

# Apex of Slavery Mentality in The Ruled Class Community in Nepal and Its Impacts on Youth's Education

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**Abstract-** *This study has tried to explore the prevalence of slavery mentality in the Madhesi community in Nepal in general and its impacts on the realisation of the potential of the youth in the globalised era specifically. It sheds light a bit more on the historical and cultural aspect and more on the political scenario of the state that has always tried to keep people enslaved. The purposes of this study are to find the causes of mental slavery in the ruled class society and its impacts on all social dimensions. Though the study lacks sufficient engagement with existing scholarly research and theoretical framing, it has moved ahead by applying the principles of an exploratory study exclusively on the Madhesi community and their perception of freedom in their personal and social life. The issues explored in the study are all public discourses, which have been interpreted in line with the scholarly ideology in this arena. It concludes that mental slavery is more prevalent in the ruled class community, which is the biggest hindrance to one's self-actualisation in a society. The freer a society is, the better the youth they are.*

**Index Terms-** *Slavery Mentality/ Ruled Class/ Commodification/ Empowerment/ Emancipation*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sonu Sharma, an Indian motivational speaker, claims that a lion can never be the king of a jungle in terms of its inherent traits, like height and length (giraffe), strength (elephant), speed (cheetah), and cunningness (fox). Despite not having any of these qualities, a lion feels like a lion; that's why a lion is a king (*Acharya, STUDY81*). The excerpt from the above motivational speech strikes the common mentality of the common

people. That also implies the psychology of the common people who are submissive by nature itself. People often seem to miss out Socrates' 'Know Thyself', a philosophical maxim. This is one reason out of many to become a slave mentally.

In Marxian thought, slavery is a condition of powerlessness in relation to another person (*Patterson, 1989*). But the Post-Modern era does not see any space of powerlessness, which is dynamic in nature. It is a subject to transformation and transmission (*Foucault, 1976*). Mental slavery is a bigger issue. It is related to psychology, attitude, and a sense of perception of the world. It implies what the world view one has about the world. The personal construct one develops and the social construct one forms shapes his or her totality. Self-reflection leads one to self-reliance and self-confidence, which becomes the base of one's mentally mature and psychological strength. The more psychologically strong one is, the less submissive he/ she stands to be. Other-centric rather than self-centric people are generally prone to mental slavery. *Garvey (1938)* says:

We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind. Mind is your only ruler, sovereign. The man who is not able to develop and use his mind is bound to be the slave of the other man who uses his mind. (*p.7*)

This research work provides a much-needed inquiry into slavery mentality in the ruled class community and its analysis and interpretation from historical and cultural perspectives. This piece of work hopes to

illuminate how the long-rooted psychological fear manifested in the form of mental slavery in the ruled class in the Nepalese society has been a bane of social progress, and how even educated members of the ruled class lag far behind achieving their full potential.

## II. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES OF MENTAL SLAVERY

Mental slavery refers to a psychological state in which an individual is controlled or influenced by another person or group (Garvey, 2014). Marcus Mosiah Garvey from Jamaica, who coined the term 'mental slavery', further says *-Mind is your only ruler, sovereign. The man who is not able to develop and use his mind is bound to be a slave of the other man who uses his mind.* Mental slavery encompasses instances where individuals voluntarily surrender their autonomy and self-determination to someone else, either through fear, shame, or a desire for approval or validation from their superior. In these cases, the individual may willingly accept restrictions on their freedom and independence, even if it means sacrificing their own interests or well-being (Wiki freedom).

Social structure contributes to the social construction of an individual. It teaches them how to present themselves in social affairs. People with social isolation and poverty are more susceptible to mental slavery. The feelings of powerlessness, lack of control over one's life, constant fear or anxiety, difficulty making decisions or taking risks, feeling like an outsider in one's own circle, and situations like such pave the way for people to be mentally slave. The ruling class elsewhere in the world keep striking the mentality of the ruled ones. They are often found to be using different manipulating techniques that overwhelmingly control the thought process of the ruled ones.

