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**IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN INDIA:  
CASE STUDY OF THE NORTHEASTERN REGIONS OF INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

One of the most heinous yet organized crimes over the globe is considered to be the trafficking of humans for the purpose of sexual exploitation, skin and organ trading, providing cheap labour for industries, and so on and so forth. The purpose of this study is to look at a broad field of research on the global phenomena of human trafficking. It seeks to examine and analyse the good and bad effects of globalization on human trafficking in the context of Northeast India. This paper has examined the problem in the Northeast in greater depth, analysing questions of human security.

**INTRODUCTION**

Human trafficking is a severe concern to human security in Indian states. The Northeast, which shares international borders with China, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, is one of India's worst-affected regions. Due to a variety of causes, the international territorial borders of the Northeast are very vulnerable to infiltration, allowing the flesh trade to flourish in the region with little policing. Young women and children are trafficked across the international border from Bangladesh and Nepal to be exploited in brothels, commercial sites for forceful sex activity, and often for cheap labour. There are significant problems and concerns that have yet to be aired and addressed through a competent policy framework and its execution.

The study is significant for two reasons. The research first investigates the topic of human trafficking in the region of Northeast India, analyzing the various forms of and reasons behind the evil. Further, the research also discusses the impact which globalisation has caused in contributing towards human trafficking. It also analyses on the measures adopted for curbing or reducing human trafficking in India as well as at a global level.

**■ HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT A GLOBAL LEVEL**

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Human trafficking is a business carried on at a global level. Millions of young females are trafficked every year for reasons such as prostitution, commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour, skin trade, and more such reasons which a person sitting in four walls of a house, safe from the harsh realities of life, cannot even imagine in the most deadly nightmares.<sup>2</sup> A study done by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has shown that trafficking has become a global scourge which connects many countries on an unlawful transportation.<sup>3</sup>

Further, this global transportation of females for illegal activities has been increasing widely over the years. The biggest problem of this crime is its difficulty in getting detected. Such a crime is done with a very high level of secrecy and usually involves huge rackets who work in chains for their effective communication.<sup>4</sup> Studies have shown that human trafficking is presently the third largest source of criminal money in the world, driven by a confluence of troubling societal situations. These variables, known as social determinants, are the social, economic, political, and environmental factors that influence how individuals live, grow, and work.<sup>5</sup> They eventually have an impact on people's vulnerability to exploitation. Profit-driven criminal organisations thrive on unfavourable variables such as poverty and unemployment in order to force or dupe innocent individuals into illegal acts that are part of trafficking.

#### **ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING: STUDY OF THE NORTHEAST REGIONS OF INDIA**

The northeastern region of India which comprises of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim, forms one of the most susceptible region for human trafficking to take place. All these states are connected to the rest of the nation via a narrow strip of land in West Bengal which is known as the City of Siliguri and shares borders with countries like China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.<sup>6</sup> Being so close to border areas, cross-border movements are usual as well as easy in these regions. Also, various political and social regions such as military or armed conflict, displacement, high rates of poverty and unemployment and lack of development, have made the region victim of human trafficking to a large extent.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Aleinikoff, A., *Prostitution and Sex Work*, The Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law, 2009, Vol 10, Issue 2, pp 433-456.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs And Crime, 2016, Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016, New York: United Nations.

<sup>4</sup>Behnke, Alison, *Up for Sale: Human Trafficking And Modern Slavery*, 2015, Lerner Publishing Group, USA.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander, C.H., *International Law in India*, The International and Comparative Law Quarterly, 1952, Vol 1, Issue 3, pp 289-300.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs And Crime, 2013, India Country Assessment Report: Current Status of Victims Service Providers and Criminal Justice Actors on Anti-Human Trafficking, Government of India: New Delhi.

<sup>7</sup>NeimenuoKengurusie, *Human Trafficking in North East India: Patterns and Emerging Trends*, Journal of North  
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## ■ FORMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NORTHEAST INDIA

- Forced labour

Human trafficking for forced labour has occurred on a massive scale in states like as Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, and Nagaland.<sup>8</sup> Women and children are the primary targets, and they are frequently duped into believing false promises of lucrative employment in big cities, only to be compelled to labour in deplorable conditions. This might include working in factories, on building sites, or as household assistance.

