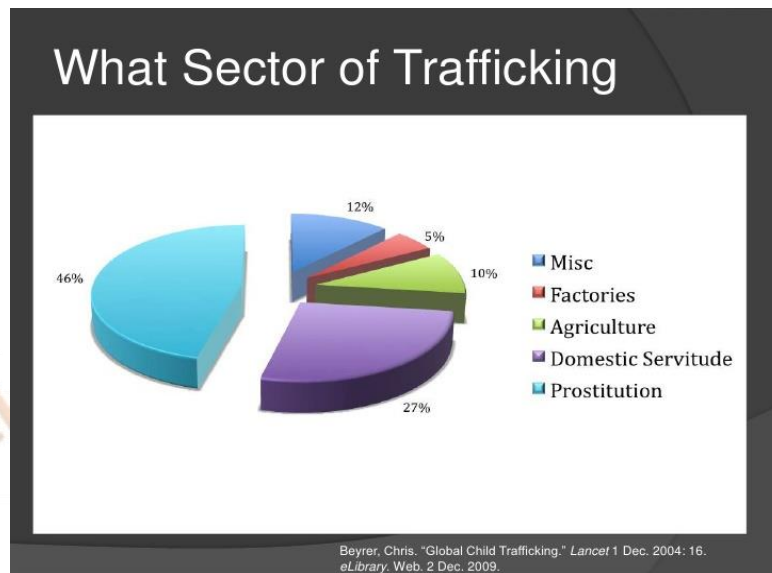
- ✓ People are basically poor and illiterate hence having low awareness in this issue.
- ✓ Media outreach is poor in many of the villages and remote areas.
- ✓ Alcoholism and battering of wife by drunk husbands is common.
- ✓ Red light area in Siliguri.
- ✓ Attitude of poor communities who have largely accepted selling of their children as a way of income.
- ✓ Lack of proper law enforcement. “Trafficking” is treated as “missing” in many cases.
- ✓ Villagers often do not know whom to approach for help.

- ✓ Dearth of NGOs / community based organizations that can provide leadership at the grass root level to fight trafficking or provide victim care. In 2011 West Bengal had four anti human trafficking units (AHTI). In 2012 instead of rising the number fell to three according to Lok Sabha data.
- ✓ In case studies reported, it is our people be it the relatives or neighbours who have been associated with trafficking. Same thing is reflected in “untrained beautician haru”---- “*Gayeka pach le ek ek gari chutti audha thap pach lai jivan ko pari bhasa bhujhai sapna bahira ko sansar ma puryaisakeka thiye*” (pg 63). “ *Gayeka haru bela bela ekdam manxe jasto bhayera ayi pharki jada ek ek jana cheperai jadai thiye.*” (pg 64)
- ✓ In many cases girls who were rescued and sent back to their families got re-absorbed in the flesh market because of disrespect and stigmatization.
- ✓ No protective home for the survivors.
- ✓ Dearth of counsellors in villages and remote areas unlike big cities.
- ✓ Tourist resorts which have mushroomed between Darjeeling to Dooars.
- ✓ Close proximity to four international borders of Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and China making West Bengal a trafficking transit point.
- ✓ Corruption and deep local political contacts of the traffickers render most prosecutorial efforts ineffective.

### **Devastating effects of human trafficking**

'Human Trafficking, Human Misery', a book written by Alexis Aronowitz, states that an estimated 80% victims of trafficking are sexually exploited, abused or forced into prostitution as most victims are young women and children. Such a victim probably might have to cater to anywhere between 8 to 15 clients in a day. The use of sexual protection is negligible in this industry, leaving the exploited at a high risk of contracting various sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. In some cases, victims are also subjected to substance abuse by being forced to take drugs. Such individuals also have to constantly battle with drug addiction. Improper supply of meals and the lack of nutritious food cause malnourishment in these entrapped victims. Poor living conditions also contribute to the development of various diseases that these victims suffer from in later years. The victims are not given any medical aid to cure these ailments. The victims also suffer from lack of self-esteem, emotional disturbance, disorientation, and depression. They develop deep psychological disorders that they struggle with for the rest of their lives even after being rescued. Psychological vulnerability hinders them from having a healthy state of mind in the future. They are likely to become withdrawn and tend to be suicidal.