### Lack of confidence

Mental slavery has some kind of replica of Skinnerian Operant Conditioning that focuses on how the hope of reward shapes one's behaviour. 'The behaviour desired is the behaviour of servitude' is what is highly desirable for the ruling class. It is dependent on perspective, which is what a ruling

class expects. This is a kind of politics, an ideology of the ruled class that there exists their master whom they have to obey and follow everything they are circulated. The greatest danger is the limitation of personal and professional growth. There is hardly any likelihood of achieving full potential when one is the victim of mental slavery. It is important to recognise that mental slavery exists and understand how it affects individuals and society as a whole. It is also essential to highlight how it is an evil to social harmony and economic prosperity.

The purpose of this work is to find the causes of mental slavery in the ruled class society and its impact on all social dimensions. The research is guided by the following research questions:

- A. What are the causes of mental slavery?
- B. Can mental slavery be eradicated? And
- C. How can the younger generation of the ruled class society take the lead to fight mental slavery?

## III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There is a big volume of research works, books, journals, news reports, and others on slavery; however, the research arena lacks work on 'slavery mentality'. While observing through a critical lens, the impacts of both types of slaves resemble each other, i.e. they are equally detrimental to a healthy social life.

To serve my purposes, I have taken the help of Duke, & Osim (2020)'s article-the culture of slavery in traditional context and globalised society, Nasidi (2022)'s article- slavery and its characteristics, Gill(2021)'s - Legacies of Slavery and their Enduring Harms, Patterson (1982)'s -Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study, and few others.

### Slavery Culture: A Part of Social Life

People being victims of mental slavery appear to be a universal case; their manifestation of mental slavery differs from one another- the variation lies only in the degree. Moreover, it turns out to be customary to adopt in the ruled class. It continues. Duke and Osim (2020) interpret the meaning of slavery from a functional approach where slavery in the society exists as a product of functional dynamics, in the

sense that the concerned people try to continue the culture of slavery to sustain unbalanced power relations among interacting persons for political, economic, social or intellectual benefits. Patterson (1982) seems to be supported by Duke and Osim. In his book, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, Patterson takes it as a desirable phenomenon. It is a desire of the strong over the weak to ameliorate economically. People with a slavery mentality are equally vulnerable. He focuses on cultural ecology, whereby he sheds light on the values inherent in human beings that create a ground for enslaving the weak ones. It is also an asymmetry of unequal relation where the host is always impoverished.

**Inequality and Poverty Leading to Mental Slavery**  
Nasidi (2022) accepts the manifestation of mental slavery in different forms. He stresses that people with mental slavery are mentally controlled in spite of being free physically. They are the product of social engineering, manipulation of knowledge and civilisation.

People pushed back from the mainstream of the nation often feel weak and hopeless, which keeps them away from access to resources, leading them to a state of poverty. This factor causes social inequality. An unequally divided society often turns out to be a breeding ground for mental slavery. Duke & Osim (2020) further state -*The present-day globalising society equally operates via the slave society dynamics found in the traditional contexts, but its power relation is rather driven by the market economy of various capitalist systems that control it, (p.10).* When controlled by any system, it indirectly creates an obligation for the weaker ones to develop the culture of slavery. i.e. the culture of survivality.

#### **Institutionalisation of the Slavery System**

Despite the world having reached the apex of globalisation, the system of slavery is still deeply rooted there. This phenomenon is systematically systematised irrespective of social advancement. Nasidi (2022) claims that slavery is an old social institution in human history. Since ancient times, it has been institutionalised. The changing tendency of the world keeps changing the slavery system. After the western world entered the industrial world in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, people were taught to be in the

workforce as the industries claimed to be a source of livelihood, which culminated in mental slavery. Through the employer-employee relationship, the slavery system is institutionalised, giving birth to industrial slaves. Economic/industrial slaves are those enslaved basically to serve as an economic workforce, mainly for the production of surplus goods (*ibid.*).

