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SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN THROUGH SEX TRAFFICKING IN CORBAN ADDISON'S
A WALK ACROSS THE SUN

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ABSTRACT

The present study focuses on the concept of Sex Trafficking in the novel *A Walk Across the Sun* by Corban Addison. Sex trafficking is the rising crime that establishing its foot in every country. Sex trafficking is a kind of recruitment of girls and women within the country or across the country for prostitution, pornographies or for other sex works. This issue is presented through the fictional characters Ahalya and Sita that how after losing their parents in Tsunami, they start their journey to their school St Marry where sisters take care of them but later, they are abducted by a trafficker, and they reach to the brothels of Mumbai where the dark phase of their lives start. It is a fictional story, but the crime inside the novel is real that stops girls to live their life without any fear.

Keywords: Sex Trafficking, sex work, abduction, prostitution, pornographies.

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INTRODUCTION

Violence against woman occurs every day all over the world. Patriarchy plays an important role in the sunjugation, and violence on women. The woman had lower status than a man in all spheres of life: family, society, religion, etc. Before marriage the woman is cared by her father and after marriage by her husband. Indian society is a male dominant society. A woman is treated as a slave of man. Woman has to give respect to the man at any cost. It is society's norm that woman should worship her husband as a god. She should call him 'pati parmashwar.' Society thinks that the most important work of a woman is to take care of her husband and children. She cannot participate in any social and external affairs.

Even in a modern era where the country is developing, and feminism is on high peek, women have to struggle a lot to live their life with dignity. Even today's society where people say that men and women are equal women are not understood as equal. Women are participating in every field, but they are becoming victims of exploitation in different fields physically, socially, mentally and economically. Sexual exploitation is not a recent crime; it can also be seen in the ancient time and in Indian Hindu epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana in which Sita and Draupadi have to suffer exploitation because of their husbands and society.

In ancient India, women are victims of sati pratha, parda, johar, child marriage, etc. but these are almost flattened. Now there are new evils to exploit women like abduction, rape, dowry, molestation, eve teasing, etc. Along with these evils, there is one evil that is rising vary fast in all countries known as sex trafficking.

Sex trafficking is the third largest crime business after arms and drugs. It is a form of slavery in the today's world and it is a massive global industry earning billions of dollars annually. It is the exploitation of women within the country or across the international borders for the purpose of sex work in brothels or commercial sex industries that include pornography. It occurs when people are forced into the commercial sex trade against their will. Sex traffickers frequently target people with histories of abuse and then use violence, threats, lies, false promises, debt bondage, or other forms of power and dealing to keep victims stay in the sex industry. Sex trafficking has been found in a broad variety of places including residential brothels, hostess clubs, online escort services, fake massage businesses, strip clubs, and street prostitution.

The countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) adopted a definition in their convention for preventing and combating trafficking in women and children:

"Trafficking in women consists of all acts involved in the procurement, transportation, forced movement, and selling and buying of women within or across border by fraudulent means, deception, coercion, direct or indirect threats, abuse of authority, for the purpose of placing a women against their will without their consent in exploitative and abusive situations such as forced prostitution, forced marriage, bonded labor, begging, organ trade etc."

Daniel Walker in his book *God in a Brothel: An Undercover Journey into Sex Trafficking and Rescue* describes sex trafficking as:

Sex trafficking is the recruitment and transportation of a person for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation and profit. Unlike human smuggling, which involves the contractual relationship between those seeking to travel and those acting as their smugglers, trafficking is a business that preys on the vulnerable using force, fraud, deception, coercion and abduction. Only the trafficker gains out of such a transaction.

Every year thousands of women and children fall into the hands of traffickers in their native countries and at international level. Every country is affected by this dirty crime. Women and girls are the main victims of trafficking for the purposes of prostitution, forced marriage and domestic work, which further turn into sexual abuse. The vast majority of people working in Indian commercial sex industry in which, according to the government, there are about three million prostitutes, of which 40 per cent are children that are under the age of 18. Every year, human traffickers earn billions of dollars in profits by victimizing millions of people around the world. This time, the market value of sex trafficking is \$32 billion. (UNODC)

The men who purchase women are not only one particular client but men from all sectors of society supporting this trafficking industry. They are rich and poor, eastern and western, young and old. They may be industrialists, government officers or normal men in marriages or parties. Some are single, and some are married and have children.

