

***Bojh* “ The Burden”**

**A Report On the ground realities of
marginalized section girl’s trafficking in
the name of fake marriage/job/better
future**

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INTRODUCTION

The Kosi - Mahananda region of North Bihar and North Bengal has emerged as a source area for the trafficking of children especially for girls child(g.c.)/adolescents and it also has become as a route of cross border trafficking. The mostly children (boy) who migrate on the name of job, come back to home or they have contact with their guardians. But this does not happen with the mostly trafficked girls. Numerous g.c/ adolescent was trafficked on the name of marriage/ love/ job through a network of the traffickers in the span of 10-15 years from this region. Among them a large number of girls could not have returned to their native places or made no any contact with their alimenter.

After all, where these girls have been traceless?????

Poverty is not only one and biggest cause of this blooming business or the compulsion of guardians due to poverty is also not the main factor. The others social callous factors are also responsible to flame the FURNACE of trafficking of children.

Lack of proper alimentionation in dealing with the children, attitude regarding them as income source, perceive the daughters as burden after birth are responsible to enhance the trafficking, along this to bear more children is working as to spread patrol to this fire of business.

It is really surprising that mostly guardians have not any information that where their daughters was married off. They have allotted their off springs to unknown groom under the utopia dreams of topical brokers. It is very stupefy matter that parents have shown aversion to seek out them.

We are not talking about those girls who are happy and living jolly full life in their husband's house. Our wishes and blesses are with them. We are discussing about the pathos situation of those innocents, who have been trafficked and trafficking on the name of marriage/ job/love and are oppressed. Our objective is to bring out those girls from the furnace of trafficking . Along this to punish the culprits and supporting elements. Our main aim is to take an intensive effort so that the g.c/ adolescents could be saved from this awkward in future and aware the community regarding the demure situation !

The outsider groom(?) and their colleague (?) come by the support of local brokers or early trafficked girls to implicate the prey . They give enticement based on intrigue(it may be in cash) to the parents. The parents easily implicate under the lust given by the brokers and immediately hand over their daughter to the unknown groom without any halt. In this way , they fell exhilaration after being confided their burden. Such types of marriages are translated into action in hot haste in so much even the neighbors are unaware. The neighbors/ villagers get information when the mother weeps after the departure of girl. After the marriage, if the married girl do not make any contact or send any message. The guardian also don't effort to get information or remain silent under the assume words of the local mediator. Either the guardians have not information after being cheated off , they have not inclination or they have

economical problems. Some guardians cant make contact because they have not proper trace . Mostly the trafficked girls are illiterate so they also can not write letter about their situation. Numerous of them are bounded to face repugnant maltreatment after such type of marriages or after being fled away with their fate lovers(brokers).

It may be the many of the trafficked g.c./adolescents are sinked into the shambles of sex trade or sold off to another person. Apart from husband ,other male members force to develop sexual relation with them. If they deny then they are beaten and extorted by many ways.

The girls who have been trafficked by above mentioned ways are become as objects of abuse within the domestic boundary or pushed to the everlasting stigma of flesh trade.

These agonies are not facing by 1 or 50 girls and not only occurencing in one or ten villages /blocks / districts . This savage play is playing with the innocent g.c /adolescents of Kosi Mahananda region to implicate them in modeled array. **It is very bewildering situation regarding the whole story that the guardians hand overed their under age/ adult girls to the unknown groom/traffickers with out any hesitation !. The remain silent position of the responsible elements, cast leaders, religious leaders, stake holders, civil society organizations or administrations is also a subject of surprise ! The high infant mortality rate high lights the mentality of community regarding children !**

Is it not our responsible to save our daughters from the clutch of traffickers and mental and physical extortion ?

Is it right way to not provide the proper alimentation?

Is there a difference between goat and daughter?

Why the guardians ruin the life of daughter by his own hand?

The presence of 24 brothels under this region is one of the major cause of trafficking and sexual exploitation of g.c./adolescents / girls. Where they are bounded to burn in fire of sex trade . These brothels are working as a transit point, supply point, source point and collection point of g.c./adolescents /girls.The number of brothels and involved girls is flourishing.

The moments of brothels will be as a tremendous cause of AIDS in future !

When the SATI – PARTHA was prevailed in society then the women were burnt at once, which regarded as the most cruel system. But in the trafficking, the g.c/adolescent has to accept her life dying in every moment, which is even worsor than the death itself.

Who is responsible for the situation of the g.c/adolescent in the Kosi Mahananda region?

Guardian?

Community?

Administration?

Civil society organization?

Cast leader/ Community leader/ Social leader/ Public representative?

OR

None of them

OR

Self the girls are?

The responsible elements have converted the life of the girl————— TO RUN DOWN IN DROPS TO BECOME HOLLOWED.....

Women are the mirror of the society and we are going to see the our faces through this mirror (situation of the g.c. adolescents/ girls)

TRAFFICKING ?

The United Nation General Assembly,1994(Resolution 49/ 166) defined it as- “The illicit and clandestine movements of persons across national borders, largely from developing countries with economies in transition, with the end goal of forcing women and girls into sexually or economically oppressive and exploitation situations for profit of recruiters, traffickers and syndicates, as well as other illegal activities related to trafficking, such as forced domestic labour, false marriages, clandestine employment.”

Has been put off BURDEN !

“Apke Beti Rani Jaise Raj Karegi”
(Your Daughter Will Rule Like A Rani).

“Apke Beti ko Duph Bhi Nahi Lagega”
(Your Daughter Will Never In Touch Even with Sun-Raise).

“Mummy Jee, Aapko note se Tawl Dunga”
(Mother You Will Be Weighted With Gold And Silver).

“Wah Sukhi Gharh Me Ja Rahi Haih”
(She Is Going To better Home).

Mentioned are the labyrinthine castle wind with tempting phrases frequently coined by the groom and their agents (touts and the traffickers) before the guardians. The woeful story related to the gloomy and dreadful life of children begins from this coined castle wind and are pushed to the eternal damnation. This damnation of children especially g.c/ adolescents is a clear mirror of the degenerated situation of this region.

Low agro productivity, effects of flood, increasing agriculture land being water logged, unequal distribution of land, illiteracy, inadequate social and welfare measures by government agencies, social orthodoxies and stigmas, population explosion & dwindling employment avenues-all have contributed to give a twist to the fate to the lives of a vast number of children, particularly females/ girls child in the Kosi-Mahananda region consisting of 14 districts of North Bihar & North Bengal (INDIA). These districts are – katihar, kishan ganj, Araria, Purnia. Shaharsha, khagria , Supol , Begushray and Madhepure in Bihar and Maldah, North dinaj pur, South dinaj pur , Drjiling and Jalpai guri (west Bengal).

The result of adverse social, economical and ecological conditions is that numerous girls/boys/girls child are being trafficked or sold to other parts of the country from this region. A large numbers of girls child/girls are being thrust in the sex market or they are forced into physical and mental extortion inside the domestic walls in the places their destiny takes them.

These districts are located near the borders of Nepal or Bangla Desh. The trafficking and physical exploitation of girls and female children in the Koshi-Mahananda region of North Bihar and North Bengal has been increasing during the last one decade. Katihar, Araria and Kishanganj dists of Bihar State are proving to be a happy hunting ground for the traffickers and broker of the victims.

The poor guardians hand over their daughter to unknown 'suitable bridge grooms' through local traffickers giving false promises to them of marriages or an offer for a lucrative job. The trafficker lures guardians with assurances of a better future for their daughters. In many cases, it may be the parents are won over by the trafficker with money. The poor guardians are gullible enough to think that they will get relief from having to spend money for their daughter's marriage.

Even when the traffickers lure the guardians with the offer of giving a lucrative job, they are assured that their daughter's income will consistently be sent to them as a financial support. "She will be sending Rs 5000 a month home", is an attractive 'package' offered to the guardians.

The poverty stricken and mostly illiterate guardians are unaware that they are thrusting their daughter into a live of mystery and hell-often towards a road ending at the brothel house or a place where she becomes a victim of all sorts of sexual and physical exploitation.

The river *Kosi -Mhahananda* and its tributaries play a dominant role in the lives of the people of this region. Local poets have described her have made amorous descriptions about the river comparing her to a ravengous minded who keeps on changing her ways (the river is notorious for shifting its track) to take revenge from the relatives of her parents house (Kosi region). It has also been described as a perpetual curse for the region-making thousands of people homeless every year and destroying crops, live stocks and infrastructure. Ironically the real daughters of this region are moving towards a live which is full of misery and horror. It is a transitional phase which threatens to change the peace and tranquility of the area.

There is a folk song stating that as the girl grows, the 'Bojhwa'(burden) of the parents also increases. Bojhwa to kaise lagi par ("How can we get over this burden) ?, asks the Mother and Father of the girl baby . And altimatally the alimenaters have found out the way to put of their burdens by hook or by crook !

Survey

A survey has been carried out in 53 villages located in the districts of Katihar, Araria and Kishanganj of Bihar (India) to understand the intensity and intricacies of the problems of trafficking & sexual exploitation of children especially girls child/girls. It was a very difficult and tedious task. The methodology adopted for survey work was as follows:

- ⊕ Primary data collection by survey format.
- ⊕ Meetings with community.
- Discussion.
- ⊕ Case Study.
- Observation.

The Points of Survey :-

- Girls child / girls / Boys
- Parents of trafficked children/girls
- Rescued girls
- Community leaders
- Traffickers
- Brokers(Local and outsiders)
- Girls/girls child from red light areas
- Socio-economical background of trafficked girls
- Net work
- Present situation
- Role of community & Civil Society
- Threat
- Challenges
- Action required.

We have developed a survey format to be taken on door-to-door basis. We selected 3 districts and 3 old blocks for survey work. But we had not selected any particular village for survey and conducted the survey at a random basis. To carry out the survey we adopted three steps.

STEP- I: Volunteers were apprised and sensitized about the problem before providing them training for carrying out the survey work. The aim, objective & methodology of survey work was imparted to the volunteers through a series of workshops.

STEP-II: The volunteers visited several villages regularly. The aim was to establish a contact with the villagers during the process of carrying out the survey. They established contact with villagers and made efforts to talk to villagers on the subject. However, most people were either hostile to talk on subject or adopted an unhelpful posture. There were occasions when our volunteers were roughed up and abused. "What we do with our daughters is our concern, not yours", were angry remarks that our volunteers had to come across. They did not want to reveal any information of subjects pertaining to trafficking of girls/children. Often, people were not even of the meaning of the word trafficking or its implications or perhaps they faked ignorance.

Often even guardians falling victim to the lures of traffickers did not want to cooperate the volunteers for survey. **“My daughter is happily married off. But I do not know where her Sasural(husband’s house) is”**, remarked guardians to our volunteers. Ironically, many guardians genuinely had no knowledge of the whereabouts of their daughters. It was a hercules task to gather information for the survey regarding trafficking going on in these areas.