#### **Slavery and Power Relationship**

Slavery and power are the two sides of the same coin. One's existence in the absence of others is virtually impossible. They exist side by side. They might appear in different forms—that is a different story, but they do. Patterson (1982) claims slavery to be one of the most extreme forms of the relation of domination, approaching the limits of total power from the viewpoint of the master, and of total powerlessness from the viewpoint of the slave. Yet it differs from other forms of extreme domination in very special ways. He defines it in a literal sense; however, his definition applies to all who are of a submissive nature. His main thesis is power-relation, which he explains to exist in three different facets: social, psychological and cultural. These three factors are conducive to worsening people's mindset.

Most of the works consulted were mainly based on slavery, its universal system, impacts of the slavery system on the concerned masses, its history, its politics, and its ecology. However, my sole concentration was on people with a of slavery mentality and their legacy in the ruled class society. Moreover, it also talks about how the members of the ruled class are made mentally slaves via different approaches applied to them.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted in line with the principle of 'exploratory study'.

Exploratory research is a preliminary study of an unfamiliar problem about which the researcher has little or no knowledge (Swaraj, 2019). Further, she opines that the study of an exploratory nature is employed to develop initial ideas and insights and to provide direction for any further research needed. It is a type of study to gain a better understanding of the issues highlighted. When any issues have not been

explored satisfactorily, or say, when they have not been established, it appears desirable to make an exploratory study. It is flexible in nature. When a problem is broad and not specifically defined, the researchers use exploratory research as a beginning step (*ibid.*). Yin, (1994) writes that exploratory studies are a valuable means of understanding what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomenon in a new light. About the process of research conduction, Swaraj (2019) further clarifies that informal interviews with persons experienced in the area of study will help the researcher in securing insight into the subject and its various facts. The salient feature of this kind of study is that it makes an analysis of "insight-stimulating" cases, followed by a review of the related literature and an experience survey.

To get insight into the issues mentioned above, I purposely selected three people (one, a political leader and columnist, a noted political analyst and economist, an educational entrepreneur, and a religious teacher), conducted an intensive level of interviews (main tool of data collection), concentrating on the following issues:

Commodification of Madheshi;  
 Cap Culture: Pride or Price Pay?  
 Victimization of Castism;  
 You are mine VS I am Yours; and  
 Confront slavery's racist legacy

The questionnaire that formed the basis of the interview was

1. In a politically and socially divided society, the ruling class makes a strategy to enslave the ruled class, like
  - a. They pick up certain people;
  - b. They attach value to them by giving them certain lucrative posts and positions.

The purpose is to teach others to accept the ruling class as their master.  
 Is that so? What is your opinion?
2. It is often thought that people with a slavery mentality are more vulnerable than the real slaves. How would you respond to it? What is

your opinion about mental slavery? How can people get rid of it?

3. Cap culture: Pride or Price Pay? (Marginalized community people, esp. Madheshi try to show nationalism by wearing a cap (and wearing a hilly class cultural dress code) when they have to contest in an election. They hope to be favoured in the election process. What is your opinion in this regard?
4. Can slavery mentality be wiped out by making people aware politically, or will it end in the course of time when people will get education in a real sense?

Some work on mental slavery is available online, and the views of experts are the main sources of data.

The result was analysed and interpreted thematically.  
 Sampled Population of the study

Table No. 1

S.N.	Participant's profile	Hereafter referred to as
1.	A political leader and a columnist	Contributor 1 (C1)
	A political Analyst and economist	Contributor 2 (C2)
	An educational entrepreneur	Contributor 3 (C3)
	A religious teacher	Contributor 4 (C4)

## V. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

Intensive study of literature about slavery and its related phenomena, deep analysis of the issues by experts, and a glocal scenario of the world accept the bad impacts of mental slavery on both the community's upward mobility and the potential achievement of an individual. Unjust power relations seem evident in enslaving minority communities where there is a legacy of rule specific to caste/community. In Nepalese society, Madheshis are more vulnerable because they are socially pushed back, psychologically controlled and culturally dominated for a long.

