

Eradicating Women Trafficking: A Religious Educational Perspective

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Abstract

Slavery and the slave trade have re-emerged in recent times in the form of trafficking in human persons, especially women and girls. Driven by the global demand for commercial sex, trafficking in women has given rise to a gigantic global industry. Only next to drugs and arms trafficking, women-trafficking is said to be the third largest trade in the world, turning over more money each year than the total of all military budgets in the world. With the above facts in mind, this paper examines the religious educational implications of women trafficking in the context of globalization.

Key words are: human, gender, prostitution, trafficking and religion

1. Introduction

The contemporary world is characterized by globalization which is often presented in glowing terms. One of the undersides of globalization which escape sufficient public attention is the large scale human trafficking, especially that of women and girls, for commercial sex purposes. In effect, this modern slavery and slave trade is believed to be fueled by globalization with its attendant crave for huge profits, rapid transportation and communications. Furthermore, more recent world sporting events have become associated with human trafficking. For instance, as the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa approached, some people read the signs of the times and sent out stringent warning signals about impending parallel human trafficking activities. In line with that awareness, the Red Card Campaign, a South African based organization, issued an alert on its website to this effect:

International sporting events have become fertile ground for human trafficking. The documented patterns of flagrant trafficking of ... women for sexual and labor exploitation at these events create a dire picture. More than 500,000 international visitors are expected in South Africa for the 2010 World Cup, and more than 500 criminal gangs are estimated to be involved in human trafficking for the sex trade in South Africa (Links, 2008).

Other South Africa- based activists also raised alarm over the impending doom foreseen in the wake of the anticipated sporting event in these words:

For the past five years, human traffickers have been using the 2010 FIFA World Cup as a 'bait' to lure people to work in South Africa at construction sites and accommodation establishments, as escorts, stadium marshals and many more ... Since 2004, the year South Africa was chosen to organize the World Cup, human trafficking 'offices' have been opened at various African countries, where unscrupulous people working as 'agents' register desperate people dying to get to the 'final destination' (South Africa) to seek any form of employment or business opportunities. Made vulnerable by the lack of economic opportunity, political instability, gender inequality and viable migration options, Africans are easy targets for traffickers (da Silva, 2010)

This paper entitled 'Eradicating women trafficking: a religious educational perspective' grew out of the author's past efforts at awareness creation activities on counter-trafficking by way of community service. The paper aims at providing education and motivation for the prevention and eradication of women-trafficking from a religious perspective. It tries to answer questions pertaining to the meaning of human trafficking, the kind of people who get trafficked, kinds of people who engage in trafficking, the connection between human trafficking and prostitution, the experiences of trafficked persons as well as implications for what religious education can do to motivate both individuals and corporate bodies to intensify efforts towards eradicating women trafficking.

1.1 Eradication versus amelioration as method

There are always at least two approaches to issues of this kind, namely, human trafficking: the amelioration approach and the eradication approach. In the amelioration approach, some activities are simply carried out and it goes on record that something has been done; but the main issue, the problem, is left untouched. The eradication approach, on the other hand, goes right to the root of the issue. Eradication implies change as different from changes or improvements. This approach asks questions and uncovers the source of the problem and seeks to solve it at the root level. If a problem is imagined as a plant, eradication aims at uprooting the plant instead of cutting off a few leaves or branches and leaving the rest of the plant intact. Applying this imagery to the case of human trafficking, certain questions immediately arise: What needs to change in people's minds and hearts, for women trafficking to stop? Firstly, there is need to acquire knowledge of what human trafficking is all about and what it is not. Secondly, there is also need to analyze the issue or the problem, its effects or manifestations, the causes and the root cause, and finally, the solution. Eradication is the method adopted in this paper.

1.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis in this paper is that human trafficking is rooted in the theological question of the nature and origins of women. Are women equally human as men? Is there one single human nature, occurring in two forms, male and female? Are women equally originated from God, as a basis for gender equality? Or are there two human natures, the male and the female; whereby one, the male is the full human person, and the other, the female is not quite the real thing; but is secondary, an after-thought, a supporting species which exists to serve and 'service' the male, to meet the needs of the male? In other words, if human trafficking is to end, there is need to answer these questions honestly, bearing in mind the need for reinterpretations of the scriptural stories of origins of the human. It would be recalled that information is now available about the origins of the world that was not previously available to the biblical writers at the time they wrote. Furthermore, it is necessary to re-examine beliefs people hold about men and women, about sex and the meaning of sex. It may be necessary to change what is believed about sex and its role in human life. A question to consider is: Has sex any meaning outside of a faithful, loving, steady relationship between a man and a woman who see themselves as equals? What do women think about sex and what do men think about sex? Is it like food, toilet, etc? Why is there so much violence and violation? Why so much demand for commercial sex (prostitution)?