STEP-III: Then we started to organize meetings with villagers at Gram *Panchayat* level or even in smaller groups. The object and usefulness of carrying out the survey was conveyed to the villagers. Slowly we managed to develop a friendly relationship with the villagers which proved useful for carrying out the survey smoothly. The villagers-group leaders, guardians, *Panchayat* representatives approached us as volunteers to give us information and help. The volunteers with the help of villagers were able to carry-out survey. The interactive sessions resulted into less resistance faced by our volunteers.

Background of the area

Districts like **Katihar, Araria, Purnia** and **Kishanganj** are extended to an area of 26,322.40 acres between north-east of Bihar. The above districts are suffering from acute poverty by unequal distribution of land and increasing flood prone area and it's by products. *Koshi-Mahananda* and its tributaries cause heavy loss of property and human life in an area of 15,360 sq. kms due to erosion, sand-casting, water logging and floods there is catastrophe and disaster year after year.

	Katihar	Araria	Purnea	Kishanganj
Population -	23,69,533	21,24,831	25,40,786	12,94,063
M-	12,44,943	11,08,924	13,25,794	6,66,910
F-	11,44,590	10,15,907	12,14,994	6,27,153
Literacy-	M- 45.51	46.50	46.16	42.80
F-	24.03	22.14	23.72	18.49
Birth rate-	37.66	36.76	38.06	37.97
Mortality rate-	77	117	89	113

Characteristics - Densely Populated Flood Prone Area.

Total Land - 2632.40 (Hc.)

Catchments area of Mahananda -24753 sq.km.,

Catchments area of Kosi -58494 sq.km.

Major Rivers - Ganga, Mahananda, Kosi and its several branches.

Soil type - Black clay loam. **Average rain fall -** 1595.3 mm.

Major crop - Paddy, Wheat, Jute, Maize, Pluses

Major cash crop - Bamboo, Banana & Vegetable

Infrastructure (up to 1960) – **Railway -**419 km., **Road-**5296 kms.,

Canal -More than 2000 kms. **Embankment-** 336 km.,

Out of old 43 blocks, about 30 are flood- prone.

Water logged area under “Kosi Command” area - 4,46,731 Hct. (up to 86), about 7 lakhs Hct.

Under ground water level - up to 15 feet

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACK GROUND

After independence in 1951 first massacre of India took place at *Chandwa Rupaspur* in the dist of Purnia. The occurrence was related to the land. Government of India made first amendment of the constitution related to land reform and Purnia was the first district in the country where the land survey was started. At that point of time there were 16 big land lords (Estates) in Purnia. A major part of land was occupied by them. According to 1951 census about 67-70% of the total population had land less than 2 acres in Purnia 17.52% land was occupied by 1.14% holdings. As per 1971 census near about 2.45 lakh agricultural labours were landless, and 1,58,870 tenants did not have their own land. Just 51 families of the area controlled 31% of the land. The efforts of Govt. towards land reforms did not prove beneficial for the landless in the old Purnia district. Due to high political and administrative manipulation of Estates more or less the problem exists till today. The main objective of Bihar land ceiling act 1962, was to fix the land ceiling per holding and declare the rest land as surplus land and distribute the surplus land among the landless by red cards. The landlords registered their land in the names of their relatives and new born babies. Landlords had religious ground to keep their possession on the lands. The landless families have gotten red cards officially but practically they have no possession of the land. The people who try to get the possession of the land are driven out forcefully. It is very difficult for the card holder to fight against the landlords. The landlords file cases against the landless involving them in different false issues. There are large number of cultivators (landless) living on other land called Bataidar. Under the provisions of B.T. Act, the Bataiders get the right on the land which they cultivate and their name are enrolled in the land records as "Sikmi Bataidars". The powerful land lords did not record their name in the lands records. Besides this, a new problem arises because the Sikmi right is not hereditary, So after the death of the paper holder, the landlord occupy the land by court orders. In Bhoodani Yagya movement about 88354 acres land was donated by the landlords and about 25049 acres land was distributed among 26093 card holder landless. Among them 14819 card holders are settled on the land and the rest are moving to and fro with papers till now. The Govt. passed "Bihar Bhoodani Act 1954" but it became a farce. To solve the problems of the landless for leaving', "Bihar homestead tenancy Act 1970 and 73" comes, But large number of people have not *parcha* still now. One of the most Vital points is the fact that the no. of Red Card, *Baskit Parcha* i.e. land concerning papers issued in the name of women is negligibly small. This is the area, where "Verbal Divorce" is common in ST/SC and OBC. The divorced women are driven out from the home (land). They have no right on the land. In many cases widow who gets the land, the landlords and their brokers declared her as *Dyne* (witch) to take the possession of her land and properties. People are not aware of their rights on lands and other laws and not aware of proper administrative system due to illiteracy. Landlords take advantage of their ignorance and harass and depress them in many ways. Thousands of cases are pending in the court of these districts regarding land disputes. The poor and downtrodden sections of the society are in no position to understand the complexities of land problems nor have the financial ability to fight prolonged legal battles.

The land problem have resulted into food insecurity, shelter problems, migration of agriculture labours due to unemployment and very low rate wages, social extortion and exploitation of downtrodden section of the society. Very recently in the year 1997 Bhoomika conducted a study related to land issue of the region in 30 villages of the Araria district. The finding of the survey land documents and version of the villagers has been revealing enough

to point towards the failure of the land reform in the area. *Out of the 30 villages surveyed as many as 60 legal cases related to land disputes had been going on in the which 258 persons are involved as and 30 of them have been sent to jail for over one month.*

The survey found 81 families who were given land card' for the land coming under the "Ceiling Act", only 11 families out of 81 families had possession of their land while 70 families could not have their possession of given lands. 105 *Bataidars* (share croppers) out of which 53 had no legal documents. However in 52 cases *parchas* have been distributed under the "Tenancy Act". While 30 of them had possession of their land, the rest had lost their land. Out of the 2100 families only 1511 had *Baskit Parcha* as liking or hereditary land. The rest 599 families did not have a scrap of paper to show the nature of land, they were dwelling on. A large number of population where also found dwelling beside roads, *Gair Majurha* land and besides canals where they could be given *parchas* according.

The four dist. of the area composed of the plain topography with several river farming medium to large river basin. The major rivers Kosi, Mahananda and its branches are perennial trouble for local people and carry water and sand at a very high speed. Soon after independence a flood control system was planned for the region. Government of India prepared a model of agriculture development (Kosi command) through the flood control projects and irrigation project ignoring the suggestion of the British experts who were against trying to control rivers by constructing high embankments. Hence a long chain of embankments were created both side of rivers and irrigation canal. The picture given by the Govt. on irrigation of land and increase in agricultural production was a very rosy and it forecasted decrease in losses due to floods. But after the implementation of "Flood control plan" situation became even more alarming. As a result these structures (embankment, canal, road and railways lines) the natural flow of water was obstructed and created water logging and brought in silt to the flood prone areas and deposited into crop field. Before the constructions of those infrastructures the flood came where 3 to 4 times in a year, having more than 2 to 3' heights and remained in the area for 3 to 4 days. But now the flood attacks is like flash floods remaining for 5 to 8 times, at the level of 4 to 5' and in some areas water logging remains more than one month. The area of water logging and period is increasing year by year.

For instance in 1987 embankment on the river Mahananda breached at 22 places and created a scene of water tornado. The breaching of embankments have become a regular phenomena. The created infrastructures such as railway line, roads, irrigation canal, buildings and residential houses have destroyed by "Flash water" of flood and converted a large chunk productive lands into water logged area. In every year there is a large loss of human and animal population, crops, food grain, seeds communication link, loss of created infrastructure, a residential areas and public property. Due to "Flash Floods"

people runs to high places for Shelter, where they are bound to live in open sky and facing Sunlight and rain and get suffering of many diseases. The situation of women and children becomes pathetic. The Government's relief measures prove to be too little and too late and is often marred with corruption. After the flood water recedes people face the challenge of survival. Poor people go to under the clutch hold of *mahajans* (money lenders and landlords) for there foods and reconstruction of their own demolished homes. Epidemic strikes causing loss of human and animals lives in the post-flood scenario.

Earlier, people were adopting traditional flood coping mechanism and try to save their livelihood and minimized the losses from flood, but after the introduction of "Flood control programme" people have gradually reduced their self preparedness before flood and created their dependency upon flood control system, The heavy loss of properties and human life in a area of 1537 sq.km. due to erosion, sand-casting water logging and floods. The farmer where bound to change their crop pattern due to long periodicity of water logging and flood.

The situation of woman becomes critical and painful during and after the flood. As a result of the floods, able-bodied male members of the family migrate outside the area in search of jobs because local agricultural activities come to a standstill-offering no or little avenues for employment. The women members are often made the bread earner of the remaining family members-including the aged and the children. Several have to opt as domestic helpers, some resort to selling of vegetables and there are some who have taken up the work of carrier women-because Nepal exists near by where all sorts of goods can be taken in and out across the porous border. Being a female with breast feeding children and girl children, they are ideally situated for the customs and the police officials to ignore them.

Thus the women of this region have learnt to 'come out of their homes' and survive without the support of their male family members. The girl children who have seen their mothers and other female family members working outside the boundaries of their homes are also used in these professions by their elders. Ironically the ecological, social and economical destruction has made large sections of rural women as working members of their family. However, it this very scenario which makes the adolescent /females vulnerable to touts.

Ins and Outs of survey (mirror)

- Girl- child/girls trafficking situation has reached an alarming proportion. No effort appear to have been made towards checking the malice and during the last one decade trafficking has grown unchecked and without social resistance.
- Trafficking has increased due to the nexus between the local brokers and the agents who usually come from outside the village.
- Persons or agencies responsible for curbing or checking trafficking have maintained a conspicuous silence over the problem. The silence of the persons and agencies has not only complicated the problem -it has given an unhindered and unfettered area for the traffickers. The intellectual, religious and caste leader, elected representative, civil society organization, police and administration have ignored this increasing fatal problem or they have shown no interest to take action against the traffickers or change social conditions.
- Traditionally perceived as a burden by the poor guardians, the girls and girl children are projected as social burdens -an image which comes as an advantage for bargaining for the touts and traffickers. The guardians are only 'relieved' to be 'unburdened' by the traffickers from their responsibility.
- Girls child/girls are trafficked only for malicious purpose. It can be either for throwing them in flesh trade, 'short term marriages, using them as mistresses, domestic hand or for merely sexual abuse. Girl children are objects of 'business' for the traffickers.
- We have surveyed 53 villages of under the 3 dists (Katihar, Araria & Kishanganj). The survey gives some startling facts. 204 cases of trafficking were detected in which 173 trafficking cases related to girls child/girls and 31 cases were involving boys. On an average from every village 2.78% girls child/girls (around 3 girls child/girls per villages) had been trafficked. This data instances the alarming situation regarding trafficking under this region.

If a large survey organizes in this area, the possibilities is that more about than 25 thousand girls have been trafficked from this region on the name of flattery marriage, job or love.

Trafficked Girls Child/Girls

- From poor families or are ethnic minorities.
- From impoverished families.
- From very low level of literacy
- From marginalized sections of the society such as the schedule cast and the other OBC, Poor & Muslims community.
- Maximum are teenage girls.
- From red light area's girls/girls child.

