

Administering Steroid Drugs to Minor Girls for Flesh Trade in India

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Abstract

Thousands of women and children are trafficked every day. Girls are mostly fall prey to the prostitution rackets and land in the brothels or end-up being sex slaves. The study attempts to look at the extent, causes, manifestation and the interventions made on trafficking of children at Mandsour district at Madhya Pradesh in India. Total 59 cases were taken for the study. The method of content analysis has been adopted for the research work. The study reveals that rescued girls are found mostly between the age group of one to eight year old. Kidnapped minor girls are being administered steroid drugs to hasten their physical growth for early initiation into the flesh trade in the camp of Banchra tribe people. Now government and social workers are taking initiative to reform and rehabilitate the Banchra tribe women.

About the steroid

A steroid is a type of organic compound that contains a characteristic arrangement of four cycloalkane rings that are joined to each other. Examples of steroids include the dietary fat cholesterol, the sex hormones estradiol and testosterone, and the anti inflammatory drug dexamethasone (www.wikipedia.org/steroid). In many contexts, the two main classes of sex steroids are androgens and estrogens, of which the most important human derivatives are testosterone and estradiol, respectively. Other contexts will include progestogens as third class steroids. In general, androgens are considered “male sex hormones”, since they have masculinising effects, while estrogens and progestogens are considered “female sex hormones”, although all types are present in each sex, albeit at different levels (www.wikipedia.org/sex-steroid).

Brief on Malwa- Mewar region in Madhya Pradesh

The Malwa- Mewar region is the largest opium growing area under legal cultivation in the world. It has brought untold riches to cultivators, carries, politicians and supervisors-and now the size of the pot has zoomed into the stratosphere. For the 1,20,000 people who have acquired pattas (permits) to cultivate poppy in Ratlam, Mandsour and Neemuch, in western Madhya Pradesh, trade (smuggling) in opium is old hat. With the entry of heroin and morphine almost every hut in the region has become a ‘factory’, every second farmer a legally defined smuggler, every manual labourer a carrier and a large section of policemen, politicians and narcotic officials have become active collaborators. In

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Mandsour people believe that a growing opium plant is a symbol of prosperity (www.outlookindia.com).

Trafficking of children

The concept of human trafficking refers to the criminal practice of exploiting human beings by treating them like commodities for profit. Even after being trafficked victims are subjected to long term exploitation (www.azadindia.org). Trafficking has been defined as the recruitment, transportation, purchase, sale, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by threat or use of violence, abduction, fraud, deception or coercion or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding such a person, whether for pay or not, in forced labour or slavery- like practices in a community other than the one in which such person lived at the time of the original act (UN, 2000).

Trafficking in women and girls is prevalent throughout the world. Gender discrimination places girls at greater risk of being trafficked than boys. Girls are usually trafficked for their labour. Examples of exploitative and illegal work that trafficked girls are subjected to include: bonded sweatshop labour, forced prostitution, and domestic servitude. Factors contributing to the trafficking in girls include: poverty, the low status of girls, lack of education, inadequate or non-existent legislation related to trafficking, as well as the lack of law enforcement. Some girls or their parents are tricked by promises of education or employment, while others are kidnapped to be bought and sold like commodities. Girls who are trafficked are vulnerable to many kinds of abuse. Traffickers use coercive tactics in order to lure and keep girls - including deception, fraud, intimidation, isolation, threat, physical force, and debt bondage. As illegal immigrants in foreign countries, often unable to speak the language, and with no contact with their families, it is difficult for these girls to escape their situation. Those who are forced into sex work, or who are vulnerable to sexual exploitation as domestic labourers, are particularly at risk of sexually-transmitted infections, including HIV, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion (www.reproductiverights.org).

