

Quotes: Caste and Forced & Bonded Labour

“Slavery emerges at the conjunction of individual vulnerability, social exclusion and failure of rule of law. So it should be no surprise that those countries that tolerate systemic and often institutional discrimination against their citizens on spurious grounds such as caste should also be the ones with the most extensive enslavement of their citizens. Slavery is one of the cruelest manifestations of caste discrimination.” [Aidan McQuade, Director of Anti-Slavery International](#)

“Almost all bonded labourers in South Asia... belong to a minority ethnic group or caste... It is crucial to understand that there remains a stratum of human beings in South Asia who are deemed exploitable and expendable by society at large.” [Siddharth Kara, Expert on Slavery](#)

“Caste discrimination is one of the most pernicious forms of discrimination, as it condemns individuals from birth to a life of marginalisation. The links between caste, social hierarchy and slavery are strong ... In India, the overwhelming majority of bonded labour victims in agriculture, brick making, mining and other sectors are from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.” [Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Ms. Gulnara Shahinian](#)

“While legislation has been adopted to eradicate bonded labour and manual scavenging, reports and interlocutors indicate that there is a consistent failure in the implementation of such laws and a tendency to minimize the significance of the problem.” [UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, Rashida Manjoo, 2014 report on India](#)

“Traditional caste rules mandate forced labour from certain communities. Caste is one of the foundations of the bonded labour system and remains a key feature of bondage even in non-agricultural industries today. The lack of access to their own land, combined with this expectation to perform free labour and the threat of violence and economic boycott against those who challenge their expected social roles, keeps many Dalit families in bondage and a perpetual state of poverty.” [India Exclusion Report 2014](#)

“Because India’s jurisprudence remains ill-equipped to stringently provide legal protection for Dalits, human traffickers easily kidnap and lure vulnerable Dalit women and girls into prostitution and child marriage and men and children into bonded labor in factories and on farms.” [Keshar Patel, World Policy Institute, 2014](#)

“A weak rule of law, widespread corruption, and poverty reinforce political, social, and economic structures of modern slavery in Pakistan. Underpinning this are culturally accepted practices that are tantamount to modern slavery... This reinforces perceptions that lower caste groups are not equal citizens and subsequently limits policy and service provisions tailored to their needs.” [2014 Global Slavery Index by the Walk Free Foundation](#)

“Most bonded labourers were Dalits. Dalits who asserted their rights often were attacked, especially in rural areas. As agricultural laborers for higher-caste landowners, Dalits often worked without remuneration.” [US State Department India Report, 2013](#)

“Manual scavenging is not a career chosen voluntarily by workers, but is instead a deeply unhealthy, unsavoury and undignified job forced upon these people because of the stigma attached to their caste. The nature of the work itself then reinforces that stigma.” [Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, 2013](#)

“Millions of children, particularly from vulnerable Dalit, tribal, and Muslim communities, facing discrimination, inadequate support in government schools, and pressures to earn money, soon drop out and start working.” [Human Rights Watch World Report 2015](#)

“Every single child labourer that I have documented comes from a highly impoverished family unit and belongs to a low-caste or minority community.” [Harvard Child Labour Expert, Siddharth Kara](#)

“Caste-based apartheid underpins the ‘camp coolie’ and sumangali systems allowing the powerful to enslave, with impunity, vulnerable workers, often young Dalit women and girls, for the manufacture of textiles and garments for northern hemisphere markets, and hence to derive considerable profits from their enslavement.” [Aidan McQuade, Director, Anti-Slavery International](#)

“During their years of bonded labour, the women were subjected to serious workplace abuses, severe restrictions on freedom of movement and communication, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, and death. The majority of sumangali-bonded laborers came from the SCs [scheduled castes – Dalits] ... most sumangali workers did not report abuses due to fear of retribution.” [Human Rights Watch World Report 2015](#)

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