Age of trafficking of girls child

As many as 85.54% girls who had been trafficked were below 18 years. Out of 173 the 148 girls child/girls have been affected by trafficking under the age of 18. These girls have been trafficked on the name of job/marriage/love. This data shows the situation of child marriage under this area and situation of child labour also. This indicates that the touts and the traffickers aim and objectives are clear. They prefer teen aged girls because they think it fetches greater price in the flesh market and that the teen aged girls are in no position to resist any sort of mental or sexual torture inflicted on them. It also indicates that the guardians want to get rid of their 'burden' as soon as they can.

Literacy rate of girls/girls child

The percentage of illiteracy of trafficked girls child/girls is as high as 90.17. In most cases trafficked girls are totally illiterate. This situation indicates the literacy rate in rural areas among women and it is also indicative towards the mentality of guardian or community regarding girls education. Neither could the trafficked girls contact their guardians nor write letters to them. It may be they are also not in position to flee away!. The population which is most hit by this menace is the class which has been deprived of education. Not surprisingly, this area has the lowest rate of literacy in the county. The level of girl literacy is even more pathetic. Illiterate girls and often their guardians also prove easy prey for the traffickers. They are gullible enough to believe the lies fed to them about riches and the comfortable life they will lead after 'marriage'.

Social situation

The social situation of trafficked girls are following:-

S.C. - 46.24%	MUSLIMS - 17.34%
O.B.C. - 35.26%	Others - 2%

This is indicative that the 'social justice' group of castes and classes are the most badly hit. Most political parties and leaders have focused in getting the support of these castes –particularly the *dalits*. Despite the lip service given to 'Dalit politics' no political organization or caste organization have made a public issue of trafficking. Despite the popular perception of social empowerment given to these castes, the ground reality is different. The lower castes and even the minorities continue to be the most socially exploited group-even in the case of girl trafficking. For centuries all over India the *dalit* women has been the most vulnerable section for sexual exploitation. The situation has not changed even today only the modes of sexual exploitation have changed. Previously they were sexually exploited within their domestic and social boundaries, now they are reaching the flesh market and other localities of physical and mental torture.

Marital status of trafficked girls

82.65% trafficked girls were unmarried. Not surprisingly quite a few of the girls were found to be adolescents because that is the age group targeted by the traffickers. However, it also shows that guardians of this region are not adverse to 'marrying off' the burden. In some cases the victims are deserted by their husbands and since there is a tradition of 'oral divorce' in this region they are considered even heavier burdens by their guardians.

Techniques

Paying some amounts to the guardians and middle man (it may be in many cases).

Use of false identification.

Luring guardians and girl child/girls with false promises of better job opportunities and marriage.

Seeking the help of a local broker or other contacts to approach the victim's family as a well-wisher.

Purchasing the girls from the pimps of red light area.

Lure the girl with love.

Persuading the guardian and girl by glib talk about the wealth and caste they are in.

Approaching impoverished, illiterate marginalized sector and ethnic minorities families.

Selling girls after bringing them in from outside into flesh market (under red light area).

Nourishing them from their childhood, under red light area.

Trafficking on the name of marriage/ love

88.73% girls child/girls have been trafficked on the name of marriage, 3.46% on the name of job and 8.09% eloped on the name of love from this region. Again the large number of trafficked girls in the name of marriage to totally strangers indicates the desperateness of their guardians to get rid of them. It speaks volumes on the economical status and the dowry system prevailing in the society. Without trying to find the facts about the prospective grooms, the guardians are happy to get rid of their girls without having to pay dowry and in some cases even making some money from the 'marriage of their daughters'. During the survey many guardians cited dowry as the sole reason for marrying off their daughters. The touts and traffickers often pose as 'businessmen' and reside in the locality for six to eight months to impress the guardians and the girls.

In a village located near Kishan ganj town a cloth hawker came and stayed at a villager's house for some time and eloped away with his host's daughter. Later the same girl returned with scares all over her body. The girl said that she had been kept in Delhi and was mass raped several times. She was forced into prostitution. Tragically she died two months after her return unable to cope with the trauma.

18 Years old Babita has a baby child. At present time she is living with her parents at village *Balwa* under *Katihar* district.

Babita had filed a case with the support of *Bhoomika*. The final chart sheet has been submitted by the police against the culprits under which they are responsible for the deteriorated situation of Babita.

Case No - 5/9-1-2003 under section 498(A)/ 376/ 34

Babita daughter of *Jogain Takur* has belongs to OBC. Babita has no word knowledge. Babita and her mother have been hocused under the sophisticated tricks of the local brokers. Ultimately Babita was married off *Madan singh* from *Mahatama Jyoti Foole Nagar (U.P)*. *Madan Singh* had identified himself as a Brahmn. But he actually was belonged to schedule cast. Babitas' damnation period started from her marriage date - 10-03-2000. The innocent Babita was baffled physically and mentally. According to her statement she was brutally raped by vicious male persons at sashural including her husband, her father- in- law *Jhawa singh*, her brother- in- law *Charmi Singh*. Clothes or sometimes other things had been pushed in her mouth, her hands and legs had been tightly pulled back, while rapping. She was beaten up and food was stopped about 2- 3 days. She was forced regarding the demand of Rs 5000/-. But her parents were not able to collect this amount. Her husband was trying to sell her to another male members.

But, however, the pregnant Babita came back to parents house from the persecutive enviroment.

Ultimately after a long wait Police has filed a final chart sheet. Babita has started to work regarding the hawking of the food materials by the economical support of *Bhoomika* and is alimenting her and her baby.

In this way, foiled Babita has reached a ladder of success but last success of ladder is left.

After a struggle and striving for justice, court has enforced a notice against the culprits being awared of the truthfulness of case in the matter of *Mehru Nisha*.

Mehru Nisha from the *Kishanganj* district had filed the case by the support of the volunteers of *Bhoomika*. Her statement was recorded by the court on dated 10th August. Her filed case has been taken into congligence after the statements of the witnesses.

Case No - 74C/2002 on dated - 7- 8- 2002.

Mehru Nisha was married off to *Md. Sawkin Ali* from district *Ali garh (U.P)*. Her husband and her father- in- law were going to sell her to another person because her parents were not in position to provide their demands. The father of *Mehru Nisha* is a agricultural labour. *Mehru Nisha* and her baby child was beaten and abused by her husband, father- in- law and other male members being denied to provide the money.

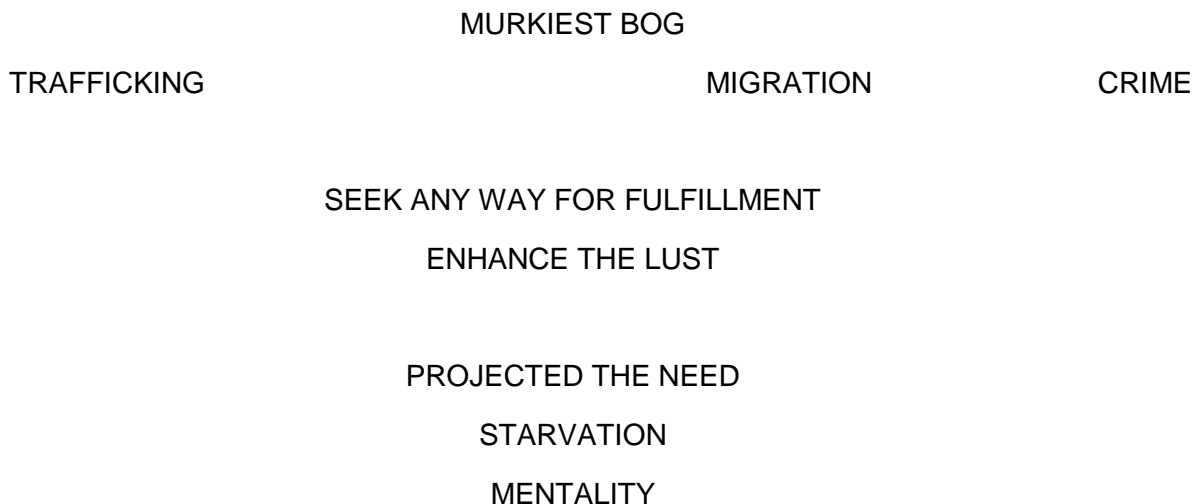
After some days, Mehru Nisha, however, fled away from her husband' house to her parents' house. And she had filed the case. Now, she is living with her father.

WHY KOSHI MAHANANDA REGION ?

- Due to social, economical, natural and geographical situation this region is highly productive for trafficking of children especially girls child/girls .
- Due to lack of traditional employment & new job opportunity.
- Migration
- Thinking of children as an income source.
- No fear of law or resistance from the local people to traffickers scheming and manipulating situations to suit their purpose.
- Provide support & shelter by local people to traffickers for financial gains.
- An insensitive community towards trafficking of girls .
- Failure of family planning.
- Land problems.
- No access of poor to Govt. welfare programs.
- Lack of knowledge regarding the anti trafficking laws.
- Illiteracy.
- Poverty.
- Drawbacks of Flood & Water logging.
- Starvation.
- Decline in human and social values
- No attention regarding proper alimentation of girls child/girls.
- Negative attitude regarding girls child/girls.
- Filling up the requirements cheap labor with children.

Since, proper alimentation is a far and wide issue for guardians regarding girls child/girls, alimentation is also a dry facts. The birth of a girl child is often mourned and there is a clear discrimination in favor of a male child. Infanticide was common in the upper caste in this region. But in the lower strata now a days the girls may not be killed, but they are often ignored and neglected. Life is most cases for the girls is more painful than instant death.

The pressing need to migrate in search of work creates a fertile ground for trafficker to exploit this need and profit from it. Migration and trafficking are distinct and separate but at the same time integrally connected. There are, however, linkage between two activities - migration and trafficking. Following structure instances, how life demises:-



Traceless girls

According to the survey report, 32.36% trafficked girls are traceless or their guardians having no information about them. These trafficked girls have not yet made any contact with their guardians after being departing from their homes for a 'better life'. But what is more shocking is the fact that most guardians have not bothered to make efforts to trace out their girls. They accept it as their fate. The guardians do not want to think that their lost daughters and even listen about a possible solution to trace them out. When our volunteers tried to talk to the concerned guardians, they were often met with angry retorts. "Where ever she is living and whomever she is living with she should be all right", they replied. In many cases the guardians were unable to say where they have married away their daughters. There appeared to be no inclination to trace them out or even take the help of our volunteers towards this direction. In many cases they were unwilling to sign an application written by our volunteers to the local police station or administrative officers about their cases. There is a clear perception that the *traceless girls are either in the flesh markets or being physically exploited or may have even died.*

Gopi Rishi gave the application on dated 6-08-2002 by the help of the volunteers of Bhoomika to S.P. (Kishanganj) regarding her traceless daughter Malawati. He belongs to schedule cast (Mushar). According to the statement of Gopi Rishi his daughter has not made any contact to him for four years. Mirkhi Devi from his village came to his house and conveyed Malawati on the name of cultivation. After some days, Mirkhi Devi said that his daughter was married off to a rich person at (U.P). She denied to give any trace about Malawati.