According to a recent survey women are bought and sold to other countries from different parts of India. These girls and women are sourced from Dindigal, Madurai, Tiruchirapalli, and Chengalpattu in Tamil Nadu, Gaya, Kishanganj, Patna, Katihar, Purnea, Araria and Madhubani from Bihar, Murshidabad and 24 Parganas in West Bengal, Maharajgunj from UP, Dholpur, Alwar, Tonk from Rajasthan, Mangalore, and Gulbarga and Raichur from Karnataka. These women and girls are supplied to Thailand, Kenya, South Africa and Middle East countries like Bahrain, Dubai, Oman, Britain, South Korea and Philippines (www.azadindia.org).

Review of Literature

Unabated trafficking in girls for purposes of prostitution is the most powerful factor in maintaining the supply line of child prostitution. Organised gangs of traffickers exist in all cities where prostitution is a big business. Pimps, touts, and traffickers are constantly on the lookout in both urban and rural areas for poverty stricken families which willy-nilly resort to distress sale of their girls (Tripathy, et al, 2003). In a Child Social Welfare Board study, 11.90% of the respondents listed deception by someone as cause for entry into Prostitution (Mukerjee, et al, 1996). According to another study, 11% of trafficked women were lured, while 11% of abducted and 9.2% were sold or resold (Rozario, 1988). Traffickers approach women and girls in groups as it helps them to win their trust (Songroula, Y, 2001). A joint women's programme (JWP) study indicated the presence of an organised system of trafficking of girls for profit, which accounts for the greatest number of girls brought transported and sold within and outside India (Shalini, et al, 1996; Nair, et al, 2005). The experience of dislocation, deprivation, physical and mental torture, deprivation of medical facilities, and confinement are just examples of the problems that these children go through during the trafficking. All these have multiple traumatic effects on the victims of trafficking (Siwatch, 2006). Girl child mostly trafficked for flesh trade. Prostitution represents a significant issue in today's thought. Some feminist thinkers argue that prostitution exploits and demeans women and subjects them to the dangers of violence and disease (Schmallegger, 20012).

Present Study

Medical community is shocked at the sordid tale of man’s lust for lucre from Madhya Pradesh. In Ratlam- Chhitorgarh national highway at Mandsour district in Madhya-Pradesh where hundreds of families belonging to the de-notified Banchra tribe have been surviving on prostitution for centuries. These members of the Banchra are kidnapping the minor girls including one year old, pumping them hormones and steroids to hasten their physical growth and selling them into the flesh trade. In India, flesh trade is not a new problem but using new patterns for heinous work is a serious problem. Since this is an insidious problem and affecting the moral fibre of the society, researcher has tried to work on resent issue of flesh trade. Keeping these points in the mind, the present study was undertaken with these objectives:

Objectives of the Study

1. To certain the reality behind the kidnapping of minor girls
2. To know about the offender victim relationship.
3. How much effort was made by the police, welfare committee and the society to unite the victims with their family members?

Methodology

The study attempts to look at the extent, causes, manifestations and the interventions made on trafficking of children at Mandsour district at Madhya Pradesh in India. The work only focuses on the Banchra tribe who has been indulging in the flesh trade for many years. The information in the form of news reports in print media (Hindustan Times, Madhya Pradesh Edition) and information down loaded from internet have been the source of data (Year 2011-2012). Total 59 cases have been taken for the study those were found reported in print media and electronic media. The data has been taken from secondary sources. The method of content analysis was adopted for the study. The data has been analysed and presented in a tabular form.

Result and Discussion

Banchra tribesmen solicit customers for their women folk. Traditionally, the Banchra community would give their young girls into prostitution when they attained puberty. The community has resorted to abduction/kidnapping and drugging minor girls from surrounding areas as its own female population has decreased drastically, jeopardizing the tribes only trade. The shortfall is primarily due to young Banchra women’s aversion to bear children. “Nothing unusual except these women belonging to the Banchra tribe conducts the sex trade in the name of tradition. For them, prostitution is a way of life, passed down generation” (NDTV: 2012).