1.3 Clarification of terms

It is necessary to clarify some of the terms used in the paper. The key words are: human, woman and man; sex, gender and human rights; prostitution, economics and politics; trafficking and globalization; and so on. By human is meant a rational being belonging to the biological species, *homo sapiens*; as different from the condition of being an 'animal.' Being human presupposes not just consisting of body and soul but also having at least five aspects, namely: the social, physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions, as insights from the human sciences (psychology and other disciplines) have suggested. In addition, a human being has both a conscious and an unconscious side to her/his personality; and there is a feminine and a masculine side to humanity. Thus, humans are found in two forms, men and women. The related terms, sex and gender, need to be distinguished. Sex refers to the biological attribute of being a male or a female while gender refers to the power relations between men and women and the socially constructed roles expected of men and women in a given society –family, community and so on. In other words, sex is natural and fairly constant while gender is cultural, human-made, learned, changeable and variable from one culture to another and from one era to another.

The term, prostitution comes from the Greek word, *porneia*, derived from a verb meaning 'to sell,' usually as applied to slaves. Regardless that there are male prostitutes and it is men's demand for paid sex that makes it difficult to eradicate it, people tend to associate prostitution with women more than with men; the reality of homosexuality in today's world notwithstanding. Prostitution refers to the practice of sexual intercourse in exchange for monetary, material or other benefits. From time immemorial, the phenomenon of prostitution has been in existence in many human societies including ancient Greece, Israel, as well as some parts of Africa, to name only a few. Hence, there are numerous biblical references to the art of prostitution. What is new, however, is the scale and sophistication of the syndicates that move thousands of people, particularly women, across national and international borders for economic exploitative sex purposes.

1.4 What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is the movement of human person(s) from one place to another to the detriment of the person(s) and the benefit of another. It is a very complex phenomenon. The National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP), instituted by the Nigerian government in August 2003, offers a comprehensive definition of human trafficking as:

All acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within and across borders, purchases, sale, transfer, receipt or harbouring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion, or debt bondage for the purpose of holding or placing the person whether for or not in voluntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions (2003).

Olujuwon (2008) makes a helpful distinction between human trafficking and human smuggling. Human smuggling is the movement of a person, across national border, without proper documents, sometimes under dangerous conditions, for the purpose of making money. Smuggling, as Olujuwon (2008) maintains, has no control over migrants when they reach the final destination, whereas trafficking has. Thus, when exploitation is involved in human smuggling transaction or in the acts of prostitution, it invariably constitutes human trafficking.

The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons provides further clarity as it defines human trafficking in terms of:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (2000).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action also includes forced marriages and forced labor within the concept of human trafficking (UNIFEM, 2001). All these abuses constitute violence against women as defined by the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (Article 1).

2. The problem

The problem of human trafficking has both global and local dimensions. That is to say there is internal trafficking as well as cross-border trafficking. Even though both men and women, boys and girls, do get trafficked it is mostly women and girls, as the following statistics show. United States Department of State trafficking report released in 2000 found that crime rings and loosely connected criminal networks trafficked between 45,000 and 50,000 women and children into the U.S. annually. Also the 2004 US State Department figures indicate that:

Approximately 80% are women and up to 50% are minors. The vast majority of those trafficked under 18 years of age are girls. Male minors account for only 2% of trafficking cases. Men, women, and children are trafficked for many purposes, including sexual exploitation, begging, underpaid and exploited forced labour in the agricultural, manufacturing and construction industries, domestic service and organ harvesting (UNESCO, 2006, 12).

As to what kinds of people get trafficked, the United Nations portal on human trafficking (UN.GIFT) reports that there are more adult women than child victims and more girls than boys who are trafficked.