Malawati is abiding the ignorance of her parents and listless position of the local administration or the responsible elements of the community.

Role of guardian / eliminator and children

Due to complete lack of the concept of smaller families and the craving for male children -the size of families are extremely large and most times unsustainable due to meager incomes. This family background makes growing girl children to succumb to the glib talks of touts and middle-men who talk about marriages, a comfortable life or lucrative jobs. Many rural families have no land and are often deprived of the opportunity to lead a qualitatively better life. guardians living under poverty line are easy preys for glib talking touts who promise a better for their status regarding their daughters. Guardians of orphaned girls perceive them as burdens. In a large number of cases girls are sold with the consent of their guardians. During interaction with guardians most do not agree that they had 'sold off' their off springs to the touts. But they do agree about the financial pressure they were in leading to the decision to send their daughters with touts and traffickers.

Even after cases of sexual abuse and trafficking are brought to light, the guardians do not file F.I.R. against the culprits. Most guardians are easy victims to the grin talks and promises and false news about the well being of their daughters given to them by the local touts.

With the community and the guardians showing a totally indifferent attitude towards girls child trafficking along this, the negligible role of parents and community towards girls child/girls trafficking-the traffickers have been able to cultivate a well knit network of touts in the area. Luke warm role of GUARDIAN and COMMUNITY have been applauding the trafficking cases. Both are responsible for girls trafficking in this region.

Guardians often think that it is their rights to bring children to this world. But they have been forgetting that it is also their responsibility to provide proper alimentation. The attitude of guardians towards girls is deplorable. Girls are ignored and neglected lot-facing prejudice even in their homes.

32.36% trafficked girls are traceless or their guardians having no information about them. These trafficked girls have not yet made any contact with their guardians after being departing from their homes for a 'better life'.

Some of them came guardian's houses only one time-in a span of four to five years after their so called marriage. Most parents expressed complete ignorance about the so-called Sasural of their daughters. In a large number of cases they have no information about their daughters. Some parents and guardians had made futile attempts to seek information. Incredibly in most cases parents appear to have washed off their hands from their traceless daughters and left them to their fates. Most parents and guardians do not show any inclination to find out the whereabouts of their traceless girls child. They have not bothered to lodge a case in the local police stations regarding their missing daughters. Most parents prefer to believe the version given to them about their daughters by the touts that they were living a 'happy married life' in their Sasural(in-laws place) on in their respective 'jobs'. The touts paint a rosy picture of the life led by their daughters.

In the survey it is revealed that only 84 guardians knew the address of the place where their daughters had been married. In as many as 63 cases they showed ignorance even about the address of their daughter's in-laws place. Even without knowing the address of their daughter's in-laws place-the parents willingly married off their daughters and did not find it relevant to make queries about the persons to whom they married their girls. They showed blind faith on the words and promises made to them by the local touts and the traffickers coming from outside the village. Most have them do not realize that they have pushed their daughters to live a life in hell. It means 36.41% alimenator had not tried to collect such any information regarding where they are going to marry their daughter. They are totally ignorant about the background of the groom and his social background. They have handed over their girls to grooms silently and in haste through a local tout. The situation is a harsh truth and reflects the social respect a girl child enjoys in the region.

Our base line survey was carried out in only 53 villages of the region for this report and our survey is going on in other villages to acquaint the trafficking situation and the situation is similar . The number of 'traceless daughters' in the region will be mind boggling. It is a matter of speculation that how many girls are traceless-thrown into the flesh trade or facing sexual exploitation in 14 districts of the region having similar ecological and social patterns. The economic disparity prevailing in the society in this region makes social and even human values go haywire. According to our moderate estimate around 25,000 girls of this area have been trafficked by touts and traffickers. Many of the cases go unreported and uncared by the civil society.

Economical Background of Guardians -

The guardians of trafficked girls are overwhelmingly agriculture labourers. Their guardians work as agricultural labourers. The percentage of agricultural labourers facing this problem. According to our survey it is 90.75 per cent. Most of them do not have their own land and work in the fields belonging to others. In many cases this class of labourers do not have land even to dwell and are residing in huts built on government or other land. Since the level of literacy is low, they are easy preys to the illusions created by traffickers and the local touts. The area has one of the largest migration problems in the country. There is large number of families where male members are away for months together.

Family size

An average guardian have around six children.

Due to large families guardians are unable to provide qualitative life to their off springs. Not only the level of nutrition is low, the concept of providing education to them appears to be alien to the guardians. In the case of girls the thought of giving proper nutrition and education is even more remote. In an overwhelming number of cases the victim girls are totally illiterate. Due to large families girls are perceived as burdens. Discrimination against them in comparison with boys starts from home. Touts come to such guardians with money and make an offer to take away the 'burden'.

Crippled by poverty, guardians are not able to foot the expenses for marriage. A 'marriage' without having to spend is a dream and it comes true for such families. The touts present them grooms with 'land, wealth and huge houses'.

One father told our volunteer that the groom had promised him that his daughter would be so well off that not even the sun rays would be able to touch her skin. The father-a landless labourer, was advised not to marry off a daughter to a stranger. But despite the advice of our volunteers and the village head and even the daughter herself, the father forced her to marry the groom. It is another matter that the girl managed to escape her husband within three months of her marriage bringing tales of torture.

Without verifying the facts the families hand over their daughters to persons who have mysterious backgrounds. The actions of the guardians may be both unintentionally and intentionally. Even after learning about the misfortune of their daughters, they generally ignore it and leave their girls to their fate.

During the survey, our volunteers tried to discuss the issue and try to provoke a response from guardians about their 'missing daughters' and discoursed regarding girls child/girls trafficking with villagers.

They stated - *"What can we do, we are poor and were bound to give our daughters to an unknown person. If we don't do this, the society denounces us because of our unmarried daughters and delayed age. Local persons told us about the family and the groom. We believed them". It is hard to understand if the parents married off their daughters in haste due to their financial needs or due to social compulsions !*

ROLE of the Community

The community always plays a dominant role in either stopping or promoting such cases. In the case of trafficking the community has largely remained mute spectators. During the survey we found that the community appears to be fully aware of the activities of these traffickers. But there is very little inclination to stop the growing menace.

By remaining silent spectators of this heinous crime, the community has only served the cause of traffickers if not playing the role of a catalyst in the crime. Most of the community leaders of the villages are fully aware of the happenings related to trafficking of girl child, but reasons best known to them have remained silent. Even in the last Panchayat elections - the matter never came as an issue.

During our dialogue with the villagers, we found that the people were aware that girls were being given to unknown grooms on the pretext of marriages. In a few isolated cases the community leaders-particularly the youths have objected to the proceedings and even saved a couple of girls being taken away by the touts and grooms. However, there are many more cases in which the community leaders have not only remained indifferent but actually connived with the touts and traffickers. It was revealed to us that some community leaders had taken financial benefits from the local touts for remaining silent and even helping in the trafficking of girls. Every Judas has his price for gold coins, they say.

According to a political worker in Sarinda village in Pranpur block of Katihar district a large number of girls hailing from his village were being married off to grooms having mysterious and also dubious backgrounds. "Initially there used to a positive reaction to these marriages as stories of girls hailing from very poor families going into rich families used to float across the entire area. But later we found that the parents of these girls did not have a clue to the whereabouts of their daughters", he said. He conceded that guardians were committing a crime by marrying off their daughters -completely unaware of the consequences. "The sin is being committed due to poverty and naïve character", he argued. He promised to oppose such marriages in future . But unfortunately such voices are an exception rather than a rule. Girls of Sarinda continue to be married off to unknown destinations.

Lately, due to reports appearing in the media there have been a couple of meetings in towns to discuss the problem. The former SP of one district conceded that girl trafficking has become a major problem in the area and even concerns Nepal and Bangladesh. However, these words have remained confined to the elite class residing in towns. The issue has not been addressed to the grass roots-the villages where the problem has its birth. In villages an overwhelming number of people still remain silent as one girl after another is thrown into the flesh trade and sexual abuse.

Incidentally, the so-called marriages -due to silence are becoming more and more acceptances as people have begun to accept them as fait of the poor. The marriages are carefully executed. All the rituals right from the exchange of garlands to the weeping of mothers and other female members of the family takes place.

Religion and caste plays a strong role in the villages of Bihar. Even the houses of villagers are placed in accordance to their caste and religion. A place where Mushars (a sect of dalits) is called Mooshar toli, similarly, the dwelling of Yadavs is called 'yadav toli' and so forth. While villagers are inclined to talk on development of their caste or religion. But there is no talk on taking on the growing menace of girl child trafficking. Its just not in their priority list.

According to our survey 78 percentage social workers and community leaders had information about girls being trafficked from their area but less than 7 percent of the aware of the consequence the girls have to undergo because of such marriages. There are very few places in the area which do not have caste or community leaders right from the village level. But our volunteers found that even the caste and community leaders preferred to remain tight lipped on the issue or ignored it all together despite having full knowledge about these marriages. Despite a caste dominated society, leaders claiming to be the guiding soul of their castes, girl trafficking has risen in the last one decade at an alarming rate. It has happened in a decade which is perceived as the age of backward and dalit empowerment social struggle. The fact remains that in this social struggle the females and particularly the girl children have been given the back seat. It is surprising that while in one hand these sections of the society were propelling themselves in social and political spheres on the other hand the girls belonging to these castes are being trafficked.

As a result trafficking of girls in the area is being carried out without any obstacle or resistance. No action has been taken on trafficked girls by guardians and community leaders. Trafficking of girls in this area is not being taken seriously by the people and the government agencies. Due to unhindered activities, traffickers have been able to spread their net wide across the 14 districts.

THE TRAFFICKERS AND NETWORK

In mostly cases trafficking cases are translated into action through very well organized network in the form of family / friend / community network. All these networks have been

helping to perpetuate and sustain the increasing 'demand' for child/girls from the Koshi-Mahananda region. In all the cases, the tout happens to be a local resident. "Former trafficked girls are presented as 'role models' to the villagers-attired in fine clothes and jewels. In some cases a girl taken by the traffickers is brought back to the village after a span of 4 to 6 months and presented to the villagers as 'happily married'. She plays the role of a bait for other families having teen aged daughters.

A victim, Rupa hailing from Katihar district and aged 15 was married to Pappu Shah-a resident of Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh. Rupa's elder sister Rambha played an active role in getting the marriage facilitated. Rupa was mass raped by her husband and the male members of his family. Her husband also had an extra marital affair which he continues even after marriage. Her husband always asked her to sleep with another person.

An elder sister(trafficked girl) came to her native place with a man as a form of groom and was trying to marry her younger sister to that man. When we tried to collect information regarding the address of groom, he was showing hesitation. While this debate, the trafficked girl came forward to protect him and said that it was her family matter. This marriage was translated into action after few days in hot haste and they fled away. This is not a coined , this is a real story which is related to a village of *Pranpur* block under *katihar* district.

According to our opinion, many guardians having information regarding the hellish life their daughter's are facing in *Sasural* (?) but they do not want to make it a subject of discussion !

In many cases, the husband is a trafficker himself and uses the new entrants as sexual partners. They sold off the trafficked girls to other buyers. They may or may not be the last buyers.

