

## An Indian Christian's Crusade to Free Sex Slaves

By Wendy Griffith — CWNews.org

Girls as young as 12 are sold as sex slaves into India's sex-trade industry. But one man is not just 'standing by and watching.' He goes in and rescues these girls.

Anson Thomas has rescued hundreds of girls over the years. But now some men are trying to stop him with accusations of forcefully converting girls to Christianity.

In Mumbai, India, I caught up with Anson Thomas during one of his daring rescues. As I walked with Anson Thomas, he told me, "This is the place where I come to meet the children, meet the girls. This is one of the lanes. There are so many lanes like this, where young girls are forced into prostitution." He went on, "You see these brothels which are locked, over there? When once the girls are inside, they cannot come out."

I said, "So, is this a brothel, right here?"

Anson replied, "Yes, this is a brothel."

Anson Thomas is not afraid to walk through Mumbai's infamous red light district. That's because he's been here so many times before that many recognize him as the man who always carries a Bible. He's gotten to know the residents – many of them, prostitutes and the children of prostitutes.

Amazingly, the 38-year-old Thomas is also well-known as a national hockey player. He plays for the Indian Customs Department, where he also works. But his real passion is not found on the hockey field. Instead, it's in the slums, the alleys and the seediest parts of Mumbai. There he boldly takes on brothel owners and corrupt police officers to rescue young women and girls from forced prostitution.



Anson Thomas

Anson said, "I, on my own, cannot rescue girls. But it is God who has called me and anointed me to do this work — to be a light in the darkness."

For the last 7 years, Anson Thomas has rescued about 500 or 600 young women from these brothels. The day we interviewed him, another rescue occurred thanks to a tip from Thomas to the police. Several young women, with their suitcases, were able to leave a brothel and board a police bus.

I asked him, "Aren't you afraid? This is a very dangerous thing to rescue girls from prostitution."

Anson said, "There is danger, even danger to life. But when God is with you, who can be against you? And you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Psalm 48, the last verse, says this: ***God is my God forever and ever, and He will guide you even unto death.*** So, nothing can happen to us without God knowing about it."

On this day, as it turned out, 16 young women gained their freedom. But hundreds of thousands remain captive, trapped in India's sex-trade industry.

Experts say the number of prostitutes in India is close to 8 million. More than a million of these are believed to be children and adolescents.

Girls have been lured to Mumbai from all over India with the promise of good jobs and a better life. But once here, those dreams turn into nightmares, as agents or even family members sell them as sex slaves to the brothels for as little as 50 thousand rupees or a mere \$1100. [Editor: from other sources, I learned that in some oriental countries, girls are sold—even by parents—for a lot less. One source said that desperately poor people in Nepal have been known to sell their own daughters to slave traders for as little as \$20.]

17-year-old Samata [not her real name] was one of those girls. Her aunt sold her to a brothel, at the tender age of 14. Fortunately, she had been there only a couple of weeks when Thomas helped rescue her.

The brothel-keepers that held her received a ten-year conviction. Samata was placed in a home for girls. Recently, Thomas and his partner James John helped her find training as a beautician.

Samata said, “I used to always pray to God, that He would help me, so I could work and learn, and that He would give me the strength that whatever I learned, I could retain it. And God has given me all that.”

Thomas said, “Once these girls are rescued, I see that they are rehabilitated. I follow them up, wherever they are placed, in a government home or in a private institution, where they are kept — and even help them get a job and some vocational training.”

But not everyone is happy with the work of Anson Thomas. At his home in central Mumbai, Hindu politician Bal Kalsekar showed us a Bible and some Christian literature Thomas had handed out to the prostitutes. Bal was using it as “evidence” against Anson. Kalsekar said, “Anson Thomas went to the trouble of getting the Bibles in the same language as the girls, so he was definitely trying to force the girls to convert.”

So, I said, “You'd rather see these girls, 14, 15, 16, raped on a daily basis and forced to have sex, rather than be converted [to Christ]?”

Kalsekar denied young girls were being raped and instead answered the question with another question. He asked, “Who is giving Thomas, a social worker, the right to do what he's doing? The police have the right to go and conduct raids, but who is giving the right to Thomas?”

Thomas admitted handing out Bibles to the prostitutes, but denied he was trying to [force] convert anyone. He explained, “The complaint was made by the brothel-keepers because they saw that their business was being affected. So they made these allegations on me.”

He further explained what Christians know: “How can I forcefully convert anyone into Christianity? I don't use force. What

I've been doing is sharing the love of God. God loves these girls.”

Police say Thomas will be allowed to continue his rescue missions. But Kalsekar made it clear, his group will be keeping a close eye on Thomas' work with young prostitutes.

Thomas says his fight is not with the Hindu politicians. He added, “It's not a fight between religions, it's a fight between the power of darkness, it's a fight against Satan. So, that's why we've got to be a light in darkness.”

Thanks to that light, Samata now looks forward to a bright future, her heart full of thanks to the one who rescued her from darkness. Samata sang:

Thank you, thank you Jesus!

Thank you, thank you Jesus.

Thank you thank you Jesus,  
from my heart!

Since we first brought you this story, Thomas says he's helped rescue another 90 young women from the brothels. In spite of continuing opposition, Thomas says he won't give up, he'll continue to free young women from Mumbai's sex-trade industry.

This article found at:

[http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/012105indian\\_crusade.asp](http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/cwn/012105indian_crusade.asp)

More info at:

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