In Nigeria, the incidence of adult women identified as trafficking victims is slightly higher compared to child victims. Although both boys and girls are frequent victims, boys are identified more often in some countries, such as Mali and Mauritania, while girls are detected more frequently in other countries (UN.GIFT).

2.1 Perpetrators of human trafficking

Traffickers are mainly persons well-known to their victims; their relatives and friends. For Lesa (2010), “this business is facilitated by the people [the victims] are close to, by relatives, uncles, religious leaders and business people cheating them, [saying] that there are greater opportunities elsewhere for the victims to improve their lives” (CISA, 2010). Also according to UN.GIFT for Western and Central Africa, the perpetrators of trafficking were frequently men, but women also were often the focus of investigations for trafficking in persons ... Women investigated for trafficking outnumbered men in Liberia and Nigeria (UN.GIFT, 2010).

2.3 Experiences of trafficked persons

Information about the experiences of trafficked persons or the type of exploitation suffered by victims is not always available, possibly because of the stigma and fear that go with them. However, UN.GIFT states:

Information about the type of exploitation suffered by victims was not always reported. When information was available, forced labour emerged as a prominent form of trafficking in a large part of the region. Victims - mostly children – trafficked for forced labour might have been involved in activities such as slavery, domestic servitude, begging and camel jockeying (often Mauritanian victims trafficked to the Middle East). Sexual exploitation also was detected in many countries of the region, and trafficking for organ removal, ritual killings and mystic practices was detected in Chad and Liberia (UN.GIFT, 2010).

The main destinations outside the (western and central Africa) region are Western Europe, Southern Africa and the Middle East. “Patterns and trends of internal trafficking within the West African region are from rural to urban and industrial areas for employment and sexual exploitation” (UN.GIFT).

Trafficking does not occur in a vacuum. Violations of women's human rights in countries of origin - including state-tolerated sex discrimination, domestic violence, and rampant sexual violence - contribute to women's vulnerability to abuse. Whether the women traveled voluntarily, found themselves tricked into migrating, or were sold into the sex industry or sweatshops, trafficking victims suffered horribly similar human rights violations. Stripped of their passports, often unable to speak the local language, sold as chattel, and terrified of local law enforcement authorities and their traffickers, many women and girls struggle to pay off the enormously inflated debts owed to traffickers; others attempted to escape. In the countries of destination, women encounter violence, state complicity, detention, and deportation (Retrieved, May 8, 2010).

2.4 The Nigerian situation

Nigeria has been classified as a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. This is because Nigerian women and children are trafficked to Europe, Middle East, and other countries in Africa for the purpose of sexual exploitation, forced labour and involuntary domestic services. Nigerian girls are also trafficked for sexual exploitation to Europe, and particularly Italy, Spain, Belgium, and the Netherland etc. Nigeria also reportedly receives young women and men from Benin Republic, Togo, Cameroon, and Gabon to work in plantations as domestic hands and in the sex industry.

2.5 Statistics on human trafficking in Nigeria

In a paper presented during a programme on the ‘Youth and Human Trafficking’ organized by Ifendu for Women’s Development on 7th December, 2007, in Enugu, NAPTIP supplied the following statistics

- There were 50,000 Nigerian girls working in the Italian sex industry (e.g. Tempep contacted 749 Nigerians girls in Turin and Italy, from November 2002 to December 2003)
- About 500 Nigerian girls are working as commercial sex workers in Bamako, Mali and a similar number in Burkina Faso.
- 60-80% of female sex workers in Italy are Nigerians (UNICEF FACT SHEET 2002)

- Thousands of Nigerian girls can also be found in Belgium, Ireland Denmark, UK, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Morocco etc.
- There are more than one million commercial sex workers in major urban cities like Lagos, Kano, Abuja, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Ibadan, Owerri.

Also speaking at the occasion Rev. Sr. Dorothy Ezeh, representing Committee for Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW), had this to say:

There are many tricks with which some of our youths are being trapped and trafficked out of the country. These include offers and opportunities for marriage, scholarship, employment, and so on. Some of these girls are tricked by their parents, close relations or persons well-known in their towns to go into this business. The victims go through many ordeals that include physical sexual violence and psychological torture, often being made to swear at a shrine, with threats to their own life or that of their family and kin at home.