People involved in the network of trafficker

- i) Outsider: - Such people come from outsider to convey the girls/girls child.
- ii) Supporter of Trafficker :- Such people, involved intentionally, but it may be having no knowledge regarding result of trafficking.
- iii) People of red light areas.
- iv) Aliminator/ parent
- v) Trafficked girls/women
- vi) Mobile sex worker/agent

Trafficker come as a lonely groom or some times in groups. They usually reside in the house of married trafficked girl of the village or their local relative. In many cases the traffickers first set up the local touts with the lure of money here, married trafficked girls work as a middle women. Relatives provide girls for traffickers inside the community. The traffickers sometimes use the help of a person posing as a 'Sadhu'(God Man) who predicts a happy and prosperous marriage for the daughters of the targeted families. This network proves that girls who have been trafficked from this region, all belongs to the same caste. Like wise, if one girl

from any community has been trafficked, belongs to Schedule Cast (Mushar) then she helps in the trafficking of girls belonging to the same caste. In the wake of, due to have advantage without any investment of money in this trade local people are involved in this lucrative trade. Some times, trafficker or middle men/women create pressure on the poor parents to get their girls married off.

A women from Pranpur, disclosed that "My husband work at another place. In his absence my daughter had been married off to a groom by my relatives. My relatives told me that groom belongs to Brahman Cast. But after marriage I knew that he belongs to Schedule Caste."

In many after being departed to outside, the trafficked girls are allotted to another broker or trafficker. A network has grasped their root from source area to supply area.

If an in-depth investigation is carried out, the number of people involved in the network may amaze the concerned agencies and authorities.

Routes used for trafficking

Selecting only busy & crowded routes for departing the girls. Traffickers always use busy and crowded bus stands and train stations to take away the girls. This helps them not to arouse suspicion in the minds of the local residents. Crowds offer obscurity and a veil of protection. Local touts are used to take the girls to trains. Katihar, Barauni and Kishanganj railway stations in Bihar and New Jalpai guri and Malda stations of West Bengal are the departure points of the girls who are trafficked. All these stations are well connected with other parts of the country and long distance trains for other parts of the country including the Metros-other Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkota are available.

Network under Red light area

Trafficked girls are transferred to one red light area to another red light area under Kosi Mahananda region.

Some times the trafficked girls are provided to red light area of Bombay or other place under times boundary.

Trafficked girls are sold off in the red light area of big cities or other place.

Supporting elements regarding trafficking

FAMILY

Alimenator babies under red light area (departed from outside)

Guardian

Relatives

Husband

Community

Local touts who are citizens of the community.

Women already trafficked.

Guardians whose daughters have been already trafficked.

Pimps or organizers of flesh trade under red light area.

Persons posing as 'Spiritual Gurus'

The role of supporting elements is prominent in girls child/girls trafficking. Trafficking is impossible to sustain without their support. Appearance of supporting elements is available in all cases, we found.

Both men and women are involved in the trafficking racket. It is not only a person, but also a chain of persons. Various people are engaged in trafficking, directly or indirectly.

The network of trafficker has grasped root in these areas due to not having taken action against the broker. The trafficking of girls is becoming a good source of income.

Trafficked Girls are departing to

Most of the girls child/girls have been departed or departing on the name of these districts given below. Here is some of the districts-

- ? Raibrawlee ? Gajabad ? Bagpat ? Faijabad
- ? Mahatma Jyoti Foolenagar ? Aligarh ? Ferojabad
- ? Aagara ? Gonda ? Muradabad ? Sidhant Nagar
- ? Rampur ? Lakhanpur ? Lakhindar ? Manipur
- ? Devaria ? Sitapur

Apart from this girls have been departed or departing to the big city

Some Purpose

- Red light area
- Domestic hand
- Massage parlor
- Fate marriage
- Sexually abuse
- Vulgar dance in theater
- Call girl

The Predicament of Trafficked Girls

About 5.78% trafficked girls are living with guardians. They came after fleeing away from their *Sashural*. Some of these minor girls had aborted their pregnancies. Many girls have a baby. Tragically, they and their babies become a burden on family. Many of them are not accepted by their guardians or the community. In the lack of any future prospects they are in a very embarrassing situation. They are mentally & physically tortured. Most guardians refuse to accept the girls even if she manages to escape from the clutches of her tormentors. She is left with no other alternative but to return to her tormentors where she is assured of her food.

It can't be interpreted utterly that trafficked girls are at *Sashural* (where she is married) or allotted to second, third men.....????? But wherever they are, have been facing heterogeneous exploitation. Many of them are forced by husband or male family members to receive multiple sexual partners. If they deny to do so or effort to flee away from *Sashural* they face harsh punishment which could also mean the ultimate humiliation of being mass raped. They are forced to abide by the dictates of their in-laws.

Due to physical deterioration she died after 5-6 months. Legal action has not taken due to have not trace or any information regarding the groom.

Mahesh Lal has lost her married daughter Sarola Devi due to intolerable corporal bizarre behavior and anguish being given in her husband's house.

Mahesh Lal has no own farm for agriculture, only a little hut for living. Late Sarola Devi was totally illiterate and was working as agricultural labour.

16 year old Sarola Devi married off to a unknown groom named Raj Kumar on dated 20th May 1997. Raj Kumar came from *Gajiabad* to sell goods in that village. And was living at the hut of Mahesh Lal for about 10 days with a treachery damnable intent.

Sarola Devi went away with husband after marriage. About 5-6 months she was in good condition. After few days, her husband always abused her physically in which massive rape is containing. She had been brutally beaten by husband and other male members being denied physically.

When these maltreatment was increased she fled away from *Gajiabad* to *Kishanganj*. She reached to home with the help of known person. She was suffering from mental and physical sickness. Lots of knife scares had been made on her body.

She went to another world.....

May be same tyranny is occurencing with someone by the same tyrant.

Sanchawl and her innocent baby had to paid the cost of the neutral response of the community and parents in dealing with the mentality of daughter.

17th years old Sanchawl Devi was united into marital life in 1998. Her father died in her childhood.. She had not own land only a small house, built on other land. She belonged to Mushar cast and was totally illiterate due to lack of proper alimentation.Sanchawl worked as an agricultural labour with her mother before her marriage.

A unknown boy under the assumed name came to Suresh Chauhan,a denizen of same village, with wrong approach. Suresh Chauhan convinced Farmina Devi the mother of Sanchawl regarding her daughter's marriage with unknown groom. She was convinced due to starve full situation and statement given by Suresh said that his daughter's husband house is also at *U.P* and she is in a better situation. The unknown groom took away the Sanchawl with her mysterious dream.

After marriage Sanchawl was in contact with her mother but after few days her parents was informed that she and her baby have died during delivery.

Sanchawl bestows relief to her parents from the burden.

Statements Given by some Girls

"I was forced to receive 5-8 sexual partners a day. I fear if I try to escape I will be beaten up, food will be stopped and I will be abused and tortured. My husband and his family members create a situation where I have no other alternative but to accept their terms." "I was promoted into this flesh trade by an acquainted woman. I was totally unaware of my future. I had to meet many male person and do hard domestic works daily. I was often beaten by wires, sticks and other things when I refuse to abide by their orders. I was shocked when I had to first receive another person in my bedroom after marriage. I felt cheated".

"When I fled away from Sashural & came back to my parents house I thought my parents will be happy after being seen me. And they will be patronized me after being aware of my plight. But all my hope were short lived.. I and my baby are treated as social outcasts by my parents & family member and the community.

"My parents always trying to convince me to return to Sashural. They say - "We can not accept your burden along with your baby because we ourselves are on the verge of starvation.

*And now I think that it is better to go my Sashural because there I and my baby will not have to face this situation. It is better to die there instead of living a life of an outcast in my own home.
My life & future have deceased."*

We talked with victims and escaped trafficked girls during our survey and got an insight to their mental dilemma & agony after their return. Several of them worry about what people of their community would think about them and guardians now.

They suffer a loss of childhood, faith, health and human values. Whenever they try to re-integrate into their community they face their past terrible situation. And they are forced to return -away from family members and the community. Poverty persists - some girls return to *Sashural* because they have a hard time making a living. Due to betrayal of trust by their own family members and their community, they feel ruined and degraded. They revealed that they feel mentally isolated.

There is a joke of western U.P. and Harayana that a newly bride came at *Sashural*. After three months she asked her mother-in-law that who is her husband? Her mother-in-law responded, " I got married since 30 years ago and till now I am not able to tell that who is my husband then how can you know about your husband only after three months" !

Strangely, the thin line dividing a joke from harsh reality appears to have faded for many of the trafficked girls who have managed to return to their homes with bitter experiences of mass-rape and torture of their so called marriages to wealth and prosperity.

According to an F.I.R. filed by girls who were lucky enough to escape from the clutches of their husbands and their in-laws, they had been sexually abused not only by their husbands and other male family members but also from males from outside the family-with the consent of their in-laws. The tales of woe, torture and sexual and physical exploitation is not confined to just one girl-but goes on and on with an overwhelming number of girls managing to return.

The Trafficking Sources

- The red light area.
- More children of poor guardians.
- Divorcee and repudiated girls.
- Deserted girls child/girls.
- Greedy alimenator.
- Unsatisfied married girls with their marital life.
- Beggars.

Red light area and moving sex

The oldest profession in the world had over the years flourished in this region with minor girls being purchased or girls eloping from their homes and ultimately finding themselves in the clutches of the Dalals(middle man). Apart from ' local purchase', girls are procured from Nepal, Bangladesh and West Bengal by enticing their relatives for a job/ marriage. Quite a few girls/women in these red light areas are girls/women who have been brought into this profession under the pretext of getting married. There appears a well formed network between the brothels.

Dola – Dark but sharp features. Dola is aged about 18. She hails from Maldah district (West Bengal)and has studied till class 10.She had been pushed into flesh trade. Eldest child of 7 children her father died two years ago. A familiar lady brought her into the trade from her native home who brought her here on the name of giving her a job. She did try to resist and even try to escape, but it was futile. Beaten up , denied food and raped were methods to break her down. When she stopped resisting customers were sent to her. 'I have ceased to be a women. I have become a machine to meet the lust of the customers', she remarked. She said that he had made a friend among one of the customers who takes back money to her family in West Bengal.

24 big/small brothels are pervaded in this area. They made a transit point for girls where girls are brought from the remote area of this region (North Bengal & North Bihar), from the out side of this region & they are also sent to red light areas in other parts of the country. The pimps of brothels collect babies in many ways. They look after them and when these babies become grown up they are thrown into the sex trade. Basically, these babies are traceless from family, obtained or stolen from beggars. Beside this, the under-age girls are procured by pimps by lure of jobs or promises of a dream marriage. According to the survey in the district Kishanganj among the red lights had 34 girls who had grown there ever since they were babies and unaware of their actual parents. The survey also indicates that the red lights of Kishanganj had 13 girl babies who were not living with their parents but were actually being brought up in brothels. The 24(big or small) red light area of this region are located nearer to the National Highway, in rural area(near village), near fair ,rural market and between the town.

