



## Intangible slavery in the digital world: An analysis

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### Abstract

The research article is based on review of relevant literature on slavery and it flows through use of different media for communication in society. In the time of technological revolution, mankind has seen inflow and outflow of message and information and the social change is happening at its pace. The distance between haves and have nots turned into digital divide with the coming of technology. Devising new ways to maintain social construct, which comprises of rulers and slaves. It is nearly impossible to ignore slave roles, the concept of 'spiral of silence' which keeps people silent and accept their roles is still prevailing. Research study mentions how new digital technology has brought new ways to communicate and a new way of rule and to be ruled. Mass medium should be liberating, and it should not become tool of subjugation and slavery. The paper discusses the new age slavery in the form of digital slavery.

“He that WILL NOT reason is a bigot  
He that CANNOT reason is a fool  
He that DARE NOT reason is a slave”

—H. DRUMMOND

**Keywords:** Slavery, intangible, digital media, digital divide, subaltern, colonialism

### Introduction

Slavery is intangible, it is shapeless. Slavery is a state of mind, where how to serve the master is secondary, how to treat oneself as unequal and less than master is primary objective. A situation in which, one human being is owned by another. Defining slavery is controversial as, which practice is to be termed as slavery with changing times. (International, 2002) [2] For defining slavery, international agreement in league of nations slavery convention in 25 September 1926, defined it as a condition of person over whom any or other power attached to right of ownership are exercised. All acts involving acquisition of slave selling, the exchanging human as any act of trade. Treating someone less than other is slavery. Despite the physical equality of resources, the psychological belief of being not enough is slavery where one accepts the notion for oneself, created by others. The subjugation is slow and subtle for naked eyes but it is visibly constructing setup. The treatment of slave is normalized by the slave itself by accepting their role as destined. The vicious circle is alive as long as the slaves enjoy the role in institution of slavery. Where comfort with the subordination, familiarity with his/her role to survive keeps slavery alive. When one is not speaking one's mind, not questioning, due to sheer ignorance, lack of courage else an ease of silent unconscious acceptance of their designated subaltern role is law of nature. Blaming oneself for being born in a socio-cultural setup as a reason for their own subordination. With 1500 discovery of sea route around different continents, when nations expanded and spread European institutions across countries which was political-economic phenomenon is also known as age of discovery. During colonialism, subordination to British and acceptance of foreigner as ruler, was a state of mind where colonies believed themselves as less and ought to be ruled by person, organization, ruler superior to them. The surrender by the conscience after undermining oneself slowly creates a

dependency of decision and consequences if acted otherwise. Colonialism can return only with the consent of colonized. (Gilley, 2017) [1] It is mentioned how some colonized people felt grave security threat from colonizer, and some saw benefits of being governed by others, especially who portray themselves, better off technologically or otherwise. Slavery becomes a belief in which, the punishment determined by the master for slave is accepted as rule of nature. With the end of colonialism, the countries brought end to colonial slavery as soon as they started believing in themselves as administrators, decision makers and took charge of decision and got ready to face outcomes with courage. So the Indian constitution which came in after independence, mentions the concept of sovereignty in preamble of Indian constitution, to provide autonomy to nation state and its citizens too. As soon as one realizes the power of saying, Yes or No is realized by the slave, it determines the road for him or her whether it will lead to slavery or salvation. Once different colonized country united them and realized that colonial way of rule is unacceptable, which subjugates them by taking away their right to decide for them self. That conscious unity which is invisible, an intangible collectiveness brought tangible population physically together to act against the exploiter and raised people above the shackles of dependency and subjugation. Unity in thoughts and belief brought a conscious demand where colonies feel free to take their own decision, represent themselves. [7] Slavery of a nation state is followed by a number of different social constructs giving shelter to slavery of different kinds. The slaves to landlords in the field of farming, slaves to caste constrains and discrimination in society, slavery to a gender roles, slavery to religious rigidities, prohibited access to physical and financial resources, caste hierarchies create the rule as right and wrong, good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable, and ultimately which creates ruler and slave.