It would seem that poverty and gender-based discriminations are contributory factors driving women and girls vulnerability to being trafficked. According to Onyejekwe (2005), other Nigerian women's rights organizations reported that hundreds of Nigerian women and girls hoping to escape poverty and discrimination at home voluntarily migrated to Europe in response to job offers as domestic workers or waitresses. Upon arrival, many found themselves trapped in forced prostitution, saddled with exorbitant debts, and forced to work under brutal conditions. Like other trafficked women around the world, Nigerian women struggled to pay off their "debt." Forbidden to refuse any customer, women who dared to resist encountered harsh punishment from their employers, including physical assault. Some clients also sexually and physically attacked the women; other clients robbed them. Their status as "illegal migrants" made the women particularly vulnerable to attacks by customers and traffickers alike. The Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), a Nigeria-based advocacy group that provides support for victims of trafficking, reported that some employers denounced trafficked women to immigration officials as "illegal aliens." The result was deportation for the victims, often under inhumane conditions. In May 2000, WOCON used the trafficking cases it documented to advocate within Nigeria for, among other things, repatriation procedures guaranteeing victims safety and respect for their human rights, as well as health care and counseling services. Activists reported that the Nigerian government had arrested several men in connection with the sale of girls to Europe and the trafficking of them to other West African countries.

2.6 Effects of human trafficking

Among the effects of human trafficking are: exposure to sexual violence which causes injuries that in some cases leads to disfigurement, permanent disabilities or even death. In other cases, it results to lost opportunities and interference with school work. Some victims of human trafficking experience miscarriage or forced abortions, unwanted pregnancies as well as increased vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. Sexual violation (rape) is known to precondition the victims to turn to prostitution, to be in greater poverty, abuse alcohol or drug, and ultimately leave home or end up committing suicide (ECA-WIDNET, 1997, 33.). In other words, it is not only an effect but a cause as well.

About the effects of human trafficking Olujuwon (2008, 23-32) had this to say:

Trafficking has consequences not only for the victims, but also for their families and the nations as whole, especially as women and little girls are involved in the risk of pregnancy, maternal mortality, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Child prostitution and child labour deprive the children of the opportunity to pursue and achieve their full potentials, thereby depriving the nation of vital human resources for development. It also detracts our self-esteem as a nation and devalues our pride and moral values.

3.0 Analysis

There are remote and immediate causes of human trafficking. It is important to know these so as to be able to solve the problem effectively. Quite often a lot of efforts are wasted because a proper analysis has not been done or the real issues had not been tackled. Human trafficking is rooted in some human beings' perceptions of others not as human persons like themselves but rather as objects that exist to meet their own needs. Among the factors that promote sex-trafficking are globalization and gender inequality which in turn is linked to endemic

economic, social, cultural, political and religious arrangements that perpetuate the perception of women not as persons but as objects that exist to meet men's needs for power and pleasure. The core issues include "the socio-economic status of women, particularly in countries where the economies are collapsed and governments support the migration of their people to support domestic economy" (Friedlin, 2004). Moreover, conflict, poverty, and HIV/AIDS make adults and especially children vulnerable to trafficking within their own national borders. In addition, weak law enforcement mechanisms and measures to penalize offenders, exploitation by corrupt law enforcers and officials (UNIFEM, 2001).

In Nigeria, for example, the socio-economic problems such as illiteracy, unemployment, inflation, poverty, crime and social insecurity are all on the increase. The United Nations put it this way:

Traffickers pocket substantial criminal proceeds from various forms of victim exploitation. In Western and Central Africa, victims are predominantly women and children who live in the harshest conditions of vulnerability. Armed conflict, socio-political instability, bad governance, environmental stress and disaster drastically increase the vulnerability of children to trafficking for a variety of exploitative purposes, including their recruitment and abuse in situations of armed conflict and war (United Nations, 2010).

It is not surprising then that women trafficking has continued unabated in spite of many counter-trafficking efforts in the country.

Women trafficking as linked to prostitution has untold effects on family life and society in general. In this light, Raymond (1999) pointed out that in developing countries, "female infertility is widespread from husbands or partners who migrate to urban areas, buy commercial sex, and bring home infection and sexually transmitted diseases." She also said that "studies confirm that it is men who buy sex in the process of migration who carry the disease from one prostituted woman to another and ultimately back to their wives and girlfriends. In what becomes a vicious cycle, infertility leads to divorce and, in some cases, the ex-wife who is cast aside herself turns to prostitution to survive." She thus concluded that "a major health effect of the mass male consumption of commercial sex and the expansion of sex industries in developing countries, is not only a rampant increase in sexually transmitted diseases but an exponential increase in infertility" (Raymond, 1999).