I have discussed thematically the takeaways from the body of knowledge in this area and the insights of experts. My observation, experience and perception about people of a slavery mentality in the ruled community, especially Madhesis, have little or no place in the interpretation of the issues of this research.

#### Commodification of Madheshi by the Elite Ruling Class

For political reasons, Madhesis are commodified. One who glorifies the ruling community is awarded, promoted, and given a lucrative post and position. Indirectly, they are taught to accept them as givers and Madheshis as takers. Whenever there was a movement in Madhesh, those who favoured the ruling class were rewarded with lucrative posts and positions. This fostered a sense of mental slavery whereby they could do anything they were asked to do, opined C1. He illuminated the issue, claiming that an individual's totality is the result of his or her cultural construct, political construct (the greatest guiding force in social life) and economy. Out of three, those who have easy access to any two factors are eligible to rule the society. The Madheshi community here in Nepal has always lagged behind the mainstream of the nation. But C2 had a different opinion; he accepted my claim, though. According to C2, political figures with Madheshi sentiment have always been vocal against the prevailing practice of enslaving the marginalised communities; however, most of them themselves have been the victims of commodification. At the same time, it is the educated few who are found to be teaching the value of sycophancy to the uneducated masses for personal gain. To him, the elite group often is found to be rewarding those people who are bootlickers. Bootlicking (Yes-man culture) often proves to be an easy ladder for upward mobility. In the same way, C3 put a different opinion. He doesn't see this as a bigger issue. It is all about the lack of job opportunities.

In this regard, Gill (2021) writes- ... the commodification of human beings was an unprecedented form of brutality. The appalling inhumanity illustrated that enslaved Africans were treated as commodities. The underlying purpose of

enslavement was economic gain, e.g., wealth generation and accumulation (p.66).

Madheshis, even other minority communities too, are easily beguiled; they miss the intent of the trick and tactics of the ruling community.

#### Cap Culture: Pride or Price Pay?

The pre-election period previews a paragon of sycophancy and mental slavery of the Madheshi community in the Nepalese context. Mostly, Madheshi intellectual people who wish to contest in an election from the so-called mainstream political parties wear DHAKA TOPI to prove themselves to have nationality in a true sense for a few years. Those few years often remain a probation period to testify. Dhaka Topi (a cultural cap of the hilly Brahmin community who has had a single caste hegemony in Nepal for more than two centuries. They have set up certain values which are highly expected to be followed by all others who wish to enjoy the same privileges in the state. The cap culture circulates power. What the cap culture means to the ruling class here is not necessarily compatible with the ruled community. It is a matter of pride for one, but a price pay for others.

Social discourse in the Madheshi community about the cap-culture is negatively connotated. The discussion on cap-culture takes a political flavour and political colour. When Madheshis wear Dhaka Topi (a unique cultural cap of hilly elite class people), it means lots to both the ruling class and the ruled class. The ruling class begins trusting and accepting, whereas the ruled class becomes optimistic about their grace and kindness in terms of lucrative posts, positions, or /and promotions.

The contributors had a mixed response regarding this issue. The C1 flatly rejected the issue but accepted the dominance culturally. The other contributors- C2 and C3 interpreted the issue from a political point of view. The hilly ruling people wear KURTA AND GAMCHHA to be accepted as givers, while Madheshis, when they wear DHAKA TOPI, try to prove their loyalty to them.

