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UNVEILING THE DARK TRADE: HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE BRIDE MARKET

We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back – Malala Yousafzi

In the clandestine world of human trafficking, one particular harrowing aspect often lurks in the shadows - *The bride market*. Bride trafficking is a long standing evil in the society that can be classified as a crime against humanity because it violates the rights, dignity and liberty of the victims involved. Despite best efforts to combat human trafficking, the bride market remains a grim reality in many parts of the world, perpetuating a cycle of suffering and exploitation. Human trafficking is both an intra-country & inter-country phenomenon. According to the [report of International Labour Organization \(ILO\)](#), the organized crime of trafficking is estimated to be the third-largest international criminal enterprise, generating an estimated \$150 billion dollars annually and 2013 report commissioned by the UN office on Drugs & Crime has reported that organized trafficking rackets have started operating in the north-Indian states like Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh & many other North Indian States.

THE BRIDE-MARKET: A CLOAK OF DECEPTION

The bride market thrives in regions where gender inequality, poverty and societal pressures converge. Often, young women from economically disadvantaged groups are lured into the trade with promises of marriage, economic security, and

a better life. However the reality they encounter is quite different from the rosy picture painted by traffickers.

Exploitation and coercion once ensnared in the web of the bride market, victims face a myriad of abuses. Many are subjected to physical and sexual violence, forced labour and psychological manipulation. They are stripped of their economy, treated as commodities to be bought, sold and traded at the whims of traffickers and buyers. Coercion tactics such as debt bondage, threats against their families and confiscation of identification documents further entrap victims in a cycle of exploitation.

Cultural and Societal factors: Cultural norms and societal attitudes often contribute to the perpetuation of the bride market. In patriarchal societies where women are seen as inferior to men, their value is often equated with their ability to fulfil traditional gender roles as wives and mothers. This mindset fosters a demand for bribes, driving the lucrative business of human exploitation.

The global dimension: while the bride market may be more prevalent in certain regions, it is by no means confined to any one country or culture. With the advent of technology and global connectivity, traffickers can exploit vulnerable groups across borders with alarming rate. The anonymity afforded by the internet facilitates the online sale of brides, further exacerbating the problem on a global scale

THE ROLE OF LEGISLATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Efforts to combat human trafficking in the bride market are hindered by a lack of comprehensive legislation and inadequate enforcement mechanisms. Legal frameworks often fail to address the specific nuances of bride-trafficking, leaving victims without adequate protection and perpetrators with impunity. Moreover, corruption and complicity within law enforcement agencies can undermine efforts to dismantle trafficking networks and hold perpetrators accountable. Though the Legislature has not succeeded in mitigating bride trafficking, the judiciary has definitely brought in some respite. Recently, the supreme court of

India, in *Independent Thought v Union of India*, had criminalized sex with minor brides. In this case the Court read down exception 2 to section 375 of the Indian Penal Code.

Some of the laws and acts passed and enacted to combat trafficking are noted down below :

- *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (Earlier Indian Penal Code)*
- *Constitution of India*
- *Transplantation of human organs act*
- *Immoral traffic prevention act, 1956*
- *Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in Persons, Especially Women And Children:* This protocol was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 to stop the trade in people and it was signed by the vast majority of states.

These laws are the main and essential one which has a larger impact overall to combat trafficking in India.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

Given the transnational nature of human trafficking, international cooperation is of paramount nature in combating the bride market. Countries must work together to strengthen legal frameworks, enhance law enforcement capabilities and improve victim support system . Collaboration between governments and international organisation is crucial in fostering a coordinated response to this global phenomenon.

Empowering survivors and Building resilience

Central to any effective anti-trafficking strategy is the empowerment of survivors and the provision of a comprehensive support service. This includes access to safe housing, healthcare. Legal assistance and psychological support. By

prioritizing the needs and rights of survivors, one can help them rebuild their lives and break free from the cycle of exploitation some more laws and protocol or conventions are mentioned below.

- *United Nations Global initiative to fight against Human trafficking (U.N. GIFT) in 2007.*
- *Slavery Convention (before the abolition of slavery)*
- *Convention of the United Nations for the motive of Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons and the exploitation of the others by the traffickers*
- *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*

WAY FORWARD

The bride market stands as a stark reminder of the profound injustices that persist in our world today. It is a manifestation of the systematic inequalities, gender-based violence, entrenched poverty that continue to plague societies across the globe. As individuals, communities and nations, we must confront this scourge head on, demanding accountability, promoting gender equality and advocating for the rights and dignity of all people. Only then we can hope to dismantle the dark trade of human trafficking in the bride market and create a world where every individual can live free from exploitation and oppression.

