



Submission No 9

**Inquiry into Slavery, Slavery-like conditions and People
Trafficking**

Name: Kittu Randhawa

Submission: People Trafficking and Slavery

My name is Kittu Randhawa and I am 48 years of age. I am of Indian origin (Punjabi-Sikh) born in the UK and having lived in Australia for nearly 20 years with a good command of Punjabi and Hindi.

My submission is from an observer's perspective of people migrating to both the UK and Australia from India.

Like a lot of people who are first generation born into a country, I like others took it for granted that migrants face difficulties in moving and settling to another country. However in the last 8 years or so I see there are real differences in how migrants arrive here and how badly they can be exploited.

I am not certain this falls into the Sub-Committee's focus, but in my view it should as it is trafficking and unlikely to be recognised as such, through the use of legitimate means.

The method that I want to bring to the attention of the Sub-Committee is that of marriages. There are those in the Community who organise and arrange marriages between someone from Australia with someone in India. The person in Australia is paid usually indirectly and the person from India ends up paying often for years and not just their 'spouse' but the arranger. The sad part of this is that often the arranger is a member of the family.

I took him on knowing he didn't speak much English but as I spoke Punjabi and he was back of house that wasn't an issue for me. However I soon realised he wasn't trained and had worked as a kitchen hand in various places and he couldn't run a kitchen. I had to let him go but he begged me to keep him on, which I did for a bit longer out of sympathy more than need in the end, up until I stopped the evening openings.

This wasn't because he was trying to avoid tax, he was quite ignorant of any such matters and he didn't earn enough to worry about saving tax. He told me this was so he could buy phone cards and talk to his family in India. According to him, he had a wife and two children who he couldn't speak to at home as he wasn't allowed to use the phone. All his money was taken by his brother and he was only allowed a few dollars a week. He lived with his brother in his brother's house.

In observing him I often wondered what his story was as he was definitely a permanent resident, but I couldn't work out how he would have made the criteria. I can't say for certain, but in talking to him over time; I worked his story out to be that he had been married to another relatives' daughter to get him entry into Australia, at some time divorced from the girl and he was still paying dues to his brother and the relative.

They sent him out to work (preferably on cash), which was offered to me and I had refused; but by that time the brother must have not wanted me to ask too many questions and had agreed to it. At the same time he was to claim benefits but he got none of the money.

On one occasion I put it to him that as a resident, he could get his own job and rejoin his family. At which point he broke down and said his family no longer spoke to him and didn't want anything to do with him as they felt he had abandoned them. He had been told his wife had moved on and his children told he was dead to them. There was an aspect of his story I never got out of him and that was he was adamant that he couldn't ever bring his family here or marry again as he was stuck in his situation. I'm not sure what it was he feared, but he wouldn't talk about it in spite of me offering to help him with any paperwork.

I have seen him from time to time and since and in my view he has taken to being an alcoholic from a virtual tee-totaller and he has obviously given up part of his religious faith. I think he has mental problems, but he always put a positive spin on whatever he is doing.

Since he worked for me, he has systematically been exploited by various employers, but at the same time he is no longer a reliable employee. He wasn't very skilled in the first place, but he was punctual and hard working.

They used him to get as much money as they could and when he got wiser to his situation, they abandoned him knowing he wasn't equipped to cope. To his credit he coped better than they thought and he now refuses to return to his brother's place or have anything to do with him. The price he has paid is he has no real future here in terms of a family or close networks, he has no real skills to get a better job and he lives on being used by one person then the next, which is making him turn more to drinking.

There are no support networks for people like him and his traffickers will never be detected. This man (with another of his contacts) I have heard (I have no evidence) is a chancer who seeks out vulnerable people to exploit. One common story I've heard about him is he started the scam to con students into mobile phone plans and credit cards eventually leaving them with the bill for the credit card having taken the cash withdrawal himself. I don't believe this was a scam, I believe this is how he charged people for his services and got paid indirectly so it wasn't easily detected.

These sorts of situations exist with other people too, but they are too afraid to talk about it, If he hadn't asked me to keep money aside to ring his family I would never have guessed anything was wrong.

The biggest deterrent in these situations is that the abusers and exploiters are family (including spouses) and not just an agent making promises. The family hold a constant threat over the person that if the person doesn't do as they are told; they can be deported, but worse the threat of prosecution for using an illegal way to gain entry. They use such threats to extract wealth and assets in India too and at times to get other relatives here through forced arranged marriages.

It is a taboo topic, but a man or a woman can be compelled to marry a number of relatives from a single in a family over a few years to give them residency. This is just a legitimised form of trafficking, which has the same effect of turning one individual into a slave to serve other peoples purpose.

Kittu Randhawa.

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