*You are mine VS I am Yours*

Despite the numerous changes in Nepalese society, the general perception of both the ruling and the ruled class communities about their status seems unchanged. It has been revolving around -' you are mine vs I am yours'. Politically, the ruling class still has their stand as GIVER, and the ruled class as 'TAKER'. They have not been able to come out of this scenario. An incident- Hritik Kaand (Hritik Incident/ untoward), the event that caused a communal clash between Madheshi and Pahadiya, can be taken as an example of *You are mine VS, I am Yours*. After the aftermath of the Hritik Kaand, in which an Indian- Bollywood Cine Star-Hritik Roshan had given a bad remark about Nepalese people, causing the nation to be divided socially, there was a march of Harmonious Procession led by a veteran political leader who gave concluding remarks - we Nepali and Madheshi are united. Nearly half of the applauders were Madheshi there. His statement clearly illuminated the status of Madheshi in the country.

**Advocacy against Mental Slavery in Madheshi**  
The issue of ending mental slavery seems to be working in a paradoxical way in the Nepalese context. Those who rose to power in Madhesh to end the mental slavery got victimised. They themselves began maintaining their legacy. Basically, this happened after the Madhesh Movement 2007 when the common mass supported the movement to break the social, cultural and political hegemony of the elite ruling class. The Madhesh Movement had been raised to bring total change in a political system, especially focusing on bringing all other marginalised communities to the mainstream of the nation, one aspect of it was to raise awareness in decimating mental slavery in total. Regarding this issue, the C1 blames the system of the nation itself, whereas C2 blames the desire for power and position. C3, on the other hand, has a different opinion. He says that if people have job opportunities, they will be busy in their own lives, discarding others. Mental peace, contentment and desire for one's own self will help one to get rid of mental slavery, says C4.

Garvey (1938) gives his opinion about ending mental slavery:

We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind. Mind is your only ruler, sovereign. The man who is not able to develop and use his mind is bound to be the slave of the other man who uses his mind. (p.29)

Garvey acknowledges the importance of using one's mind to end mental slavery. Hooley (2022) writes -In our society, we are not bound in chains like the slaves on Marley's pirate ships. It is our worldview, our 'horizons for action' and our 'common sense' about what is possible and desirable which serve as our bonds. He is also in favour of asking the concerned people to get out of the perpetuation of mental slavery.

**Emancipation from Mental Slavery**

This or that way, slavery will remain forever. Its nature will keep changing. In the past, physical slavery was a global issue; now, it is a mental one. One can see the manifestation of mental slavery in jobs, relationships, money, and whatnot or wherever. By the time one is controlled by anything or any person, one cannot enjoy a life of freedom. Garvey (1986) says that a man is bound to be a slave of others if he can't develop his own mind. Prince (2020) in her blog Medium strongly recommends reading a self-development book to emancipate from mental slavery. She also suggests not taking others' opinions, but rather acting upon the idea. Mindset matters a lot in enslaving one mentally. It is the mindset that keeps one stuck somewhere. C1 asserts that mindset is what political ideology influences a society. C2 opines in a different way. He claims that both a personal and social construct are responsible for one's mindset that one develops along the way one grows up in a society. Emancipation requires a longer period of time. C3 emphasises financial freedom for the emancipation of mental slavery, whereas C4 again talks about knowing oneself as the only way to get emancipation from it.

**VI. KEY FINDINGS**

The ruled class community are often seen as prone to mental slavery. They are made weaker linguistically, socially, culturally and economically. They are

rendered ill-suited for self-esteem. The state uses all mechanisms to control them. They are simply socially dead. The ruled community are often deprived of access to education, health and economic opportunities, leading them to a state of poverty. The inequality created by the state creates an impasse for them. They cannot find the way to move forward. The road of upward mobility is not paved for them. The system itself is designed in such a way that the ruled class people are oppressed at every point of social life. This is a kind of trap which is not conducive to success for the ruled class. This continues from generation to generation, creating a legacy of slavery. The victim of mental slavery feels incapacitated from achieving their full potential in life. This culminates in communal hatred, depression, apathy and loss of hope.

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