- Sex work or commercial sexual exploitation

The most common form of human trafficking is the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, and the north eastern regions of India suffer greatly as females are trapped by traffickers in Assam, Meghalaya, and Manipur and supplied as sex workers to metro cities in India and across borders for the purpose of sexual exploitation in massage parlours and beauty salons.<sup>9</sup> India has been designated as one of the Asian nations where commercial sexual exploitation trafficking has reached worrying proportions. Girls from Manipur<sup>10</sup> and Meghalaya<sup>11</sup> are often fair-skinned and gorgeous, making them in high demand both nationally and globally.

- Internet sex work

Because online sex trade is not easily traceable, it is tough to recognise in Indian society. Many females are trafficked from Nepal, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Assam to Guwahati, Shillong, and other Indian metropolises such as Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi, and Mumbai for phone and internet sex. A study revealed how females are forced to work for organisations that facilitate internet sex under the guise of offering them jobs at MNCs, trapping them to forcefully perform sex-chat and gratify customers. These firms typically employ agents to appoint females.<sup>12</sup>

- Forced Marriage

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East India Studies, 2017, Vol 7, Issue 1, pp 115-124.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>Dutta, Tarun, *Changing Livelihood, Disaster and Human Trafficking - Study of Disaster Affected Area of Assam*, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 2013, Vol 2, Issue 8, pp 1-4.

<sup>10</sup> United News of India, 2019, *Over 100 girls rescued from traffickers in Manipur*, <http://www.uniindia.com/over-100-girls-rescued-from-traffickers-in-manipur/east/news/1486792.html>.

<sup>11</sup> The Shillong Times, 2016, *Trafficking of Women and Children Spreads to Interiors of Meghalaya*, <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2016/02/14/trafficking-of-women-and-childrenspreads-to-interiors-of-meghalaya/>.

<sup>12</sup> Crawford, M., & Kaufman, M. R., *Sex Trafficking in Nepal: Survivor Characteristics and Long-Term Outcomes*, Violence Against Women, 2008, Vol 14, Issue 8, pp 905–916.

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According to the National Crime Records Bureau, 33,855 persons were abducted or kidnapped for the purpose of marriage in 2016. Half of them were under the age of 18 at the time. Girls are trafficked from Tripura, Sikkim, and Mizoram to Haryana, Punjab, and even across the world in the context of the Northeast for the aim of forced marriage with males considerably older than these girls. Many of these victims of human trafficking are compelled to labour unpaid in the agricultural industry for their spouses and in-laws.

- Child labour

Child labour is becoming more prevalent in India's northeastern area. The majority of the youngsters are trafficked from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland to Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Imphal to labour in stores, coal mines, or as rat-hole miners in Meghalaya's Khasi Hills.<sup>13</sup>

- Child soldiers

Children are smuggled from India's northeastern provinces to Bangladesh and Nepal, where they are trained as terrorists or child soldiers. Child trafficking is a severe problem in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Nagaland. These countries share international boundaries with Myanmar as well. Young children are kidnapped and trafficked in Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh.<sup>14</sup> The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN), commanded by SS Khaplang a Zemi Naga from Myanmar, then trains them.<sup>15</sup>

- Skin and Organ Trade

The skin of females from the Northeast is in great demand in the aesthetics sector for the purpose of plastic surgery. Girls are captured by traffickers and transported to a destination place for the purpose of skin trading for the beauty business due to poor economic conditions.<sup>16</sup> The skin is so valuable because their fair complexion is practically indistinguishable from Caucasian skin: a colour that is highly coveted both on the black market and in the cosmetics sector.<sup>17</sup>

Medical technology has advanced dramatically in the field of organ transplantation. It is performed at a large number of hospitals and clinics across the world. A big number of