A sample survey conducted in 7 of these brothels had dreadful indicators and trends to show that the age group of the girls are—

- 14-18 years - 45%
- 18 -22 years - 40%
- Above 22 years- 15%

The figure do not tell the human angel of the tail in which minors are brought in by pimps and thrust into the fire of flesh trade and where they become victims of all sorts of sexual exploitation and sexual diseases

Apart from 24 red light areas in this region, there are about 400 girls/women engaged in moving sex in trains and trucks. Girls/women engaged in this process live with the community. Girls are engaged in this trade in brothels and out side and do not have the slightest idea about health hazard. Due to complete lack of regular medicine check- up, the diseases are not detected at an early stage. Once the symptoms of the diseases gets more pronounced, the brothel owner do try to get it treated but only to the extent that they recover. Due to their poor food habits and lack of remedy many of them are effected by diseases.

Most of the girls are inflicted with Reproductive Tract Infection, Quite a large number of girls are suffering from disease like SYPHILIS and GONORRHEA. They also suffer from LEUKORRHOEA- due to which a brown fluid with a pungent smell is released from their private part. This fluid is Bacterial. These ailments also affect the heart and a large number of sex girls also suffer from heart problems. When they are not able to carry out business then they are bound to fight with several diseases till the death.

Threat of AIDS

If any girls of red light area have HIV positive then by all probability a number of visitors they are entertaining every day must have acquired the dreadful disease- as it is sexually transmitted. It can be safely presumed that these customers may be transmitting the dreaded diseases to their family but also to other girls living in other red light area they visit. The trains carrying army personnel to the sensitive North Eastern state are also in danger of acquiring these diseases as mobile girls indulge in flesh trade inside the trains. If a HIV positive girl/woman transmits the disease to just four customers a day- 60 per cent of the customers are local. One can just imagine the danger this area is in. It is sitting on a VOLCANO so far as AIDS is concerned. If the family- particularly the wives of customers are taken into account the situation becomes even more alarming.

How many girls who involved in flesh trade of this region have sex diseases or how many of them are HIV positive- there has been no survey conducted in this field so far and it is impossible to establish the numbers without a proper survey. If a proper survey is conducted on this account, it would not be alarming if the results point out that a large number of sex workers are afflicted by sex ailments and even AIDS. Visitors and customers coming to these red light areas have a large number of youths and even teenagers. On an average if 5 customers come in contact with 1 girl then $2250 \times 5 = 11250$ customers come per day, around $11250 \times 30 = 337500$ customers come in touch with unsafe sex.

On the first hand, the lives of the girls are burning into ashes, on the second hand due to this AIDS with its fearful face is spreading day by day. Mostly the youth and teenagers are the easy prey of this threat. But the situation is also shocking that the innocent women are bound to abide the punishment of the laces of their husbands. And the first and last prey will be the innocent women who is not responsible from any where.

Trafficking from the Indo-Nepal border area

The border area of Indo-Nepal is proving to be a rich hunt for traffickers. The social, economical and environmental situation across the borders is identical. Being an open border access to each others localities is easy. There are marriages and relationships being built throughout the year. The network of the traffickers gets help from these cultural and geographical facts. These are one of the major transit points for girls trafficking from KMR and also from Nepal. In many cases, it has been observed that the relatives or the girls who have been affected of trafficking are involved in girls trafficking.

This trade has been proving as a lucrative trade. Trafficker on the name of family with children and old women & sometimes on the name of wife conveys girls very easily. Topical Nepalese brokers lead them until they reach to the main junction (N.J.P. or Katihar). The result of girls trafficking is in an acute position. The problem of girls trafficking is increasing day by day. There is an ample demand of Nepalese girls in India. So, trafficker to enhance this trade has modeled many types of networks. This trade is running sanguinely without any oppose because there is no awareness among the population of both areas of border side nor any type of barrier has made by them.

No need of visa, passport to cross the border and having various administrative complications provide a sufficient help to the brokers to cross the border. There are so many administrative systems have posted on border at both side but they haven't interest and awareness to check the girls trafficking. The movement of the population of both side goes on without any resistant. There are many routes at Indo Nepal border to come from Nepal to India.

No body comes forward to dialogue on the cross border girls trafficking from Nepal or from India. No attention never made by the border area administrations, civil society organizations and local communities. So, the girls from both sides are trafficked smoothly and now these areas have become as a 'Happy Haunting Ground' for the traffickers. Now, the movement of traffickers under the border area has become heedful and fiery.

Nepal, since, connected with India so it is spontaneous that the drawbacks of trafficking of KMR effect the population of Nepal also. Because their is a deep relationship of "ROTI and BETI" (Blood Relationship) between them and they have the same or similar cultural activities.

Carrier girls/women

Migration has become as a major work for the Male of this region (India and Nepal border area). The migration has often created problems for the women, as there are many reported cases of desertion and raise questionations on her survival within the boundaries of her family. Due to social and economical compulsion there are around 30,000 women working as ' carrier women'- engaged in the cross border vending / hawking of food grains/vegetables/ others good such as electronics items, and cosmetics etc.

This compulsion or need enhances girls/women trafficking and numerous girls/women are trafficked from the area of Indo Nepal border to India. Nepalese girls/women are procured from Nepal to India through border on the name of fate marriages or services. Girls' guardians are staunch that their daughter will go in a venerable family or she will have a better status service. After this, girls are used in physical and sexual exploitation through heterogeneous sectors. Mainly girls procured by different enticing they are closely connected with poor families. Basically, girls are used in red light area for sex-trade. Now days, on the name of 'NEO FASHION OF SOCIETY TO CHANGE THE CONSERVATIVE ENVIRONMENT', Nepalese girls are used in Gent's parlors as a body massagers. Many of them are used in the theatre to perform the vulgar dances. For this, a joint network of brokers is working in this region.

Changing pattern of trafficker, community & role of Bhoomika

While the programmes of Bhoomika in the working area, many cases related to g.c/girls trafficking came in light. Bhoomika had taken this issues as a challenge and carried out a sample survey in 53 villages. And the projected facts of survey were very dazeful and painful. The survey report was showing the alarmic situation regarding trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls. A striking step has been taken by the group of Bhoomika and its network with its limit circumstances to aware the community regarding the dimensions of trafficking as an experiment. Meetings have been organized with the self- governance- unit and other local civil society organization and community to aware and combat the activities of trafficking. While the beginning, some positive results have came.

The result of our effort is that the community has began to receive the given messages but in circumterence. But looking to the adequate problems, it is needed to carry out adequate long term programme at grass root level in this region . This alarmic problems could not be checked or rooted out being organized the work plan in particular area or in limited circumstances. Because, if one area is checked then the rest will be as haunting ground

Various activities are carrying out by Bhoomika under the region which are as below-

Meetings with Panchayat(self governance unit).

Meetings with community at village level, block level, district level and regional level.

Meetings with adolescents / girls/ women.

Training with volunteers.

Distribution of Information materials.

Rehabilitation and case follow up.

Survey in other places.

Flash the situation through media.

There is a distance of sky and earth between this work and other welfare programme .Because in other programmes, the community is beneficiaries but here the beneficiaries are the girls/ women which are regarded as last person at family level, community level, cast level and culture level also. While the picture, the community and different stake holders are responsible at community, individual and their responsibility level. So it is a very uphill task to change the situation regarding g.c/ adolescents trafficking.

The girls hailing from Kishanganj came to their Mukhia to inform regarding the out sider grooms. Then Mukhia tried to stop the marriage but the father of daughters was not agreed and he organized the marriage with those grooms silently. After few months, one of the trafficked girl fled away from their husband's house and is living with their parents.

Due to the protest of local villager, now the traffickers dwell in other place out of that village. And the local brokers bring the girls from village for marriage.

A mother of 13 years old daughter took her daughter to marry her at U.P due to local activeness of community. After few months, that girl came back to her native place.

During our interaction with a cross section of villagers-the incidents of girl trafficking ranged from tragedy to the humorous. We were told in a village located in Kursela block of Katihar district that a boy was dressed up as a bride for an outsider groom after taking money from him. Immediately after the marriage was performed, the 'bride' fled and disappeared leaving the groom and his men shouting foul !

Bhoomika has organized meetings under 20 Gram Panchayats of Katihar, Araria and Kishangang district. Some of these meetings have been repeated

for better result. We are closely watching the 7 Gram Panchayat. And it is our believe that the trafficking occurrences is diminishing in that Gram Panchayat. And it is a remarkable result of our effort that Bhoomika has established the issue of trafficking as a issue.

Kosi ———“ AN HOURT-TOUCHING STORY”

Girls being ignored and neglected by their parents is more of a custom than an exception in this part of the world. It finds its reflection in folk tales. There is one on Kosi-the river which ravages these parts of the country year after year. It is a folk-tale of Kosi-Mahananda region :- “ Kosi was a daughter of this region. She was married off by her parents at ‘BARAH CHETRA’ (in the Himalaya). When she went to Sashural she had to face a lot of taunts and mental agony from the female members of her in-laws. She had a verbal row with her mother-in-law & sister-in-law. And after verbally lashing out at them, she fled to mother’s land in search of help.

She wanted help from parent’s family member or community people. But all of them ignored her pleas. Never the less, Kosi continued to crying.

But no one was there who could respond to her pleas. May be, by tradition here, daughters are considered a burden. Kosi was ignored by her parents and dubbed as a burden. The tradition appears to have continued in this region. Like Kosi daughters are ignored and neglected. The marriages are quickly finalized by parents not with the aim to make their daughters live a happy life, but to ‘unburden’ themselves.

Incidentally, according to folk tales, Kosi got angry with her parents and community members for ignoring and neglecting her pleas for help against her in-laws. . Then she cursed the people of this region that this region will be always effected by flood and it will bring untold mystery to the region and its people. The masses of this region will always have to survive in poverty and fight for a living on a ‘hand to mouth’ basis. Salvation from the curse of Kosi has always remained the central issue of this region and the situation related to floods turns worse every year.

THE TURNED OUT QUESTION IS THAT

People of Koshi-Mahananda region have been living with one "CURSE" given by one of their daughters (Kosi). Ironically their daughters continue to face the same neglect from their parents. The response of the parents and the community to the pleas of their daughters for help has been lukewarm. The central question is-" will the people of MAHANANDA REGION GET SALVATION FROM CURSES, GIVEN BY TRAFFICKED GIRLS FROM THIS REGION"?

Ironically, more than outsiders, the people responsible for trafficking of girls child from this area are their own family members and relatives, people living in their neighborhood, members from their own community and even their own parents.

Girls are not considered as a human being. They are considered as an object which can be utilized anywhere and in any manner.

Parents perceive their children especial towards girls child/girls as a income source instead of providing them a proper alimantation.

It is also said "BETI LAXMI HOTI HAI" "(daughter is goddess of wealth)". Now it is proving to be ironically true in this region. It is said that the status of women is the mirror of that particular society and also a measurement of the morals of the men in particular and the society as a whole.

The increasing trafficking of girls child/girls, their sexual & mental exploitation is the symbol of deteriorated condition of moralities of community. Most trafficking effected villages have no access to Govt. welfare schemes. Villagers have been enduring with the failure of welfare programs & along with this officious of middle man .