When girls and women are trafficked, traffickers send them to different places within the country or across the international borders. These girls are passing among multiple traffickers, moving further and further from their homelands to other regions and countries. When girls are trafficked to national and international borders, they are sold to the different places for high prices that offer sexual services and prostitution like brothels, massage parlors, strip clubs, etc.

Corban Addison's *A Walk Across the Sun* highlights the issue of sex trafficking. The novel does not expose the dark world of sex trafficking and prostitution not only in India but also in France and America. Jefferies explains the term in her words that "prostitution is a male sexual behavior characterize by three elements variously combined: barter, promiscuity, and emotional indifference. Any man is a prostitution abuser who, for the purpose of his sexual satisfaction, habitually or intermittently reduces another human being into a sexual object by the use of money or other mercenary considerations"(4).

Elise Building in her paper on Women and Social Violence (1988) clearly points out that, "social violence against women are mainly based on a) social or institutional structure of the patriarchal order perpetuating all kinds of discrimination and oppressions against women which result into b) behavioral violence in every society. Of the most frequent expressions of behavioral violence against themselves women as victims find involved in rape, wife beating and prostitution all over the world" (qtd. in Prabha and Singh)

In *A Walk Across the Sun*, the patriarchal setup of Ghai family is not dominating. Ahalya and Sita both are goddesses to their parents. Their family does not make the difference between son and daughter and they love both daughters. This is shown when Naresh brings tickets of a concert of violin at eight o'clock because both the sisters are students of the violin.

Their parents are dreaming of their education from the university in England, and they believe that a mastery of English is the ticket to Cambridge or Oxford. They are students of convent school from where they are learning Hindi, our national language, and Tamil, the native language of Tamil Nadu, they are also learning English language but both sisters preferred to speak in English.

The exploitation happened to them when they lost their parents in the tsunami, Ahalya and Sita then decided to go to St. Mary from where they are getting their education. But unfortunately, they are abducted and send to Mumbai. After reaching Mumbai, they sold both girls for seventy five thousand to Suchir in the brothels of Mumbai. "The man led them into a small room furnished with a bed, a dresser, a toilet and a sink. He turned on an overhead bulb hanging from wooden rafters." (68) He told them that they were in Kamathipura (...Kamathipura, Asia's largest red-light area located in the heart of the Mumbai, India... it is populated by about 5000 sex workers, male, female and transgender either brothel based or street based (qtd in Karandikar)) and they had to sleep with a man. It was unimaginable for both the girls. Both of them had never slept with any man.

Ahalya was forced to work as a prostitute in the brothel otherwise they would kill both sisters. For the sake of the life of Sita, she agreed to be a prostitute. But she never gave them permission to touch her sister.

Ahalya is first exploited by Shankar, who is a customer coming in the brothel for sexual pleasure. Suchir gives him a description of both Ahalya and Sita. Shankar chooses Sita for a sexual act. Shankar takes her hand and leads her hallway. He drew her up the stairs. Sumeera left her and Shankar in the room and closed the door. Ahalya stared at a spot on the floor. She could not bring herself to look at the man who brought her in the room. He smiles at her and unbuttons his pants. He pushed her on the bed by saying that:

Tonight is your wedding night. (102)

After that Prasad who is Suchir's son takes Ahalya everyday in the one of the sex rooms after everyone sleeps in the brothel. It happens every day or after two or three days. Ahalya is always scared of Prasad. Sumeera asks her about the reason of stress on her face, but Ahalya does not tell her. In this way, Ahalya is exploited everyday by customers and Prasad.

In *A Walk Across the Sun*, the work as a prostitute starts for Ahalya. Two customers come to Sumeera for the rate of the girl. One was middle aged, and the other was a boy no older than Ahalya. From the talking of the middle aged man to the younger one Ahalya got to know that the younger boy was his son and today is his birthday and Ahalya is a gift for him. The boy stood hesitantly and approached her. He glanced at his father for reassurance and the man gave him permission to go with her. The boy touched her lips with his fingertips and traced a line down to her chest. Ahalya shivered and wondered what the boy would do with her.