### Can opposites collide?

Opposites attract as they exist around each other, so question arises can these opposites collide? Can the power of slavery and courage collide? Slavery, an age old construct and on the other hand courage “Mother of evolution and Change”. Where slavery is intangible, so is bravery, but can these opposites collide? If they do, will they synthesize a new intangible domain for rebellious forces. Courage is usually unaccepted by the rulers and unaccepted from slaves for being rebel and disrupting their equilibrium. As once the rebel becomes the ruler starts deriving success from previous ruler and turns into one of them a new ruler. Since time immemorial, rebels are hanged, shot, made to sacrifice their slave lives to diffuse the idea of fear if asked for freedom from slavery. Within group of rebels, one or two becomes new leader, need subjugated group rise up to rule and lead but ultimately maintain new leading position they acquire. Social reforms turn into gigantic illusions where a mirage as we reach there are new mirages at some distance. The nation state got liberated from foreign rule, Slavery still persist. Slaves still exist in different strata’s in one form or other. The servitude chains their consciousness to forbid individual to ever think oneself as a decision maker. The social status of an individual by itself becomes a source of power or weakness, physical, social, political or financial resources determine whole series of events. Gayatri Spivak <sup>[8]</sup> asks how can the subaltern speak, how one can raise concerns, their dissent in front of a firmly deep rooted established social construct of his or her ruler and his own role as a “to be ruled”. It is fear of ruler as from high social status, where privilege of being born in a group or born as a particular gender, or race to which slave surrenders to. She questions that can a women speak and challenge her subjugation on her own, in front of her own ruler she is obeying since time immemorial, out of fear all her life generation after generation or she needs a person with power men or women, who have resources, financial, social otherwise their concern are not heard. Can a person with no trapped minds create trapped bodies, those who are playing their roles in the social construct of class disparities, gender discrimination, and tribal exploitations. Eventually the subaltern sustaining, relishing system which is already established and never dares to question or stand against in fear of isolation as mentioned by Noelle-Neuman in the theory named as “Spiral of silence”.

### Slavery diffused in generations

Subaltern is someone who is subordinate to some alternate rulers one or the other. “The rule maker” may change it can be religious, economic ruler, racial, community related, gender based but intangible subordinate consciousness keeps traveling generation after generation. Parmar A K (2019) <sup>[9]</sup> Standing and Its Entrance: An Investigation of Bama's Karukku and Sangati specifies that how in her collection of memoirs Bama presents her experience as a Dalit Christian and how Dalits are isolated in the foundation of Chapel and in this way Christianity the position framework has been so profoundly imbued in the Indian mind that establishments that should advance libertarianism or mindfulness wind up spreading similar differentiations. Bama comprehends that Dalitness is basically a method towards accomplishing a feeling of social character. For this new Dalit individual, social and social opportunity has come due to his self-height and self-recognizable proof” Dalits

have looked to rethink their societal position through schooling and change to change the personality of Indian culture as we live in a republic. Yet at the same time dalit people are denied to have - equity, balance, freedom and society - the four fundamental standards of a majority rule government. A Dalit isn't permitted to free of his/her standing character that slanders him/her socially. The caste (being born in a specific group) used by other, as slavery thrived through a combination of use of power and ignorance. The concept of slavery also changes according to time and context, it melts and multiply the slavery and slave’s identity. People are changing their social identities it becomes impossible to change roles when role in society are pre decided by socially said or unsaid arrangement. Countries once slave now desire to be world ruler, which is nourishing the sentiment of slavery. The approaching of the government likewise neglected to change Brazil's social association. Fundamentally, it stayed partitioned into two classes of individuals: from one perspective, the landowners; on the other, the majority of slaves and free workers, the last option being very few and made up generally of laborers and foreigners who came from different places and were many times jobless. John Baptist scalabrini, P.1) <sup>[10]</sup> the social imbalance which obliged most of the foreigners to live on the manors, poor and vulnerable, without consistent work and now and again abused by proprietors who kept on acting as indicated by the old attitude that had won during the time of subjugation? Subjugation is elusive idea however sufficiently able to stop us genuinely going out, communicating our self or think past a point. Slavery is when one is losing his/ her individuality as a person, and creates bottleneck for realizing his/ her potential, in the name of culture, traditions, nationality, gender, caste, race, region, stereotypes are attached and followed to keep system in equilibrium which is in the name of culture.

