

BONDED LABOR AND CONSTRAINED ROLE OF PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT IN ITS ERADICATION

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ABSTRACT

Topic of the study is selected due to its importance and as a major debating issue of the civic society. References are made to some of the most relevant human rights standards in order to explain what conditions of exploitative labor practices can be described as bonded labor because modern day slavery is one of the great human rights challenges of our time (Colin Powell, July-August 2003). Millions of people around the globe are made to work against their will. Where bonded labor is used, a range of associated human rights abuses are frequently taking place, including rape, overture and murder (U.S. Department of Labor: 1995). This paper is an attempt to illustrate the circumstances in which bonded labor occurs, examples of Pakistani government failure to take effective action and what measures can be taken to stop the bonded labor in Pakistan are highlighted. This is a framework for the future researchers.

INTRODUCTION

In ancient societies people were forced to work for elites from generation to generation on two time meal negating and abusing their human rights as there was no concept of human rights in the primitive societies (Heady., 1966), where Riggs (1964) states that having passed from transitional periods i.e. fused to prismatic and now diffracted, influential and powerful are practicing the same. Forcible slavery still exists even after the emergence of the civil society. Bonded labor is one of the issues of the present societies where people are working against their will, in most of the cases for the life-time.

In countries where it exists, bonded labors are deprived of their basic rights, i.e. education, health and shelter etc. (Sharma, 1999). They are dependent on their masters for their livelihood. In recent decades, all most all the advanced counties, financial institutions and NGOs are focusing on the elimination of this menace as per UN human rights charter. In Pakistan, it exists in brick kiln, rural areas of Sindh and some parts of NWFP in the form of peasantry and in the red light areas besides in many industrial units in the form of child labor (Samra *et al*, 1997). Recently government was forced to frame laws to prevent the bonded labor (Factories Act, 1994). Research is underway in many areas to explore deep into

the different avenues of the problem and eliminate it through different measures.

Problem Statement: Despite many steps taken by government and NGOs to solve the problem of bonded labor in Pakistan, still it is a serious question. Pakistani law define bonded labor as "a *peshgi* advance received by him or any member of his family, a person by himself or through any member of his family renders labor or service either without wages or for nominal wages or forfeits freedom of employment with another person for a specified or non-specified period or forfeits the right to freely move from one place to another or forfeit the right to appropriate or sell at the market price his property and includes a surety who agrees to render bonded service on the failure of the debtor and on his behalf" (Ali, 2001). The actual figure of bonded labor in Pakistan and the inhuman treatment by their masters is still behind the scene. In a country where the exact statistics is not known one can not expect the solution of the problem. What government, NGOs etc. are doing the most is the release of some bonded labors but this is a partial solution. Until the root cause "poverty" is not eliminated, bonded labors will remain bonded. This research is thus, an effort to: "Identify the prevailing situation of bonded labor, the government halfhearted efforts, and the critical issues responsible for failure of