3.1 The role of governments in fueling women-trafficking

Activists have pointed accusing fingers at governments, saying that they are not doing enough to end the trafficking of women and children. Onyejekwe (2005, 141-151) put it this way: "Around the world, governments allow trafficking of women and girls for forced labor and servitude to flourish with near impunity. Lured with fraudulent promises of lucrative opportunities, women migrated within and across borders for work." Ann Jordan, director of the Initiative Against Trafficking in Persons at the International Human Rights Law Group in Washington, D. C., holds the view that in poor countries where organized crime is often in collusion with some public officials, that no amount of anti-prostitution legislation will end trafficking (Onyejekwe, 2005). One reason that has been advanced is that next to drugs and arms trafficking, women-trafficking is their largest source of revenue. Thus, they turn a blind eye to what is happening.

The hypocrisy of some governments in the matter of women-trafficking is evident in the link between prostitution, economics and politics. For instance on the political side, while many governments deplore the phenomenon of human trafficking and some even execute death penalties for drug-trafficking, coupled with stringent immigration laws, they do not have equally strong legal arrangements to curb and eliminate human trafficking, particularly women-trafficking. In contrast to penalties for drug and arms trafficking, the penalties for human trafficking are lower in many countries.

There is a fundamental connection between legal recognition of prostitution industries and human-trafficking. Some countries have legalized prostitution in the belief that it would curb child prostitution and trafficking. Human-trafficking for prostitution has therefore become a gigantic global, multi-billion dollar business, which turns over more money each year than the total of all military budgets in the world; and it is fueled by the global demand for sex-for-sale. At any rate, experiences from countries such as Germany and Australia now show that the legalization of prostitution has not improved the conditions in which prostituted women are sexually exploited (Onyejekwe, 2005).

It is actually ironic that at a time when government and international agencies are hiring gender consultants to conduct gender analyses and to eradicate violence against women that the same governments and their agencies

are deliberately blurring the line of connection between trafficking and prostitution. They advocate what they call 'voluntary prostitution' as legitimate work, and even the recognition for trafficking as 'migration for sex work.' Fortunately, as will be demonstrated later, some governments have grown wiser and recognized the intrinsic link between prostitution and women trafficking and are taking appropriate steps to address the twin problems.

3.2 Trafficking and globalization

Trafficking in human beings, especially that of women and children, has become a global business that affects all countries and reap enormous profit for traffickers and their intermediaries. Human trafficking is not new. What is new is the global sophistication, complexity and control of how women and children are trafficked from and to all parts of the globe. United States reports cite 700,000 to two million women and children internationally trafficked each year into the sex industry and for labour, with 50,000 into the United States. The United Nations estimates that trafficking is a 5-7 billion US dollars operation annually.

Thus, globalization has largely increased the incident of human trafficking. We live in a world that is increasingly becoming a global village. The media spreads round the world images and messages about what is happening in every part of the world. It means that the young people in the remote villages of various African countries are constantly watching what to them appears as wonderful paradise in other parts of the world. Communication makes it very possible to reach out to people across the sea, through internet, e-mail and cell phones. The fast development in transportation has made it easier to move from one place to another. Finally, poverty coupled with greed contributes to this social evil.

In a slightly different but still interconnected level, military presence generates sex industries in many parts of the world and it is tolerated by governments as rest and recreation venues for the troops. Then, there are racial and gender myths and stereotypes that promote sexual exploitation, for example, in tourism brochures and on the internet, advertising 'exotic women for sexual pleasures.' Globalisation of the economy, which means globalisation of the sex industry, as it is, becomes an industry without borders. Large and small-scale trafficking networks operate across borders, actively recruiting girls and women, especially from villages, city streets, and transportation centres. Hotels, airlines, and charter companies, often with direct and indirect government collusion and corruption, are involved in the trafficking of women for, for example, in sex tourism.

