



A Book Review:
SOLD

“Sold” is a wonderfully written fiction novel by Patricia McCormick in 2006 AD that portrays the life of a teenage girl named Lakshmi who is trafficked and exploited by various means. Sol had not only depicted the story of Lakshmi but many other girls and women who are exploited and used as sex slaves. As the book is written in the first person’s point of view, the readers get attached and can actually feel the pain buried inside Lakshmi if read properly.

At the beginning of the novel, Lakshmi is introduced as a girl who has lived in a small village in Nepal. She lives with her goat named Tali, her baby brother, her mother whom she calls Ama, and her stepfather who gambles, isn’t involved in any work and wastes money all the time. Lakshmi had lots of hopes and wishes for her future. She wanted to continue being the number

one girl in the class. Moreover, she wanted to work as a maid in the city like Gita, her friend, so that she could earn money to save her family from poverty. Unfortunately, it rains heavily in her village and the rain washes all the crops away. This leads to Lakshmi and her family being poorer and they starve. As it was difficult for her family to sustain life in the midst of the growing poverty, her stepfather makes Lakshmi go to the city to work as a maid. He then tells one of his relatives who is mentioned as Auntie Bimla in the novel to take Lakshmi to the city. Stepfather and Auntie Bimla exchange money and then Bimla and Lakshmi head to the cities. On the way to the city, Lakshmi looks outside and is very excited about her future there. After some time they reach Auntie Bimla's house where she meets her husband. Her husband takes Lakshmi across the border to a place which is named Happiness House. After both of them reach the Happiness House, a woman named Mumtaz arrives, and again an exchange of money takes place between her and the husband of Auntie Bimla. Thereafter, Lakshmi is taken into a small room where a man tries to rape her. She then finds out what kind of work she was sold for. Lakshmi had been sold to a sex brothel named Happiness House where girls like her were sexually exploited every day and Mumtaz was the owner of the brothel. When Lakshmi escapes from the rapist, Mumtaz explains to her about the brothel and how she must work to pay off the money she used to buy Lakshmi. Lakshmi refuses continuously to Mumtaz which leads to Mumtaz locking Lakshmi in the small room, beating her daily, and not giving her any food to eat. Despite all the torture, Lakshmi still denies working as a sex worker. One day, Mumtaz drugs her and a man rapes her. After that day, she gets drugged every night to work as a prostitute. After a few nights, Mumtaz makes her join the rest of the girls in the brothel. There she meets Shahanna, a girl from Nepal, and learns about the rest of the girls from her. Shilpa was a girl who worked as a spy for Mumtaz and Monica was a short-tempered yet the highest-paid girl. A girl named Anita had tried to escape from the brothel but Mumtaz's men had caught her and beaten her to the point where her face was disfigured. Pushpa was a woman whose husband had passed away. She had a son and a daughter named Harish and Jeena. Lakshmi and Harish form a friendship with each other as Harish teaches her Hindi. One day, Shilpa tells Lakshmi that the money Lakshmi had earned in the brothel was never sent to her family in the village. This makes her agitated. Gradually, she meets an American man who promises to come back after some days to help Lakshmi escape and prosecute Mumtaz. After a few days, he does come along with the policemen. The novel ends with Lakshmi and the other girls being free and also Mumtaz being arrested.

Talking about "Sold", I found it very heart-clenching. A girl who is just in her pre-teens had been sold and raped every night. Even thinking about it is scary and traumatic let alone bearing it. Also, the fact that this is the life story of millions of people is actually horrible. The novel has also shown the importance of friendship. Had Lakshmi not made friends in the brothel, it would have been a lot more difficult for her to stay alive. She would have lost all her hopes. Shahanna, Monica, and Harsh were the ray of hope and a reason to live for Lakshmi. The novel has also shown how women who work in brothels are boycotted in society. People need to understand that in the majority of cases, it is not the women's choice. It is either because they have no other

option or they are forced into the activity. Instead of boycotting people in these conditions, people should help and assure that the victims never feel lonely and good for nothing. It is the utmost responsibility of society itself to try to remove them from the traumatic state they are in. In this novel, it is a woman who makes women suffer. Mumtaz who was once a teen herself, makes girls and women get raped every day. This shows how cruel the world can be to the innocent. Although this is a very hopeful and beautifully written book that shows the cruelty of the world, I do not recommend this book to people who have past traumas relating to sexual or any form of exploitation. This can trigger anxiety and make Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) worse. As for people in general, anybody above the age of fourteen can read this book as Lakshmi, the protagonist herself is a thirteen-year-old girl.

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Grade: X

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