Culture which is characterized as, complex entire which incorporates information, conviction, expressions, ethics, regulations, customs, and some other capacities and propensities procured by man as a citizen. (Edward B. Taylor,1871:1) <sup>[11]</sup> A group of individuals imposing beliefs onto another with force termed as cultural subjugation. As Dr. Ambedkar specifies in his book mentioning different aspects related to subjugation on basis of caste "The annihilation of caste" <sup>[12]</sup> (1979, p.79) "Standing Framework (caste) isn't only division of work, it is likewise a division of workers. Socialized society without a doubt needs division of work. In no enlightened society, division of work joined by this unnatural division of workers into water-tight compartments. "Different roles of division are distributed but the rigidity of role and presence of a strong bulletproof glass ceiling is something slavery is made of. Division became cultural norm which made it more difficult to temper with”. Where if one can see open sky beyond clear glass ceiling still the ceiling exists and breaking it will break the glass, which is feared by all. Untouchability is not a singular experience. They have been exposed to exclusion of varying degrees and rejection of identity. Slavery has become culture which the oppressor and oppressed both have adopted, generation after generation and passed it on. Since generations, time to time new policies and steps are brought in society, with the aim to resolve the problems and fill the gap between have and have not. The social issues where the oppressor continues to use new technological

mediums, context to oppress their fellow member in society. These Problems becomes mirage in desert, where as soon as you try to reach there you realize the water is visible somewhere else as women get right to study they need equal right to work and contribute a new mirage, as they started working, working and social role come in clash where their initial dedicated role is considered as jeopardized by her and again she is in loop of questions that how initial action of liberty was questionable, which created different social issues a s new mirage in desert. With women started looking for educational rights, they needed financial rights too which was questioned by self-proclaimed proprietor of financial, education resources. The overall freedom of subaltern is never granted or accepted by the ruler, rights are granted in bits and pieces as much pleases to the ruler elite.

### **Rigid social bee comb**

Different Social constructs are bee comb boxes, sticky and set pattern for some to get honey for them. As different societies develop new parameters, fresh grounds to subjugate different groups of people in the form of gender, races, region, and people from economic, social, environmental resources. Dr B. R. Ambedkar specifies in his discourse, the 1936 Yearly Meeting of the Jat-Pat-Todak Mandal of Lahore, that between dependence of one class on another class is unavoidable. Indeed, even reliance of one class upon another may here and there become passable. Question emerges, why make one individual ward upon one more for his/her central necessities? An advancement which is considered as continuous course of progress and improvement or development of people, transforming people into reinforced human as fortified work. When there are mere bonded minds, learning to bind themselves which will never let them unleash one self. The unlearning the age old practice of intangible slavery has become new challenge to bring society out of rigid bee comb boxes. These bee combs are sticky and rigid. If externally approached for change, the creator of this bee comb the social construct like bees comes at you to bite. They defend the constructed bee-comb to keep honey (the profit) safe for them self. The profit margins always motivate big companies to exploit employees and keep them always in check. Creating labor unions and giving them right to express their concerns through their leader, a middle man to communicate and negotiate a keep them bound with group identity. Freedom is given to grow but how much freedom is too much is already defined with sometimes written or not written clearly. The subaltern faces conflict of loyalty as well as soon as the question the ruler, slave feels as traitor. Such strong surrender and control of mind never lets subjugation to come to an end. Well slavery is illegal in countries across globe but the intangibility makes it untapped so it exists in different forms in different groups. Deshmukh, A. K (2021) <sup>[6]</sup> Survivors of slavery often talk about how clever and sensitive their slaveholders were in understanding their vulnerabilities and then manipulating them through false sympathy, where they consider subjugation as destiny. Subjugation which is gaining control of some one physically or consciously. The subaltern faces conflict of loyalty when ever they dare to question the ruler.

### **Slavery declining but multiplying in digital times**

In the world of digital media, we have moved from political-economic slavery to an age of digital slavery. The concept