One argument for legalizing prostitution in the Netherlands was that legalization would help end the use of desperate immigrant women trafficked for prostitution. A report done for the Governmental Budapest Group stated that 80% of the women in the brothels in the Netherlands are trafficked from other countries. As early as 1994, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) stated that in the Netherlands alone, "nearly 70 percent of trafficked women were from Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC)." Another argument for legalizing prostitution in the Netherlands was that it would end child prostitution. In reality, however, child prostitution in the Netherlands has increased dramatically during the 1990s. The Amsterdam-based Child Right organization estimates that the number has gone from 4,000 children in 1996 to 15,000 in 2001. The group estimates that at least 5, 000 of the children in prostitution are from other countries, with a large segment being Nigerian girls.

In light of all that has been said so far in terms of causes of human trafficking, Leidholdt (1999) is correct insisting that "prostitution represents the ownership of women ... by pimps, brothel owners, and sometimes, even customers for the purpose of financial gain, sexual gratification, and/or power and domination." In the words of Raymond (2003) "Legalization of prostitution sends the message to new generations of men and boys that women are sexual commodities and that prostitution is harmless fun." In other words, beneath all the economic and political factors already mentioned there are other factors which drive women trafficking.

3.4 A religious educational perspective

Besides economic and political factors there are others such as cultural and psycho-spiritual factors which pre-condition women to allow themselves to be used as objects to satisfy men's desire for pleasure and power and discourage women from standing on their dignity as human beings in their full right as persons.

Experience and study show that most people take it for granted that men and women are not equal by any means; that men are pre-eminent human beings and women are secondary. Many actually believe, literally, on the basis of the biblical stories of Adam and Eve (Uchem, 2001: 179-190). In the book of Genesis, there are texts or rather their male-centered interpretations over the years to the effect that women: were created second, as an

afterthought by God and, therefore, occupy a secondary place in the order of creation; that men are the normative human beings while women are derivatives, men's helpers, existing [only] to serve men's needs [and desires]” (Uchem, 2002: 40-44). It needs to be said that this is spiritual and theological abuse of women and it is the root of the sexual abuse of women; likewise all the conclusions based on false, literal, historical and factual reading of the Bible.

It was the analytic psychologist, Carl G. Jung, who insisted (Uchem, 2001, 160) that most of human existence and conduct lie largely in the unconscious domain while the conscious aspect represents only but a small fraction of the total personality, like the tip of an iceberg (Schultz, 1976. Schultz, 1977. Sharp, 1998). Certain elements in the collective human unconscious, known as archetypes, find expression in myths in all human societies across the world. Consequently, human beings are myth-making creatures. By myth is meant a foundational story of a human community which gives it meaning and a sense of purpose. Many such myths also have embedded in them very uncomplimentary beliefs about women. Unfortunately, believers uncritically tend to regard them as equally inspired word of God.

3.5 Core gender and human rights issues

Traffic of women and girls is only one example of women's experiences of violence. There are innumerable other examples of violence against women and violations against their rights as human beings. However, the root issue is the negativity attached to the female and the positivity that goes with the male in most human societies. All other gender issues originate from this basic negative perception of the female and a positive one toward the male. For instance, the female is valued less than the male and is more disposable. Consequently, other things associated with women are automatically considered of less value; for example, women's work, ideas, opinions, perspectives, witness, presence, contributions and achievements. The result is a tendency by men (who are not yet conscientized) to exclude women from full participation in the human enterprise and to treat women as a necessary extra for men's comfort.

Most respectable people from around the world would not consciously admit their disagreement with the notion of gender equality. Yet, most people's subliminal beliefs about the nature of men and women, emanating from their unconscious manifest in behaviours and attitudes such as: excluding women from meaningful and key leadership positions as different from tokens and associates; purposeful equal participation in policies and decision-making processes rather than being notified later for compliance; fostering women's economic and psychological dependency on men and maintaining men's power and control over women rather than supporting women's self-governance/self-determination; treating women as statistics, adjuncts and appendages rather than naming them as full human beings in their own right; suppressing women's voices and presuming to speak for them even in their presence instead of listening to women respectfully and encouraging them to find their own voice and use it; not giving women their due credit but downplaying their work of production, reproduction and social initiatives, taking these for granted and taking them over instead of truthfully acknowledging women's role, achievements and contributions in their family and community; using exclusively masculine language as a powerful tool of oppression, suppression and domination in a manner that recognizes only the existence of the male and renders the female non-present instead of speaking with inclusive language and imagery with equal recognition of male and female presence; foisting sexual stereotypes, stigma and guilt on women, while condoning many men's promiscuity and undependability and maintaining double standards of sexual morality rather than justice for all.

