

Partner of Auckland mum who kept teen daughter as a sex slave sentenced

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Avneesh Sehgal appears for sentencing at Auckland High Court. / Michael Craig

[By: Sam Hurley](#)

The partner of the "most despised woman in New Zealand" has been jailed for helping keep a teenage girl as a sex slave - selling her to men around Auckland about 1000 times.

Avneesh Sehgal, 26, appeared for sentencing this morning before Justice Graham Lang in the High Court at Auckland - he is the co-offender of [Kasmeer Lata](#).

Justice Lang said Sehgal's culpability was less than Lata's, who forced her daughter into prostitution, but still significant given the lasting effects the pair's offending will have on the teen.

He sentenced Sehgal to four years and eight months' imprisonment with a minimum period of two years and four months.

The *Herald* has followed the court proceedings and revealed details of what is only New Zealand's [third conviction](#) for dealing in slaves, which was handed down to Lata last month along with a six-year and 11-month prison term.

Justice Matthew Muir also imposed a minimum period of imprisonment of three years and five months for Lata.

"New Zealand's courts will not [tolerate] the prostitution of children," he said.

"Children are entitled to the love and care of their parents - not to be farmed out for financial gain."

Kasmeer Lata was jailed for six years and 11 months. Photo / Jason Oxenham

Sehgal was charged with dealing in underage people for sexual exploitation and receiving earnings from underage sexual exploitation.

He pleaded guilty mere minutes after Lata was sentenced for keeping her daughter as a slave, first selling her for sex on her 15th birthday.

The *Herald* [earlier revealed](#) that Sehgal was arrested at Auckland International Airport trying to board a plane to India on the eve of his partner's sentencing.

Sources said he was stopped with a large bag and cash and told authorities he was travelling to Delhi to tend to his ill father.

Sehgal, who was on bail, had initially pleaded not guilty and was due to go trial just a few days later.

Avneensh Sehgal standing in the dock. Photo / Michael Craig

He met Lata after she moved to New Zealand from Fiji in 2014 with her children and the pair began a de facto relationship the following year, according to court documents obtained by the *Herald*.

Lata told her daughter to begin work as a prostitute to help feed her family, who initially lived in Whangārei, when just 14, the documents read.

Despite refusing, the teen was kept as a prisoner inside her Papatoetoe home and taken to men in motels around Auckland after the family moved into an apartment.

Sehgal helped Lata facilitate as many as five "appointments" a day with men wanting to have sex with her daughter, selling her body about 1000 times.

The teen, who has permanent name suppression, fled her home to police in November 2016.

Kasmeer Lata during her sentencing last month. Photo / Jason Oxenham
During the 18-month period it is estimated the teen's 36-year-old mother collected about \$100,000, keeping half, court documents show.

Sehgal's part in the scheme also included helping to arrange advertisements, selling the girl online and in print, including one in the classified section of the *Herald* which was paid for using a bank account in Sehgal's name.

An ad for the teen, called "Topsy", on the website New Zealand Girls was also paid by Sehgal who provided his name and phone number as a contact for the escort agency.

He further allowed Lata to use his New Zealand bank account to deposit the money she earned from pimping out her daughter and assisted his partner in driving the teen to around Auckland for the "appointments".

A taxi driver had also been hired by Lata to help drive the teen to motels, the court heard.

Sehgal continues to deny the offending, Crown solicitor Natalie Walker said, referencing a pre-sentence report.

Walker added that Sehgal showed little to no remorse.

Sehgal's lawyer, Graeme Newell, said his client "aided and abetted" Lata but that Sehgal's role was not essential for Lata's offending to occur.

Justice Lang said Sehgal must have known the gross breach of trust occurring between a mother and her daughter. He gave Sehgal no credit for any remorse.

The court heard that Sehgal was likely to have his permanent New Zealand residency revoked and he will be deported to India at the conclusion of his sentence.

Lata's defence counsel Karl Trotter said at her sentencing that his client has "come to the realisation that she may well be the most despised woman in New Zealand".

She will likely be deported to Fiji at the end of her sentence. An Auckland teenager was kept as a slave by her mum and sold a sickening 1000 times for sex.

The teenage victim, now 18, was granted residency and can now live, work and study in New Zealand [without fear of deportation](#).

"I felt that I had to do it," she told the *Herald* in an [exclusive interview](#).

"I had to do what I was told, what my mother said.

"My main weakness is that I love my mother a lot - I still do - and I can't see her tears."

The teen said it was a relief when her mum was charged because "my brothers were safe rather than my mum getting caught".

"All I wanted was your love when I was a child, teenager - and as your girl," the teen said in her victim impact statement.

"You did not care about me - and I just wanted your attention."

The case was the first of its kind in New Zealand under a specific subsection of the Crimes Act.

Lata's slave dealing conviction was also one of just three in New Zealand's legal history, since the crime was written into the Crimes Act in 1961.

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