

Unfolding the Ethical Perspectives of “SOLD” by Patricia McCormick

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ABSTRACT

Abducting children for the sexual exploitation and trafficking them to other nations is happening since a long time. After being trafficked and experienced extreme difficult situations of life, these victims are often intolerable and unacceptable by their families and other society members. The community make them experience stigma, blame, biasness, loneliness, shame, loss of identity along with unrecognized socioeconomic and citizen status. The paper will provide a structures debate on the ethical perspectives on whether or not a sexually trafficked person should return to the society they belong. Moreover, the religion Islam has a strong obligation in viewing all mankind with an equal right to exercise. To conclude, multiple attainable recommendations could be implemented to support trafficked victims in a society.

Keywords: Sexual assault; Prostitution; Child trafficking; Ethical perspective; Sex trafficking; Brothel; Ethical theories; Lakshmi

INTRODUCTION

This paper will delineate a review of a book titled “SOLD” which was penned by Patricia McCormick in 2006. The article will unfold the story of a thirteen-year-old teenage girl “Lakshmi” who was sold by his father and trafficked to India for sexual exploitation. The structured debate will cover supporting arguments and counter arguments on the proposition related to the social and religious perspectives regarding the concern in the light of ethical theories. The book “SOLD” illustrates the story of a 14-year-old teenage girl “Lakshmi” from rural Nepal who arrives in India with compassion to support her family. As soon as she reached India, in the twinkling of an eye, she determines the miserable truth of her being sold to prostitution.

ABOUT THE CASE

Lakshmi lived in a slum area of Nepal with her mother and step-father. Lakshmi and her family did not have a luxurious way of living but she blissfully enjoyed playing with her goat, sitting in the light of a lamp with mother brushing her hair. One unfortunate day when the himalayan monsoon struck and devastated all the crops. Lakshmi’s step-father made her meet an attractive glamorous lady who asked Lakshmi to come along with

her to the big city and work for a rich lady named “Mumtaz”, who in return gave Lakshmi delight and affluence. Although Lakshmi’s mother was not willing to send her, the young teenage girl wanted to buy happiness and a tin roof for her family so that no rain can destroy her house any further.

Lakshmi made her way to the “Happiness House” of Mumtaz, which she thought would be a place of delectation and ecstasy. However, she soon learned the glooming truth of her being sold to prostitution, and the only way out was to pay off his Mumtaz’s debt that she paid to her stepfather. Each passing day added to Lakshmi’s agony and despair. She made friends who have had through similar suffering and pain; Lakshmi was going through. The little innocent girls being brought in and diseased girls with AIDS being thrown out enumerated Lakshmi’s aggression. Moreover, Lakshmi by the time grasped different skills that she was going to use in the escape from happiness house.

In the darkness of night between the noises of a religious celebration, she successfully managed to evade Mumtaz’s prison and made her way to a shelter home. Lakshmi successfully saved herself with many other girls, who caved in the same brothel.

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DISCUSSIONS

Sexually trafficked people returning to their society

Supporting argument: Powell cited in his study approximately 21 million people in the world are being trafficked for that specific purposes such as forced labour and uplifting sex industry. Gender preference plays a huge role in human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime has shown that trafficking is gender biased since the women trafficked are accountable for 49%, whereas only 18% men are affected, also 33% children of both genders get trafficked. The victims are often discouraged and demoralized from acquiring help from society due to the fear of getting rejected and being shamed. Moreover, when the traffic victims are recovered from the brothels, they are hardly embraced by society due to stigmatized preconceptions associated with them. According to Peláez Echeverry, stigma possesses major constituents including blame, biasness, loss of identity, loneliness, and shame, loss of socioeconomic and citizen status, language barriers, and uncommon religious norms and values. Additionally, a qualitative study by Iram suggested that victimized people do not prefer to return to their homes due to multiple reasons that include poverty, unemployment, disrespect, honor, and sexual violence at home. Ultimately, these factors become the rationale to bounce back in the sex industry. It has been studied that they are prone to undergo the same trauma and negligence if they return to the society. This stigmatization would lead to retraumatizing of victims, which propelled these victims to remain in the brothel. One of the sex workers in the story named “Monica” was very happy to go back to her home after paying debts to Mumtaz for ages. Monica was tortured physically and mentally by her family when she returned home, leading her to bounce back to the same brothel within a few will be working it is observed that the children growing days in the brothels Secondly, for the same cause and run the same business. This can also be relatable with the story, when the toddler baby girl of other sex worker in the house of happiness was expected and bounded to be working for Mumtaz in the future. In a country like Pakistan, when there is an existence of unmet socio-economic needs and unemployment, young girls are often trapped by a trafficker to opt for the quickest means of earnings. This is the vicious cycle of cause and effect, which adds significant prevalence to the growing pandemic of sex workers around the globe [14].