There is two symbol of degradation of any community :

Migration

Flesh trade

Both the above points have been grasping root in Kosi Mahananda region. Migration has been proving as a main base for in search of job opportunity due to lack of traditional employment & no new avenue of job. On the other hand, get rid of the burden of daughters and have a source of income. Parents or community people are allotting girls child/girls to trafficker with no remorse. Migration and flesh trade are two symbols of degradation setting in the community.

While girls child/women may have chosen to migrate, either legally or illegally, they are never trafficked with consent. It is mistake to speak of trafficking with consent' as the use of violence, deception, intimidation and other abuse which are central to the definition of trafficking are not consented to.

Even as we were conducting this survey a new awareness appears to have gripped the society on the subject. After our volunteers approached the community after facing several resistances, there was a marked change in their attitude -however small it may be. There was an incident when a 13 years old girl was saved by the community in Siranda village in Kartihar district after she was married to a 30 years old man with a dubious back ground. This was despite the fact that the girl's father was not present and her other family members had consented to the wed lock and filed a false affidavit at Katihar's lower court about the age of the bride and the bridegroom. After learning about the incident members of the community searched out the couple and retrieved the minor girl even at the cost of receiving physical injury in an accident. Our study of the problem in this region makes us to draw the conclusion that due to increased Flood ,water logging and reduced agricultural activity in the last 10 years. Incident of child trafficking and the number of red light area have increased.

It is our firm belief that many of these traceless girls are working as sex-workers. Nobody is sure what happens to the sex workers afterwards. Whatever has come out from the survey conducted by us is the fact the region has become a fertile land for traffickers and brothel runners searching for new entrants in the oldest profession of the world.

In many cases, we found a demand for 'infant girls'- being purchased from beggars or people living in abject poverty and even stolen. Most of them are relieved as it frees them from the `de-responsibility of having to give dowry for marriage and are even gives them additional money.

The story of ill-fated girl being trapped in the vicious flesh trade through trafficking is not limited in a couple of incident or cases. During conducting the survey, the volunteers came face to face with the same stories of misery, neglect and deceit unfolding itself many times. They were not only confined to the 53 villages we surveyed but also over 200 other villages of which our volunteers were told by the local people.

These stories keep unfolding themselves at least 1000 times.

The greatest folly of the society is that elected members and community/cast/religious leaders have remained silent regarding this problem, as have the police—even sensitive police officers express their helplessness. The police of this region have preferred to ignore these cases even when they are happening beneath their nose. Most of the policemen express helplessness on the plea that the people fail to lodge cases against the culprits. “Its more of a social problem than a policing matter. First, there should be people willing to come forward asking for help”, said Narendra Singh—an officer-in-charge- in Jogbani near the Indo-Nepal border. However, for most of the policemen trafficking of girls from this region is a non-issue. They tend to ignore it. The number of cases lodged in police stations is dismal despite so many traffickers and touts operating in the area. A complaint on trafficking is often dismissed as ‘domestic problems’ or ‘too complicated to take up’. Since the victims are from the poor section the job is considered ‘none-paying’. Laws against trafficking ‘Immoral Trafficking Act’— is too old and are more focused on red light areas.

It is impossible to forget the image of girls utilized for sexual exploitation, slavery and physical extortion. It is like watching a LIVING DEAD BODY.

Daughters are been given to brokers and traffickers like goats being delivered to butchers. 39.30% guardians are strangers for their sons-in-law. They are totally unaware of the fate of their daughters and have shown no inclination to find out. Just as after selling of their goats they show no interest in how they are butchered, the guardians show no interest in the fate of their daughters after unburdening themselves.

During the survey it was felt that mostly guardians have shown little inclination to investigate about their daughter. Only 8 parents of trafficked girls showed their interest to search their daughter. So many of them appear to have become ‘humanized’ to human and social values or were too involved in their day to day fight for survival to care for such things. The very name of the fighting the issue in the court appeared to be frightening for them.

On the other had the guardians of trafficked boys have filled survey form materially. They were active towards the investigation of their traceless sons. It is a stark instance of our community bias against the female gender.

AIDS threat looms in Kosi, Mahananda region: report

By Arun Kumar
The Times of India News Service

PATNA: In the next five years, the Kosi-Mahananda region may become the biggest AIDS-affected area of Bihar, says a report issued by Ceased and Bhoomika. The report is based on a survey jointly conducted by the two organisations in Katihar, Purnia, Araria and Kishanganj districts of the state from December 1999 to April 2000. These are border districts touching Nepal or Bangladesh or the state of West Bengal.

According to the report, the districts have altogether 16 major sex-trade centres, where 2,500 girls are engaged in the flesh trade. Apart from other sex-workers in these districts, there are a substantial number of sex-workers belonging to nomadic tribes, who operate on the national highways 31 and 39 and on the trains passing through them. The military compartments of the trains passing through the Baruni-Katihar and Kishanganj-Calcutta sections of the NE and NF Railways are the best hunting grounds for the sex-workers, says the report.

Alarming is the new trend of removal of uterus noticed among the sex-workers. This is because the pimp at the sex-trade centres, who are mainly Nax, a nomadic tribe traditionally associated with the sex trade, find it useful for saving the expenses on abortion and the loss of earning four days a month when the sex-workers have a period, the report claims.

The report says that the sex-workers are generally now in the age-group of 14-25 years as against 16-33

years earlier. Presence of minor girls is quite common at all the sex-trade centres of Lakhnighari, Gulab Bagh, Katihar Mur, Harid, Bannaniki and Dharnaha in Purnia district, Forbesganj, Foghoni, Khabaspur, Dharamganj and Gidhra in Araria district, Kattahari and Khagra in Kishanganj district, and Kalipara, Basantpur and Sahmari in Katihar district.

As customers nowadays prefer minor girls, such sex-workers from these centres are sent to metro cities like Mumbai from time to time for a short duration as also sold to brothels all over the country, the report maintains. A significant trend noticed in the survey is the substantial decline in the age-group of customers. Now teenagers constitute a major part of the customers patronising the sex trade in these Bihar areas. The other major sections of the customers are truckers and military personnel passing through these areas.

Another important trend noticed in the survey is the decline in the percentage of girls from Nax families engaged in the flesh trade. At present about 70 per cent of the sex-workers in these areas are non-Nax. Most of the non-Nax girls are from Nepal, North Bengal, Bangladesh and the hinterland of the Kosi-Mahananda region. Rearing of girls for the sex trade is prevalent among the Nax too. The report notes that the influx of non-Nax girls has tamed the sex trade all the more cruel, perhaps because the Nax operators do not feel any affinity for these outsiders.

The report says that there is complete lack of health awareness among the sex-workers.

Our experience during conducting this survey was both revealing and painful. It was revealing that such a large number of girls belonging to the rural parts of this region were 'traceless'. It was a painful experience to realize that daughters of these area of the victims have nothing to speak out for them. They are a neglected lot and even parents chose to ignore their very existence in the family. As the country gears up for reservation in elected bodies for women, here is a section of girl children who have been left to fend themselves by the community leaders and the government agencies. It is our firm conviction that if a survey is carried out at a larger scale the number of missing girls-ultimately landing up in brothels in various parts of the country or being sexually and emotionally abused would be mind boggling.

The survey reflected that instead of treating girl children and girls as equal-needing proper care, education and upbringing, they are being treated as a source of 'income'. First by their parents and guardians, who are guilty of agreeing to marry them off to persons with uncertain and even dubious track record. Secondly . traffickers and touts-preying on them for commercial use of their flesh. Finally it is the community which treats them nothing more that an object of sexual pleasure. The pathos and emotional values take the back seat.

We firmly believe that the trend if not checked will not only vitiate the moral and social fabric of the region, but will also play havoc with health. With over 3,000 sex workers-many of whom are among the 'missing' daughters in various brothels of the region the awareness about AIDS was alarmingly low. If a proper HIV test was carried out, we firmly believe that the results would shock the county-most of the state's health department-which continues to boast that the number of AIDS patients is the lowest in the country. If the trend is not stopped one can only imagine what can happen to this region in the near future. Though a section of the media like 'Aaj-Tak', 'India Today' Indian Express, The Telegraph, Pioneer ,Stateman, Hindustan, Sahara- Samay , Anand Bazar and Times of India have carried reports on this issue. We firmly believe that nothing short of a major campaign will curb the inhuman evil.

The curse of Kosi is unrelenting. People of this area reel under her curse year after year-many are forced to leave their homes again again-go to unknown destinations for livelihood. Though according to Mythology Kosi's curse was for the people in general it is the female section of the community which is the worse sufferer of a society which is becoming immune to the evils of one of the oldest professions of the world. The number of girls being thrust by the traffickers to the flesh trade and untold miseries due to poverty stricken families, an unthoughtful community, gender bias and an indifferent law enforcing agency is showing . One daughter of this region Kosi cursed the entire society. Today

there are thousands of daughters of this region forced to live a life in hell . What will happen to this region when it has to face curses given by thousands of its daughters? What will happen to the future of daughters taking birth in this region? This is just the beginning!????????????????????????????????

Steps suggested for challenging the menace:

- i) It is needed to follow up the cases regarding trafficking & to take striking action against the culprits. So that the network of trafficker would scatter and punishment would be given to them.
- ii) Seek the traceless girls / boys.
- iii) Reintegrate the rescued girls having baby in community.
- iv) It is needed to provide training based on future job opportunity to rescued girls. So that they would not be burden on their family. They could be dependent it self.
- v) To aware the people against the sort of trafficking, on the name of job or marriage. For this, it is needed to organize meetings in small groups with Panchayats regarding trafficking situation. And to acquaint the people regarding drawbacks of trafficking on the name of marriage or job, real identification of trafficker & knowledge about available laws by the help of I.C. Material.
- vi) Make an emphasis on government to seek the traceless girls.
- vii) There is a need for a comprehensive policy on child trafficking because available policy does not contain any thing specifically for child victims of trafficking though it does talk about protection of children against neglect, cruelty and exploitation. And the trauma suffered by the victim both while being trafficked and there after.
- viii) There is a need for a comprehensive legislation on child trafficking which goes beyond children prostitution and address other grave forms and purposes of trafficking of children.
- ix) There is need for training for law enforcement.
- x) Sensitize the police personnel and administration.
- xi) To empower the girls child/girls it is needed to patch them to educational programme based on future job opportunity.
- xii) Effort to diminish the gender based repugnant alimentation regarding girls child.
- xiii) Initiative to make education and proper alimentation of girls child/girls as a issue in abject area because education and proper emendation is not a prominent issue in these area.
- xiv) Aware the people for have no more children so that children would not be as a burden on family.
- xv) Confide responsibility to community people to resist social evils like dowry, sexual exploitation, extortion etc. And make an environment in community against demur social evils.
- xvi) Open a marriage beauro at Panchayat level by the support of Gram Panchayat and effort for a materially registration regarding girls marriage.
- xvi) Rescue and rehabilitation of sex-workers.
- xvii) Registration in Panchayat of such people who will go outside in search of job.
- xviii) Make aware and responsible the community leaders, civil societies organizations to resist this problem.
- (xix) Especial programme based on alternative job opportunity for the children of red- light area especially for g.c/ adolescent including youth and teenage.

xxi) It is needed to establish the checking points to check the movements of trafficker and identify them. For this, the checking points can establish at in following points :-

Katihar Railway Station.
New Jalpaiguri Railway Station
Siliguri Bus Stand
Maldah Rly station and bus stand
Barauni Rly. Station

This turned out problem indicates the social and economic situation. Women and girls endure the dire offspring of problem at the most. Grasped root of trafficking in these region is the apparent evidence.