Mandsour Police have recovered 59 minor girls and booked 72 persons, of them Police have arrested 48 persons in the series of raid. In all 28 of the recovered girls have been handed over to their parents.

| TABLE- 1: VICTIMS’ AGE | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| AGE (in years) | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
| 1-2 | 3 | 05.08 |
| 3-4 | 18 | 30.50 |
| 5-6 | 10 | 16.94 |
| 7-8 | 26 | 44.06 |
| 9-10 | 02 | 03.38 |
| Total | 59 | 100.00 |

Children are innocent, trusting, and full of hope that their childhood should be joyful and loving. Their lives should mature gradually, as they gain new experiences. But for many new experiences,

the reality of childhood is altogether different. Right through history, children have been abused and exploited in the name of many things (Patel, 2006).

Table 1, show that the age of victims varied between 1-8 years. It indicates that crimes against children do not respect age. A high proportion of victims, belong to the age group of 7-8 years, were found victimized by the offenders. 5.08% cases were found in the age group of 1-2 years. 16.94% victims were found between the age group of 5-6 years. Only two victims belong to 9-10 year of age group.

| SOLD (in Rupees) | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
|-------------------|--------|------------|
| Less than 25,000 | 04 | 06.77 |
| 26,000-50,000 | 28 | 47.45 |
| 51,000- 75,000 | 17 | 28.81 |
| 76,000- 1,00000 | 06 | 10.16 |
| Not Mentioned | 04 | 06.77 |
| Total | 59 | 100.00 |

Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation is one of the largest crimes. The International organization for migration estimates that the global trafficking industry generates up to U.S. \$ 8 billion every year from this trade (Siwatch, 2006). Ganthia (1999) estimated that transaction in prostitution were worth Rs. 185,000,000 in a day and Rs. 37,000 crore per year. Children as young as nine years of age were went apparently purchased for 60,000 at auctions where bid against India men (SOS, 2001). The sharing of income makes the nexus between procures pimps, brothel keepers, local hooligans and police so strong that they together promote prostitution (Mukerjee, et al, 1996).

Table 2, reveals that kidnapped children were found sold in up to 100000 Rupees. Nearly half of the children were sold between Rs. 26,000- 50,000. Only 6.77% victims were sold in Rs. 76,000-100000. Nearly 1/3rd victims were sold in Rs. 51,000-75,000.

| OFFENDER | NUMBER | PERCENTAGE |
|---------------|--------|------------|
| Family Member | 07 | 11.86 |
| Acquaintance | 29 | 49.15 |
| Stranger | 09 | 15.25 |
| Not Mentioned | 14 | 23.72 |
| Total | 59 | 100.00 |

Victim –offender relationship is one of the most important notions in victimology. Meldelsohn (1974) calls the victim and his offender the “penal-couple”. Meldelsohn (1976) categorized the child victim as a completely innocent victim. For Hentig (1948), children are physically underdeveloped psychologically immature. They are weak compared to adults. So they are easy to prey to Kidnapping and sex offences. Children also fall victims of criminals and assist in committing crime. It has been found that 11.86% offenders were their own family members (Table-3). They were the father of the victims. In some cases relatives, neighbours, friends were found main accused of crime (49.15%). Only 15.25% stranger were found offender of kidnapping.

Females were also found as the part of this crime. Girls were lured by chocolates, sweets or other eatery. Banchra men used to roam around in railway station, fairs, temples etc. kidnapped girls and brought them to dera (home). During the kidnapping the girls change their dressing so that they could not be traced by the police. They lived like a family members in Banchra family. Girls those were rescued from the clutches of the Banchras narrated ordeal (Hindustan Times, 1 April: 2011).

Case-1, when she was kidnapped. She was taken on cycle by boy. He first treated her by sweet and handed over to a man near the landmark house. He made her to bear a new dress and boarded a white

bus following which she vomited and went into slumber. At the Banchra camp (home), she was not treated badly. Initially she cried for her parents, but a woman there consoled her. She was also fed regularly and got a better diet than she used to have at home.

Case-2, Ten year old girl, who was kidnapped with her sister two years before. Both were playing outside their small one room situated on the side of railway track. Both of them were lured by their distant relative who used to visit them very often. Both were sold to different women. She told that “there are many girls in women’s house and woman used to make me do household work and beat me up at times. Her three and half year small sister told-“Offender’s wife used to tell me that Police would take me if I cried”.