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<sup>13</sup>Kharbhiih, Hasina. 2017, *Human trafficking in the Northeast: a horrid truth that remains unacknowledged*, <https://yourstory.com/2017/10/human-trafficking-northeast>.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Patricia, Mukhim, 2016, *Child soldiers of Northeast: Straddling between boundaries*, The Northeast Today, <https://thenortheasttoday.com/archive/child-soldiers-of-northeast-straddling-betweenboundaries/>.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), 1998, *Report of the Committee on Prostitution, Child Prostitutes and Children of Prostitutes*, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

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individuals in India are suffering from major ailments as a result of lifestyle changes, and the only cure is organ transplantation. According to research, farmers, local craftsmen, and agricultural labourers are the ones who are enticed for money and end up being victims of such acts as organ trade.<sup>18</sup>

### ■ GLOBALISATION AS A FACTOR OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Globalization has enhanced engagement between the market and the general public and has resulted in political, economic, and technical advances reducing barriers and rendering national boundaries less meaningful.<sup>19</sup>

The level of migration and urbanization has increased tremendously due to globalisation.<sup>20</sup> This has also had huge impact on females who have started leaving their homes in search of a better life, but unfortunately, many end up becoming a victim of human trafficking. Women's bodies are considered as commodities, with the market determining their value.<sup>21</sup>

This has greatly impacted the region of Northeast India wherein the people have become more vulnerable to human trafficking as a result of globalisation. Industrialization and globalisation have rendered traditional livelihoods unviable, particularly in rural regions.

The deterioration of livelihoods in these areas, along with the availability of better livelihood prospects in other places, drives impoverished people to migrate to high-income areas.<sup>22</sup> People move for a variety of reasons, including personal and professional advancement. It is often middle-class professionals or semi-skilled, unskilled, or low-skilled employees. However, people with the lowest level of skills have a higher risk of migrating and turning into a victim of human trafficking. Such folks are almost always impoverished. Women and children make up a sizable proportion of the low unskilled labour force. This is because they face systemic gender and social discrimination. Women's internal and international labor-force mobility has left them exposed to sexual exploitation. Women and children migrants are pressured or deceived at their point of origin, throughout their journey and transit, and at their final destination.<sup>23</sup>

### ■ OTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Various other factors which contribute to the evil of human trafficking have been discussed

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<sup>18</sup>SankarSen and JoyshreeAhuja, *Trafficking in Woman and Children, Myths and Realities*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Fukuda-parr, Sakiko, *Gender, globalization and new threats to human security*, Peace Review a Journal of Social Justice, 2004, Vol 16, Issue 1, pp 35-42.

<sup>20</sup> Adamson, Fiona B., *International Migration in a Globalizing World: Assessing Impacts on National Security*, in Kirshner, Jonathan. (Eds.), *Globalization and National Security*, Routledge: New York, 2006.

<sup>21</sup>Gundlach, E. &Nunnenkamp, P., *Globalisation of Production and Markets*, Germany: Kiel Institute, 1994.

<sup>22</sup>*Supra* note 21.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

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below-

i) Poverty

Due to poverty, and in search of improving the lifestyle, people are fooled into entering jobs which can give them better lives.<sup>24</sup> This often leads them to become victims of human trafficking.

ii) Illiteracy

The school dropout rate in the tea garden areas in the Northeast India is 75 per cent, which makes the task of traffickers easy to lure the youth and push them into prostitution, forced child labour and other forms of trafficking. For instance, children are trafficked from North Assam and forced to work as bonded labour in the rubber plantations in Arunachal Pradesh. Due to the lack of education a large number of families in Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland place their trust in fake missionaries.<sup>25</sup>

iii) Armed conflict and insurgency

The Northeast India has been dealing with armed conflict and insurgency since long, and make attempts to escape such violence.<sup>26</sup> This is most prevalent in areas of Manipur. Also, due to the prevalence of ethnic conflict in lower Assam, a huge part of the population has become homeless.<sup>27</sup> As a result, in the course of time they migrated from Assam to other states of India for a better livelihood. During this process of migration they get trapped by human traffickers and fall victim to this inhuman practice.

iv) Natural calamities

The state of Assam has seen immense amount of displacement of people from its place in the past few decades, reasons being several man-made as well as natural disasters. Such disasters have also made the people require a safer and better life for themselves and such need to move for a better life has made the public prone of human trafficking.<sup>28</sup>

v) Alcoholism

The heavy use of alcohol in Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram has made people

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<sup>24</sup>Bamforth, S.S., Poulton, L., Tait, M., & Timberlake, J., *India Invisible Poor: Child Trafficking, Child Eyes Series*, 2009, The Guardian.