Reflection from “untrained beautician haru”-----“*Puryaisake ka thiye k jane haru madhya dara ghar re kaila ki chori jo gao ka sabai sita hasne bolne sab bhanda pharsaili thiyi kun sahar ma ho oath ko muskan harayi. Gayeki duwai mahina ma arkai bhayera gaon pharki sakeko thiye.*” (pg 63)



### Anti-Trafficking policies and strategies

- ❖ **Sensitization** can be done through street theatre shows in tea garden, market places, villages, towns and major road junctions. Prevention through public awareness campaign by incorporating health and human trafficking information should be done by both government and non-government organizations.
- ❖ **Documentary films** can come handy. MARG (Mankind in action for rural growth) NGO has been raising awareness about human trafficking through a documentary film “SAPANA” which revolves round the life of Reena, a teenaged school dropout from a tea garden in Darjeeling who gets lured to a big city life in search of a lucrative job and ultimately gets sold to a brothel. However later she is rescued.
- ❖ **Social awareness at an early age** about the concept of trafficking can be done through school health curricula.
- ❖ **Co-ordination** between inter district police is necessary.
- ❖ **Empowerment of Women’s SHGs:** Empowering rural women self help groups in vulnerable areas has been the cornerstone of trafficking prevention programme. These groups have immense potential to handle social issues affecting village populace. Their experience in handling micro credit issues, unity, proximity to village women and their participation in village matters makes them an ideal source of organized woman power to deal with social issues affecting community. Its major focus should be on developing self-sufficiency and autonomy among the rural poor women, by advocating entrepreneurship qualities among them. Further women are encouraged to meet and discuss their common problems and come up with their own solutions.

❖ **Provide jobs, internships, skills training and other opportunities to survivors** to re-integrate them back to the society.

❖ **New government schemes encouraging girl child's education such as Kanyasree Prakalpa scheme** has had a greater impact in reducing trafficking of young girls. More of such scheme needs to be promoted." Beti bachawo, beti parawo" schemes should be advocated.

❖ **Training of law enforcement officials** .Those working in the anti- trafficking field must receive additional training on how to access justice mechanisms and procedures, and be made more aware of how to use anti-trafficking legislation for the benefit of victims.

❖ **Village watchdog committees** including village officials, Sarpanch, Anganwadi worker, school headmaster, police, representative of parents, representative of youth group, NGOs and a member of the Self Help Group should be constituted to help address trafficking problems. Bringing together women, youth and adolescents is a medium through which responsibility and accountability is shared by the larger community as a whole. Vigilance Committees should be constituted at each village and district level as it contributes in combating and preventing trafficking at source areas.

❖ **More of Anti-trafficking units need to pop up.** SANLAAP a non- governmental organization established in 1987 in West Bengal has sought to help prevent and combat women & child trafficking through a legal empowerment project in four districts of West Bengal: Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas. MARG a Darjeeling based NGO registered in 2006 is also eliminating human trafficking by spreading awareness among masses.

❖ **Facilitate networking and coordination at local, national and international level** with government and non-government organizations, forums, universities/educational institutions, support organizations, banking sector, media and other sectors.

❖ **Speak up!** Don't minimize the power of face book posts, tweets, blogs, and other modes of electronic communication.

❖ **Sponsor a child if you can.** Poverty makes populations more vulnerable to traffickers. Consider helping a child in an area of the world where child sex-trafficking is most prevalent. Trafficking exists everywhere, but India, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Eastern Europe, parts of Africa, Haiti, and the Philippines are more vulnerable.

## CONCLUSION

Every country is affected by trafficking, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims. It is usually the poorest and corrupt countries with the least economic opportunities that are most likely to be the source of slaves in human trafficking trade. The richer nations are the main consumers of the victims, thus allowing this illegal trade to continue indefinitely. To combat these organized crime educational institutions, NGOs, government, police, masses all must unite together by raising global awareness, providing better job opportunities and enforcing stringent laws.



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