Case-3, Seven year old girl is shy. She preferred to keep silent with her bowed most of the time. She is beautiful. Her good looks might have led the kidnapper, a young boy known to the family, to handing her over to two middle-men who sold her for Rs 50,000 to the Banchra Tribe man.

In many research works, it was found that illiteracy, poverty, traditions were the main cause of the flesh trade. For the meagre money parents easily sell their daughters to the perpetrators. They never feel any remorse for their deed.

New trend in flesh trade

Administering drugs and growth hormones to pre-adolescent girls is a new and disturbing trend. Kidnapped minors are injected steroids in frequent intervals to artificially enhance their physical growth. The drugs have come handy as cheaper and easier substitute for pigeon and peacock meat that used to be given in the past to weak girls of the tribe for hastening their growth. In last four years, many community members have taken to administering oral or injectable steroids to young girls. Some of the 34 men arrested in the raids admitted to giving easily available estrogen (a hormone) and steroids such pednisolone dexona and kenacart dexona to their victims at frequent intervals.

Shocking results of the drugs

Girls as young as six or seven years old suddenly grow up, looking like teenagers. The drugs are cheap and easily available over the counter at medical stores. More shockingly, little girls are forced to watch elder prostitutes with customers in dingy rooms, to prepare them for the trade. Since these little girls are not their own children the tribe members do not feel any remorse for this cruelty. In many cases, little girls even had to be admitted to a hospital after they suffered serious injuries to their private parts after being forced into sex early.

Activities of rich businessmen

Rich businessmen, mainly from Gujarat and Maharashtra, pay handsome money for the first timers. First-time sex fetches high prices because there is a belief that by the time the girls turn 12 to 13, they may already have had sex with 50 to 60 men and are susceptible to sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/ AIDS. By the time the kidnapped girls realise that they have kidnapped, it’s too late for them to escape.

Other impact of the drugs

Physical

Apart from the trauma of growing fast in a hellish environment, the impact of the drugs can be devastating on the young ones. Growth hormones such as estrogen advance breast growth and puberty within three to six months, it’s given tiny doses to young women. In girls as young as one years of age, it would serve no purpose. Rather, it would have harmful

effects such as abnormal hair growth in the form of a beard or moustache, and a lot of unnecessary weight.

Psychological

Steroids usage affects not only the body but the mind as well. The mental effect of using the drug can be just as dangerous as an even more serious as the side effects that are physical. Psychosis is a break with reality. The steroid user doesn't feel connected world and instead living and thinking in his own world. Depression is a common side and can be severe that it even leads to suicide. Mania is a feeling of complete euphoria. She may also be prone to violence and rash, impulsive decisions. This can negatively affect the social life of the steroid abuser, which can lead once again depression and abuse of other drugs (www.livestron.com).

Law and order

The accused have been booked under Indian Penal Code, 1860- 365, 366(a), 372, 34, 120(b) and under section 5 of the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act, 1956. The rescued girls have been sent to 'Apna Ghar', shelter home under the direction of child welfare committee. A probe by the National Commission for protection of Child Rights has been ordered by Women and Child Development Ministry, into this sordid drugs episode.

Efforts by the police

The Madhya Pradesh police are gearing up for a major DNA test exercise to ascertain the maternity of 869 girls currently living in the Banchra community at 39 hamlets in Mandsour district (Hindustan Times, March 25:2011). It is surprising to see so many girl children in their settlements, when it's known that women in this community refrain from getting pregnant. When the police sought details of their birth certificate and other medical help they took during pregnancy their replies were not convincing. Many Banchra families suspected of being involved in the racket have fled their villages, locking their house.

Registration of cases in past 30 years

Dodar village in Ratlam district is one of the major settlements of Banchra community frequented by truckers (truck drivers). In Mandsour district where hundreds of families belonging to the de-notified Banchra tribe have been serving on prostitution for centuries, has seen only 23 cases of immoral trafficking registered in the past 30 years (Hindustan Times, 27 March: 2011).