Communitarianism: Incorporating communitarianism concept in the current scenario, bringing a sex trafficked victim back into society would increase the transmission of diseases such as HIV and AIDS, risking other members of community to inflict fatal disease. Therefore, for the betterment of other members of the society, these victims should not be reintegrated into society prevent the further burden of the disease in the country. Also, it may lead abused victims to return to the exploiters due to poor subsistence, social isolation, stigmatization, and vulnerability to intimidation.

Counter argument: On the contrary, the sexually trafficked for person should return to society as they recognize these victims as nationals with active citizenship status. A few parts of society are striving through multiple Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), women protection bureau, and welfare centers to the extend support these victims socially and mentally. Moreover this is not always the case that offspring are anticipated to do their mother has done all her life. This is an individual fight, and success depends upon a person’s intensity to strive to break the chain of a vicious cycle and fetch a difference. A piece of news shared on CNN world in 2013 highlighting Shweta Katti, a girl who grew up in a brothel and with her hard work and dedication towards education enabled her to win a scholarship in the US to become a psychologist and is now a leading motivational speaker, who aims to uplift the image of sex workers. According to the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, both women and men in society have equal rights, and any physical violence against women is rigorously outlawed. However, the dark side of society still considered sex workers as characterless and immoral, whereas the consumers are (male) considered as a respectable part of the community [4]. Men also play a significant role in spreading contagious diseases in society, as they are the major group responsible to avail sex services and running a successful sex industry. The bitter truth of society is that consumers are male not considered characterless and immoral whereas, women as sex worker had such biased image.

Libertarianism: Approach advocates that sex workers should have the autonomy to be part of society and enjoy all the benefits that any citizen holds. In libertarianism, an individual action of happiness should not violate other individual’s rights. Libertarians appreciate movements and activities that foster fairness and justice in society and eventually give a healthy opportunity for the sex worker to get back to their homes. Also, the stewardship approach requires the authorities to be accountable to the needs of the individual and community level by addressing the inequalities based on their demographic background and social status. This approach may include activities to be initiated in the society before returning to society, which includes rescuing, repatriation, and producing an atmosphere that respectfully reintegrates and embraces trafficked victims in society. A comprehensive approach is demanded to combat the sex-trafficking problem, ethically by empowering, equalizing, making them accountable and allowing them to participation in the society with respect and dignity.

Religious perspective: To commence the discussion on concept of sex trafficking about Islamic school of thought, is valuable to understand the concepts of traditional slavery since constitutes form of exploitation under trafficking in persons. The religion Islam prohibits against the concept of slavery, They has been observed broadly based on its primary and secondary sources which are the divine book of Koran, Prophet’s Sunnah, and the doctoring of Islamic scholar’s consensus believes that is Ijma. Slavery was commonly observed in the period before the advent

of Islam, and that it did not abolish this concept. Rather, Islam taught the lesson to free sex slaves by keeping sex permitted with the condition of getting married only. According to one of the traditions of the prophet, “there are three people whose prayers Allah will not accept and the one who enslaves a free man is among them”. He further said, “Whoever frees a Muslim slave, Allah will save all the parts of his body from the Fire as he has freed the body-parts of the slave”. Moreover, the commandments in Koran with the human sex trafficking forbids forced sex since it is an abuse regarding which Koran says, “but force not your maids to prostitution when they desire chastity, so that ye may make a gain in the goods of this life.” Additionally, Islam views all human beings as equal and considers being superior and oppressing others as a satanic logic. Islamic law calls for the welfare of human beings by teaching the ethical principles of equality and justice and therefore provides equal rights to both genders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are some recommendations to support trafficked victims in a society. Ethically, there should be an active role of policy developers to design interventions and assess its implementation about ethical approaches of doing upright, avoiding detriment, and providing courtesy, equity, enablement, sustainability, social obligation, opportunity to participate, share concerns and should be given self-accountability within the society. The issue can be discussed through multiple ethical perspectives that include libertarianism, paternalism, stewardship, and virtue of ethics. By the libertarian approach, the provision and protection of rights about international human rights standards should be incorporated, where NGOs play a huge role in preparing trafficked victims mentally, socially, and physically before returning to society. A paternalistic aspect to inhibit and alleviate child trafficking is by constructing all-inclusive and detailed awareness regarding the understanding of sex trafficking. Concerning the scenario in the book, when Lakshmi was being migrated across the border, the event could be prevented through a paternalistic approach. Likewise, Rijal, suggested that crossing border moments by individuals when

securitized strictly, can be successful in preventing and protecting girls to get illegally transited. Lastly, through virtue ethics, the stakeholders all around the world would involve in taking measures to combat the issue at global level with an aim to bring difference at mass level. Since it is a time-consuming process, it may not immediately bring difference but changing the mindset will bring benefit for the long-term goals [5-6].

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, according to the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that males and females should have equal opportunities in law and social situations, and they should not discriminate for equal treatment, health, and education. The scenario introduced us to the unfortunate, neglected, not spoken, hidden yet bitter realities and vulnerabilities of society. Therefore, it is acceptable to make a sound stance by justified the discussion that sex victims should be embraced by society with the same respect and honor they deserve just like any other member of society and live life productively.

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