<sup>25</sup>Aliperti, P, *The Role of Education to Prevent the Trafficking in Children for forced and bonded labour in India*, Thesis, 2009, Division of Public Administration, International Christian University (ICU), Graduate School.

<sup>26</sup>Pati, Roza, *Human Trafficking: An Issue of Human and National Security*, University of Miami National Security & Armed Conflict Law Review, 2014, Vol 14, Issue 2.

<sup>27</sup>*Supra* note 21.

<sup>28</sup>*Supra* note 10.

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irresponsible towards their families, who face further abuse, exploitation, illegal movement and trafficking.<sup>29</sup>

vi) Need and desire for better employment

The hope of finding lucrative employment in metropolitan and urban areas leads many women and young girls to become victims of trafficking. There is a large influx of poor and illiterate women to the metro cities in India who don't have any knowledge of their jobs or even their boss under whom they have moved out from their place. The ease of movement due to globalisation has made the task of traffickers easier.<sup>30</sup>

vii) High demand

A news report from the Times of India had mentioned that the maximum number of demand comes for the North east girls, who are young and fair. These demands have been witnessed majorly from the metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata.<sup>31</sup>

#### ■ MEASURES TO CURB HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- Indian context

The Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1986 acts as a legislation curbing human trafficking in India. However, there is no specific law to reduce human trafficking in the Northeast. Only NGOs work against the criminal practice. Most of the NGOs such as NEDAN, Impulse NGO Network, and GOLD organization have taken effective initiatives to curb human trafficking in the northeastern region of India. The Impulse NGO has been working with collaboration of Police, Anti-trafficking Units and other international organization to combat cross border trafficking in the northeast.<sup>32</sup> These NGOs continue to rescue large number of cases and provide shelter to victims. Sometimes they take initiative to take victims into the social mainstream.

- Global context

Many resolutions have been adopted by the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice for curbing the evil menace of human trafficking done in the form of smuggling of migrants in a very organised manner. The various international legislations

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<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>Birkenthal, Sara, *Human Trafficking: A Human Rights Abuse with Global Dimensions*, Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Rights Law, 2013, pp 27-40.

<sup>31</sup> Times of India, 2016, *Delhi turning into hub of human trafficking*, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Delhi-turning-into-hub-of-human-trafficking/articleshow/53938896.cms>.

<sup>32</sup>Kharbhiih, Hasina, *News File: A collection of news clippings on trafficking and sexual exploitation of children in Meghalaya*, 2003, Impulse NGO Networks: Meghalaya.

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framed are as follows-

- International Trafficking in minors (1994)
- Violence against women and International trafficking in children (1996)
- Violence against women (1997)

In 1999, resolutions concerning the 'Palermo Convention' adopted by the United Nations Commission formed the background to the elaboration of the new instrument for combating different forms of organized crime.<sup>33</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Human trafficking is an evil affecting large part of the globe and the study which specifically dealt with the Northeast India also showed how globalisation has increased the intensity with which the crime is being committed. The slave mentality which people possess is clearly portrayed via the various reason for which trafficking is done.

After having a careful analysis of the issue at stake and understanding the measures which has been taken at the national and international level, it can be concluded that the evil persists irrespective of caste, class and gender. The northeastern region of India is gradually becoming a hotspot for this criminal activity. The evil of human trafficking should be strictly checked before it annihilates our society. Stringent laws should not only be made but implementation of them should be severely checked. Lastly, education, knowledge and awareness should be done to ensure that people know about the evil and understand the intentions of people. Only a society which is self-aware will be able to protect itself from the clutches of an evil like human trafficking.

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<sup>33</sup> Gallagher, Anne, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, *Human Right Quarterly*, 2001, Vol 23, Issue 4, pp 1135-1141.  
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