In the official records, a total 23 cases under various sections of the Prevention of Immoral Trafficking Act 1956 were registered in the district since 1978, which includes two cases registered in 2011, three cases in 2010, four cases in 2009, one case in 2008, four cases in 1996, three in 1984 and six cases in 1978. According to rough estimates, the tribe has more than 20,000 members spread across the districts of Mandsour, Neemuch, Ratlam, Indore, Ujjain and Shajapur. Among these nearly 5,000 women were in the flesh trade.

Some efforts to enhance the banchra community

In 1998 collectors of Mandsour and Neemuch had jointly undertaken a reformation drive called 'Nirmal-Abhiyan' with much fanfare. Over 70 girls, who were sent to a reformatory in Indore, returned to their traditional business after a while as the initiative failed to have provisions for alternative source of income for their families. However, a few girls continued with the education during campaign and also got government jobs. In 2007-8, next collector had also initiated efforts to get the community people into main stream by conducting a sociological study of the community people and employing qualified social workers to help the Banchra women to get employment.

Conclusion

There is internal movement of children within the country itself for flesh trade. It is undertaken in an organized manner by organised syndicates or by individuals and sometimes informal groups. Relatives, parents, and acquaintance are part of this as well. Prosecution and protection is the best method to prevent the serious problem. Prosecution includes booking the traffickers and then punishing them hardly. Protection of the trafficked victim includes all steps towards the redressed of their grievances thus helping the victim survive and rehabilitate in the society. Vocational skills training programme can be useful for their rehabilitation in the society. Gender discrimination is important consequent of the vulnerability of girl child. This manifests itself in several serious violations of women's right such as female foeticide and infanticide. New prevention strategies need to be oriented to trigger the trafficking. Working partnership between the police and NGOs, public awareness, community participation, and women education are main prevention programmes. In India Political support is an essential requirement to combat trafficking. Help lines and help booths are very important for providing timely help to any person in distress, especially in remote area.

Although there is an Immoral Traffic Prevention Act in place to aide in the immorality of human trafficking, "it only refers to trafficking for prostitution hence does not provide comprehensive protection for children. Nor does the Act provide clear definition of trafficking". Also, India has failed to uphold the "The Palemo Protocol", which provides protection to children against trafficking (www.wikipedia.com).

Sex between individuals below the age of 18, even if consensual, is a crime. However, the new rules notified on 14th Nov. 2012 to enforce the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act – failed to address how law enforcing agents can identify the accused and the victim when both the persons involved are minors. This concern was raised by several state governments (Hindustan Times, 15 Nov., 2012). The criminal event is ultimately a result of the coming together of inputs provided by the offender, criminal justice system (police, court, correction), victim and society (Schmaller, 2012).

Salient Features of Legal Framework in India

Indian Penal Code, 1860

1. Section 360 A- Procurement of a minor girl (below 18 years of age) from one part to the country to another is punishable.

Suppression of Immoral Trafficking in women and girls Act, 1956

1. Procuring, including or taking person for prostitution.
2. Living on the earning of prostitution.

Immoral Prevention trafficking Act, 1986

Section-7 provides punishment for the two categories:

1. Any person who carried on prostitution.
2. The person with whom such prostitution is carried on.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000

1. The law is especially relevant to children who are vulnerable and are therefore likely to be inducted into trafficking

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

1. Penetrative sexual assault (sec.-3)
2. Aggravated penetrative sexual assault (sec.-6)
3. Sexual assault (sec.-7)

Measures for Prevention of Child Trafficking

1. Identification of vulnerable places.
2. Identification of States.
3. Identification of cities.
4. Identification of villages.
5. Identification of remote areas.
6. Identification of vulnerable society.
7. Identification of vulnerable families.
8. Identification of vulnerable individual children.
9. Identification of major factors for trafficking.
10. Identification of existing resources in the society.

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