Thus, in many world contexts, the social construction of the feminine is that which is 'less' and 'worse' than the masculine. The notion of 'woman' carries pejorative, negative, depreciatory, uncomplimentary, and derogatory connotations. All these connotations resolve into one large connotation of assuming that women are men's object of ownership as property, first by their father and later in life, by their husband, and by an unspoken extension, by all existing males. Thus, the key issue of gender and human rights entailed in human trafficking is men's presumed 'ownership' of women; seeing and treating women as their property to be exploited; women as not owning but being owned as object that exist for men.

Rebera (1996), a Sri Lankan living in Australia, underscores these realities when she critically analyzes the situation of women who become professional sex workers. She argues that contrary to what many think, "The majority of women who become prostitutes do so not because they enjoy this kind of lifestyle which is what many middle-class people like to believe) but because they have no other option for survival" (Rebera, 1996, 108). She throws light on the psychological and structural economic pre-conditioning that sets the women up for prostitution. This could equally be applied to women trafficked as a consequence of their own financial need or that of their family who might have pushed them into it.

Most societies still consider sexuality and women as synonymous. Sexuality is still linked to temptation and sin, and female sexuality [is seen as] the property of men. ... It is something she offers to the man. With this kind of imagery embedded in our psyche, it is not difficult to see how and why women become easy victims of prostitution. It is often the only way they can earn a living ... when society closes the door to economic survival in the workforce, then a woman's body and her sexuality become the only tools of trade left (Rebera, 1996, 107).

It has been sadly noted that the most prevalent form of sex trafficking is for prostitution, sex tourism and mail order bride industries. Unfortunately, one would never know from anti-trafficking organizations that it is mostly women who are trafficked for exploitation in prostitution. In fact many anti-trafficking advocates seem to want to make all references to sex trafficking disappear, talking only about trafficking of persons for bonded labour. Clearly, being trafficked into exploitative farm or factory work is incompatible with fundamental human rights and is harmful to those who are subjected to this form of trafficking. But that harm is really not as severe as the harm done to women and girls trafficked into prostitution in brothels and repeatedly subjected to violation and rape. Also ignored is the fact that the trafficking of many women and girls for bonded labour and domestic often ends up with them being sexually exploited by unscrupulous employers and others.

3.6 Eradicating Women Trafficking: Selected Responses

In light of the enormity of the problem of human trafficking, a multi-faceted approach should be adopted in addressing it. For Donna Hughes (2000), a social activist, efforts to eradicate trafficking should concentrate on providing assistance for the victims and imposing steep penalties on the perpetrator. In this author's view, vigorous efforts should go into awareness creation especially on the tricks and traps used by human traffickers so as to prevent potential victims being caught unawares. Activists can also adopt the recommendations of Sr Kayula Lesa, Coordinator for Church Social Teaching at the Zambia-based Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), as reported in the Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA: newsletter of *May 11, 2010*). "We still have the opportunity to save someone from being trafficked ... because victims tend to be those who have never heard of human trafficking. We have a duty to educate our families and people in our communities." The Nigerian based Committee for the Support of Women's Dignity (COSUDOW) is a project of Nigeria Conference of Women Religious founded in 1999 which both rehabilitates returnees/survivors of international trafficking and sensitizes the populace on the problem. COSUDOW reunites the survivors with their families and provides them with psycho-social as well as material and financial support either for schooling or for skills development and business start-up.

No doubt some people stand to gain from others' losses. Accordingly, it is pertinent to beware of people and forces that do not want the trafficking in women to end and so will do anything to oppose efforts aimed in that direction. Therefore, 'ending sex trafficking' demands taking a firm stand as did a US based organization, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW). In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* (2013), reacting to an article entitled 'Free Speech and an Anti-Prostitution Pledge,' the executive director of CATW, had this to say:

You use a free speech argument to oppose the United States government's requirement that organizations that receive federal funds have a policy opposing prostitution and sex trafficking. ... the prostitution industry, the endpoint of sex trafficking, must be opposed if we stand any chance of ending sex trafficking (Norma, 2013).