His father haggled with Suchir for the price and finally agreed on fifteen thousand rupees. The boy took her hand and followed Suchir to the first sex room along the hall. The room was tiny, large enough only to accommodate a bed, a sink, and a toilet. Then Suchir closed the door; the boy stood stiffly unsure how to proceed. In his eyes, Ahalya saw a mixture of awe and apprehension. He moved closer and kissed her mouth. His excitement increased when Ahalya did not refuse his action. She lay back on the bed and submitted herself to the desires of the boy. Ahalya lay on the mattress staring at the ceiling and feeling unclean. She got up and washed at the sink. During that time there were several thoughts running in her mind:

A beshya could expect nothing more from life than air in her lungs, food and water in her stomach, a roof over head and the affections of her kind. To survive in such a world, she would have to sever her heart from her body. She had no other option. (106)

In the novel *A Walk across the Sun* also both the sisters are exploited by men. Sita, the sister of Ahalya, is sold again and again from one country to another even with drugs in her body. Sita was sent to Paris by the character named Navin. He is also a drug dealer. He smuggled drug through Sita from India to Paris. Navin, who sells Sita to his relatives uses Sita as an object. Before leaving for the airport he took Sita in the flat, there Navin puts the brown powder in the condoms and packs them. He brings a large glass of water and a round pill. That medicine is an anti-laxative which slows down the digestion of Sita. Sita drank the water, and Navin gave her first pellet of condom dipped in the coconut oil to swallow. In this way, Navin puts all the drugs in Sita's body. Then they leave the place and without any problem they pass from one country to another. They are not caught by police due to drugs in Sita's body.

She does not become the part of prostitutes in India and Paris. She is not exploited sexually by anyone. She only works in the restaurant as a maid. The condition of Sita in Paris is not so good. She has to work for the whole day. Paris is a prison of suffocation and labour. For her, the door of the outer world is closed. She can't go outside the restaurant. Her work is endless, and she can't take a break. The aunt, the wife of the owner of the restaurant, shows no sympathy for her. She just commands her:

"Mop" "Sweep!" "Scrub the floor!" "Scrub the stove!" "Clean the bathroom!" (230)

Everyday Sita puts the tablecloth on the floor of the kitchen closet for sleep. The heat and the warmth of the restaurant never reach Sita, she always shivers and feels cold. She is always thinking to escape from the jail, but she is never left alone by Auntji. At night, Auntji locks the door of the kitchen, and the key is always kept in her necklace. But after some months the owner of the restaurant sells her again to Klein.

Klein is a man who sells sex on the internet. He makes porn of girls and blackmails them to work for him. "Pornography is anything whose sole purpose is to arouse sexual desire" (Attwood). "Pornography is derived from the Greek *porne*, meaning "whore", and *graphein*, meaning to write. Pornography literally means the 'writing of harlots' or 'depictions of acts of prostitutes.' It has come to mean material intended to arouse sexual feelings that may include sexist or violent elements" (Neil, 77). Klein makes nude pictures of them and uploads them on his Website "The Kandyland" where men purchase videos of nude girls, their nude pictures and who made more than money they have pleased with sexual services by the chosen girl. When the raid happens in the house and all the officers enter the house, Sita is with Klein and Klein asked her the reason for her visit to the house. Then he answers his own question:

You are not here because I enjoy the sale of sex. You are here because men enjoy the purchase of it. I am simply the broker. Some businessmen sell objects. Others sell knowledge. I sell fantasies. It is all the same. (458)

These lines show that men treated women like an object. For a man, women are only entertainment for them. She is understood as a maid who works for family and sacrifice all the time, understood as a production machine which produces children for family and understood as a sex object with whom man can enjoy sex.

The above lines by Klein to Sita also highlights that demand plays a significant role in sex trafficking. When people demand prostitutes, women are trafficked by pimps and traffickers to fulfill the demand. Donna Hughes, professor and Carlson endowed chair in university of Rhode Island, presented a paper "The Human Rights Challenge of Globalization in Asia-Pacific-U.S.: The Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children" at globalization Research Center, University o Hawaii at Manoa on 13-15 November 2002. She said in her paper that "the demand is the driving force behind trafficking. The trafficking process begins when men and pimps create the demand for women and girls to be used for prostitution. When the demand for prostitution is high, in a sufficient number of locales, women and girls can be recruited. In each locale, women and girls with certain physical attributes are in demand. The pimps place orders with traffickers for the number of women and girls they need".

Though, the status of women in India is not equal to men. They are fighting or struggling to establish their own identity as a human being, not as an only daughter, wife or mother. They are facing fears and

burdened every day. Sex trafficking, kidnapping, rape, molestation continues after various laws are available in the constitution. The country celebrates Woman's Day, but still men have more freedom than women. The government should be stricter towards the crime against women. Women should get respect and honor in all the fields of the society.

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