of digital slave is a terminology where individuality of user is lost with constant surveillance on like and dislikes, a tyranny to buy and save oneself from FOMO, the fear of missing out when rest of the world showcase their happiness with purchases, and visiting places. We are digital beings who live in data repositories and communicate through digital data. The digital world and technology, owned by others but the claim that our personal data and electronic interactions are owned and controlled by us where when asked we allow access of information in apparatus. With ownership of digital technology, owners enjoys, the right to use, trade and dispose user's information. The Universal declaration of human rights stated that, nobody will be held in subjugation or bondage; subjection and the slave exchange will be restricted in the entirety. Today that should incorporate both actual servitude and digital slavery. A long time back in 1807 the abolition of the Slave Exchange England proclaimed the start of the finish of bondage as a lawful and real condition, in spite of the fact that it was only after 1833 that the cancelation at last happened with the banning of subjugation in English domains. The equality between actual bondage and digital servitude are striking." (2018) <sup>[13]</sup>. On social media also the vulnerable offline slaves are treated as vulnerable on the online platform as well. Sometimes adolescents, some religious groups, gender, races, face hate comments which are on the basis of their caste, gender, religion known as online hate, trolling, discrimination, regional biasness, racism in the form of digital form of dislikes, boycott, hate comments. Revolutionary movement from intangible thought of fear, into tangible scared physical actions to digital hate, or hate mongers, the fearful thought is moving in a vicious circle, the circle of silence as mentioned by Elisabeth N. Neumann. (Matthes, 2015) <sup>[14]</sup> Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in "The spiral of Silence" mention how once a thought is subjugated, it keeps people silent as they feel alone and unheard, they keep silence intact to showcase themselves as "regular" and one of their kind, so they keep their sufferings to oneself and accept it as their fate. <sup>[14]</sup> The spiral of silence theory, discusses. Insight that one's viewpoint is disagreeable will in general beat one's demeanor of his viewpoints, sees down. The manipulation of quietness, specifies that individuals have a feeling of dread toward social segregation that prompts them to screen the way of behaving of others for indications of endorsement or objection continually. The slaves watch out for the gathering alongside their personality to be protected from the resentment of conqueror and disconnection from their own gathering. The harsh develop for a lady is kept up with by ladies by keeping quietness is for shielding herself from physical, sexual double-dealing. Where since centuries she is trained to be dependent and not think as an individual, rather comprehend as a women the bee-comb box they are think they are born into. To filter once decision, potential with the gender box, if that thought or opportunity pass through the filter of ideal women one can grab the opportunities. The problem aggregated when boxes are covered with more boxes of social constructs of race, class, literacy, financial resource, the box become more difficult to ever surpass. In present time young woman enslaved into sexual exploitation and abuse in pornography on the Internet. The thought of social and digital isolation of in-case of revelation of her physical exploitation she is going through exploitation. The social norms of un-acceptance and isolation are now present

on digital mediums too. The slavery is still flourishing in digital world. If technology is considered as the master, we need to understand that someone creates, operates and owns the technology and slaves again remains the slaves. Commercial success over such a long period rested on great advances in technology the adaptation of those technologies to create a vast slave economy. Digital mediums will bring democratized setup, or else it brought the social constructs on digital platform as well. The new technologies now enabled greater power and speed than ever before. Greater power meant greater control, and greater speed meant the destruction of distance. Slavers equipped with industrial power and speed could take anyone into slavery anywhere. Technology owner is the master, users become followers again, taking the role of mere consumers, listeners, users, followers for sustaining the industry. So dissenting voices are blocked, controlled or under surveillance in digital times as well. Technology is revolutionary but the users remain the same believer of slavery, subjugation and a Population of different gender, nationality, and region are constantly on mobile, always plugged in. It is not for the first time when technology is creating slaves, there are evidences and incidents in past when new technology as factory machines, agricultural technology brought, advertised and sold to make life comfortable and fill the gap between rich and poor, how come gap never got filled, the social or political gap still flourishing.

### Conclusion

We are not slave to technology; technology is a medium for slavery to exist and sustain. As without human, innovation and new technology could never exist. Individuals think of creating innovation and decide if it will flourish or not. Similar to our intangible slavery persisting in society, it is socially determined and constructed factors which makes acceptable and unacceptable. In the computerized world we are slaves 2.0. Today's technological convergence of multiple devices is forming a new reality. (Pestunov, 2022)<sup>[5]</sup> Data about people as a trade-off for some free internet providers. It is practically equivalent to old-style slaves giving their free work as a trade-off with the expectation of complimentary food, dress, and safe house. The way that the slave-proprietors gave something of significant worth to their slaves didn't make the trading of slave work for essential necessities impartial. The connection is inconsistent. Give them common freedoms to full fill their human potential lead an agreeable, fundamental equivalent right to raise concern. Power-less in the possession of worldwide computerized syndications which is now providing digital identity. Liberation was at long last accomplished in Brazil was the chance it managed for migrating, in a manner of speaking, the premise of the public culture from the field to the metropolitan habitats. From the start, in any case, this was subbing worker work for that of slaves, subbing the political force of the new estates in the west for that of the old ranches, where outdated types of horticulture persevered. The working class espresso cultivators, along with the mine proprietors, reinforced their political power, which ensured for them amazing chances to acquire abroad advances and bigger sponsorships for movement. The need of digital literacy is need of the hour, to use technology wisely for benefit of society. Slavery of mind is dependency of decision, media should be liberating in nature.

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