It is quite instructive to note that the United States has a law prohibiting the use of any government money to "promote or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution" (United States, 2003). The law requires practically all recipients of government funds to "have a policy explicitly opposing prostitution," to make an anti-prostitution pledge and refrain from any speech "inconsistent with" the government policy on the matter. It is quite encouraging to know that the US has recognized the connection between prostitution and women trafficking. This is a very good example of how a government can take a clear stand that will contribute substantially in curbing women trafficking since it is linked with prostitution.

The earlier citation illustrates how one organization, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), used one of the most powerful organs of public opinion, a newspaper, to challenge the evil of human trafficking in support of the US government measures to curb women trafficking. CATW has a comprehensive approach to eradication of women trafficking; ranging from education on women trafficking, legislative advocacy and survivor support to campaign for 'ending the demand' for commercial sex. In a section entitled 'Take Action,'

the group recommends five actions by which individuals can help end human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation as follows: learning more about the subject, educating others in one's community, speak out, advocating for the passage and implementation of strong anti-trafficking laws and for the allocation of funding for anti-trafficking work and victim assistance, and financial support of anti-trafficking work (<http://www.catwinternational.org/Help/Respond>). Convinced that it is really "the demand for women and children for commercial sex that is fueling sex trafficking," CATW has introduced the innovative 'end demand strategy' to end human trafficking, training "youth, teachers, professionals, police, governmental authorities and the public about the harm of sexual exploitation and to prevent women and children from becoming victims." Indeed, CATW has demonstrated the much need political and social will required to eradicate and not just to ameliorate the problem of women trafficking by aligning itself with 'the Nordic Model,' which originated in Sweden in 1999 and then spread to South Korea in 2004, Norway in 2009, and Iceland in 2009. It is notable as the world's first human rights based legal approach to ending human trafficking. It is also the first law in the whole world to recognize prostitution as violence against women and a violation of human rights. The Nordic law criminalizes the purchase of commercial sex and offers the exploited an exit strategy. (<http://www.catwinternational.org/BestPractices/EndingDemand>).

4.0 Conclusion: Implications for religious education

On the whole, this paper has provided information on the global menace of human trafficking with particular emphasis on women-trafficking. It has elaborated on the meaning of human trafficking, the kind of persons affected and implicated as well as the connection between human trafficking and prostitution. It now remains to draw out the implications for the role of religious education in efforts towards eradicating women trafficking. The previous section exemplified a possible role of a non- governmental body (CATW) in complementing that of a government, namely, the United States. Similarly, faith-based organizations and communities can play comparable advocacy roles. Not only educating and sensitizing their members, and rehabilitating survivors, as highlighted earlier in the paper but taking a firm public advocacy stand can also be their role. This can be done through writing and speaking out in both the print and electronic media. The chief means to cultivate and raise a brand of citizens who are willing, ready and able to stand up in defense of the rights of persons who are vulnerable to those who promote only their own personal interests and profits at the expense of others should be an adequate programme of religious instruction. The curriculum of such religious education should be broad enough to be concerned with ameliorating people's sufferings here on earth instead of focusing only on the heavenly happiness of the hereafter. Such religious education curriculum should recognize the equal human status of women and men as a precondition for eradicating the violence entailed in women trafficking.

What is at stake in the issue of women trafficking are the humanity and identity of women. This is not a new question. It is as old as the stone-age when the feminine dimension of the human began to be despised, downgraded, denigrated and demonized by men as weak, secondary, and as the epitome and embodiment of evil. The sad thing is that these myths of female inferiority and functionality have become deeply entrenched in the human psyche, including those that do not hold allegiance to Christianity. That is why some women even resist efforts aimed at changing their situation. Therefore, in order to curb the menace of human trafficking, the humanity of women must be affirmed both at the conscious and the unconscious level, both in words and actions that women are full fledged members of the human community. The myths of origins that portray women as existing for men's comfort need to be re-interpreted as men and women existing for each other. The governments which still largely wear masculine faces will become less hypocritical and take honest steps to enforce penalties on traffickers with as much seriousness as they do drug traffickers. Religious leaders of all faiths have a lot to do to educate their members and especially to reverse the ills visited on women all in the name of religion. The struggle to counter trafficking in persons is one area where religions can collaborate with governments and with one another to eradicate human trafficking.

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