For extermination, inevitable long term plan is imperative to organize especial focus on women and girls child in these abject and deprived area. So that the economic & social situation of people would amend. General people would get the advantage of government and non-government programme. And all ongoing welfare programme in these region would translate into action unavoidably.

The response of national and international some Govt. and non-governmental organization in abject area is around lukewarm and out of access. So, it is must that organization would take these region under their working area.

Long Term Plans, may be or others :-

- Education for children especial focus on girls child.
- Try to provide new job opportunity as cottage industry.
- Strengthen of civil society and make them responsible for social problem.
- Knowledge regarding flood coping.
- Vocational training based on local agro product.
- Especial programme for people rapped to red light area and their children.
- Promotion of diversified and mixed cropping pattern.
- Re-open of land reform and land development.

Now, more women working for smugglers

By Ananta Sharma
The Times of India News Service

BATNA: Devastating floods in the northern districts of Bihar have led to large-scale migration of males seeking work elsewhere and left thousands of women and children unaided for. These hapless women have either become net-workers or work as "carrier women" for smugglers along with their children. In fact, there has been an alarming rise in the number of children involved in drug peddling.

The vicious circle has today resulted in more than 2,000 women engaged in prostitution in the eastern districts of the state such as Khatwa, Patna, Araria and Kishanganj and over 10,000 women and scores of children involved in smuggling activities. The greater tragedy is that women in the sex trade start young and die young, even though the number of deadly HIV has been identified in the area, not much being done to help them.

Colleges, schools, government and govt-aided NGOs mean much to little Babam and Geeta (names changed) who have no choice but to carry smuggled goods on their heads along with their young mother. Six, Six, the 10-year-old, was deserted by her husband, who migrated to earn a living in 1981 after their crops were washed away by floods. "Now you see the much better off we are than Araria Area", they say. The girls do not even know what kind of business they are involved in.

The tales of woe of such families and women are standing left unaided by the migrating male members of the family, women are left at the mercy of the people who take advantage of the situation. And probably to protect themselves and their families from starvation they enter become net-workers or

start working for smugglers plying their trade across the international borders. In fact, they are controlled by "syndicates" based in Angam, Naxalbari and Siliguri. The "syndicates" enjoy political patronage and their claim is so great that the trains which are supposed to halt at the Naxalbari station for just more than two minutes, stay there for one hour and a half to two hours. Even syndicates receive other benefits including land holdings.

Women earning a living through smuggling have to face extortion and violence by local, police and customs personnel at various levels. A number of cases of drug peddling by them have also been reported. Despite so much risk and harassment involved in the work they do, they barely manage to get Rs 1,000-2,500 a month.

According to a survey conducted by a non-governmental organisation Bhoomika Bihar which is trying to help such persons, there are more than 20,000 women working as hawkers and vendors, and of this 20,000 are working as 'carriers' for smugglers. The 'carrier women' move around in trains which pass through areas near the international bordering in Khatwa, Patna and Naxalbari. They do not purchase any tickets for travelling and nobody asks for it.

This trend which started in the early 1980s, has now become quite rampant with able-bodied males shifting to greater distances. In old Patna district, over 75,000 acres of land was controlled by 54 families and majority of the population was landless. The population census of the area shows decrease in the number of land-owning farmers and increase in the number of labourers. In 1961, 28% and 1981, the percentage of land owners was 48.5, 42.1 and 36.1 respectively while the percentage of

landless workers rose from 28.5 in 61 to 34.7 in 71 to 41.1 in '81. The area was faced with sharp growth in population and floods. The average land owned by a person stood at 1.29 acres in 1961 which came down to .88 acres.

The study shows that a large number of women in Khatwa, Patna, Araria and Kishanganj have been forced to work as net-workers. Traditionally, women engaged in this profession were not by caste patronised by the local landlords who also give them shelter. They were mainly located in the areas of Guldighat and Parbhanga where weekly fairs were held. Now as many as 1,000 families are involved in this work and young girls are often sold and forced into prostitution by their close relatives. Apart from the "locally purchased" girls, young girls from Nepal, Bangladesh and West Bengal are recruited by having their relatives with job or money.

Besides these 2,500 net-workers, more than 400 women are working as 'highway net-workers' operating in trains and trucks plying in the area. Even the fear of AIDS has not been able to put an end to this trade. A doctor, A K Sinha, is reported to have detected no more than six such cases at a camp held recently at Guldighat.

According to Bhoomika Bihar chief Anant Kumar, the organisation is working for rehabilitation of such women and has already taken 20 of them under its wings. They have been given loans to set up business ventures and other projects. "People here will have to learn to live with floods. Our NGO is trying to sink tubewells made of local materials in low floods of Kosi which will keep going up with the rising flood waters. It also plans to encourage cultivation on machines in order to protect crops from getting submerged in water."

Flesh trade thriving in urban Bihar

By Sanjay Singh
Times News Network

Patna: Flesh trade is thriving in Patna. So think politicians, but not the police. To them, this "oldest profession" has been thriving in the city since long but appears to be thriving now because the police have become more active against the racket.

"This trade is growing because of the cultural changes in the society brought about by globalisation and television. Recent police action against those involved in this trade may work as a deterrent for others to join it," said ADG of police A R Sinha. In the recent past, Patna police have busted a number of brothels in different areas of the city. Simultaneously the city also witnessed the arrest of a number of "customers" and girls from dif-

- Flesh trade growth is due to changes in society brought by IT, says a senior officer
- Many brothels have been busted in recent months
- Police say girls from Nepal are brought here by agents

ferent gents' parlours under the Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act. However, the series of frequent raids on gents' parlours apparently failed to dampen the business of "body massage" and other similar facilities in the parlours.

The moot point is who are the girls involved in flesh trade and how do they land up in this business? Police believe that many of the girls are brought to Patna from Nepal area by the "agents" in this business.

Thursday's arrest of three

young girls from a house in Kadamkuan is a case in point. Garima, one of the arrested girl, said she was brought from Darjeeling to Patna by her "bhaiya". But City SP O N Bhaaskar believed "bhaiya" is a term used for agents in this business.

The confessional statement of a woman, Anuradha Singh, a few months back exposed the grip of the flesh trade over the city.

After her arrest in connection with the killing of a chartered accountant G C Poddar, Anuradha reportedly made a sensational disclosure about the patronage given to this business by political and bureaucratic circles of the city.

But the police preferred to zero in on killers of Poddar and apparently avoided the investigation of the case to expose such politicians and bureaucrats.

Scissors' grip on sex-workers

FROM TARAK CHAKRABORTY

For long years, Jan. 1st, 1971, the... (text continues)

A... (text continues)

... (text continues)

... (text continues)

... (text continues)

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Sex workers beaten again

Times News Network

Kishanganj Sex workers, who were traumatised and forcibly driven out of their houses in the red-light area in Khogra mohalla of the town some three months back following the murder of a love-love tractor driver, were yet again physically tortured and beaten up when they tried to re-occupy their houses and rehabilitate themselves in their profession on Friday.

A visibly shaken and terrified Bikit Banu with fractured hand, now hospitalised in Kishanganj hospital says, "we were beaten up and forcibly evicted when we dared to come back and take possession of our deserted houses", Sharmila Khatoon was quite dazed and traumatised in the hospital.

According to an FIR lodged with Kishanganj police station, a motley group of residents, who had earlier also let loose mayhem and reign

of terror following the murder of the tractor driver, allegedly resorted to all kinds of bullying tactics, attacked them and forcibly drove out a handful of sex workers who tried to take possession of their houses. Some of the sex workers were also seriously injured.

A case Under Sections 147, 323, 341 IPC has been registered but so far no one has been arrested, according to officer-in-charge (OC) Kishanganj.

A magistrate, along with posse of armed police was stationed at the site on Saturday and Sunday. The OC said steps are being taken to allow the sex workers to take possession of their houses.

The red-light area in Khogra, on the outskirts of the town, according to the old timers, is over a century old. However, over the years, the once forlorn and desolate area has become thickly populated and is now hub of business activities.

Women traffickers active

By Bhawanvati Prasad
Times News Network

Kishanganj Mohana Mishra of village Singria-Salaspur in Kishanganj district is a distinguished woman.

When she married Shrikant All of village Acharya in the Allah district of neighbouring Uttar Pradesh, she was an eye closed maid, looking forward to a happy conjugal life which she had been dreaming of since her childhood.

However, Mishra, daughter of a poor peasant, was in for a bitter shock as she realised her matrimonial bliss placed. The attributes of her husband was something she could never like.

Her husband and father-in-law Mohammed Ali were some into their true colours.

In 1955, Mishra showed a lot of persistence keeping the situation well improve one day. But her fortune deserted her as she witnessed there a tragedy following a plan to sell her off.

As she got wind of the nefarious intention, she started looking for an opportunity to slip away which she did eventually.

On other desperation, she on Wednesday last filed a case in the court of chief judicial magistrate (CJM), Kishanganj, alleging inter-alia how her in-laws were planning to sell her off.

Across the same time, Sujan Das of the same village petitioned the Kishanganj SES narrating the tale of the disappearance of her married daughter Sunita.

Sunita was married about six years back to one Jai Singh of village Laxmi in Jagat district of UP. The marriage had been introduced by one Mohammed Sultan, who turned out to be a chaste thief.

Sunita, her mother alleged, had been treated badly by her in-laws.

When she reports of their daughter's miserable condition in her marital home, the parents got worried.

About four months ago, Sunita's father went to her marital home to find that she is traceless.

In yet another petition to the CJM one Mahesh of village Chakra in the town has complained against one Shukla, an old woman.

According to the complaint, Shukla has been procuring girls of poor parents by promising them better life and then sells them off to the pimp or those engaged in

such trade. On the face of it, all these appear to be stray cases.

However, the fact is that there is a similar pattern to it.

During the last decade or so, there has been a phenomenal growth in cases of trafficking in girls as well as married women.

According to a survey conducted by Shri Krishna Vikas, a non government organisation, over 20,000 girls and married women have been whisked away by pimps and agents, mostly from Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat who work in tandem with local middlemen.

By dangling prospects of a secure and cozy married life or jobs, they virtually prevail upon poor parents and arrange to take over their young girls.

Such trafficking has been widespread in Kishanganj, Purbia, Khatwa, Araria and adjoining districts.

Survey done by Shri Krishna Vikas makes startling disclosures. According to it, trafficking in girls is most prevalent among the scheduled caste (SC) population, followed by the other backward caste (OBC) population and the Muslims (20 per cent).