CHAPTER 3
CONTEXT OF MODERN SLAVERY

Introduction

When we think about slavery what comes to mind is the Trans-Atlantic Slavery trade. Many people from Africa were transported to the West Indies and America to work mainly in sugar plantations. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) 20.9 million men, women and children around the world are in slavery. In the 21st century people are still sold like objects, forced to work for little or no pay and at the complete mercy of their ‘employers’.

Till the 19th century slavery was a well established social institution, which had its own rules and regulations. Since the abolition of legal slavery in the nineteenth century, the word “slavery” has been used to describe different things: bonded labour, child labour, prison labour, prostitution, traffic of human organs etc. (Bales 2). Though more than 300 international treaties have been signed since 1815, slavery is present in the present world in different forms, and in the nineteenth century slavery was defined as the “legal ownership of one person by another” (Bales 2) since, most slavery in the nineteenth century took that form.

In this chapter, we try to analyze the question of slavery in the world context, especially in the Greco-Roman world and in the Biblical world. Slavery goes back as far as ancient Egypt and Roman Empire. It has never disappeared although it did take on different forms over the centuries. In the first part of this chapter we attempt to explain the evolution of slavery in the world context, starting from the Ancient Near East (ANE) till the New Testament period. The study of ancient slavery enables us to understand better Paul’s letter to Philemon, which deals with the issue of slavery. In the second part of the chapter we deal with the issues related to modern slavery, especially the system of bonded labour in India.

3.1. Definition of Slavery

The institution of slavery is based on the relationship between two people, which is both social and economic in nature. “It is a social system by which a certain group of people were controlled, by others, even using violence” (Bales 3). Due to violence and severe punishments from the masters the slaves live in constant fear, and they do not have any choice other than submitting to the masters.
The institution of slavery is also closely connected to economic exploitation. In ancient societies slaves were regularly used as primary producers in the key economic activities of agriculture, mining, and manufacture and most slaveholders identified themselves as normal business people (Bradley, Cartledge 1).

The very system of slavery goes against the natural order because in this institution, a person is put into the ownership of another, and there is no other person or authority to whom a slave can turn for protection (Wiedemann 15).

A critical investigation of ancient slavery faces two immediate obstacles: methodology and philosophy. The methodological problem is lack of primary sources. This is due to the fact that whatever sources survive express exclusively the views of the slaveholder, leaving out completely the opinions of the slaves. The philosophical concerns the very definition of the term, slave and “slavery” (Harrill, *The Manumission* 13). Currently there is no general theory that allows us to have a single definition of slavery for all cultures and times. According to Davis Brion “the deep we learn about slavery, the more difficulty we have defining it” (8). The problem of defining a ‘slave’ involves the question of whether a slave is a thing or a person. One of the most influential critics of the law-oriented approach is the historical sociologist Orlando Patterson. He defines the concept of slavery as “a process of dishonour, alienation, and social death” (Harrill, *The Manumission* 15). For him, “slavery is an intrinsically violent relationship of control, in which the enslaved person is functionally denied access to autonomous relations outside the master’s sphere of influence” (Harrill, *The Manumission* 15).

In modern times, various International Conventions have attempted to define the term slavery. The following are some of the definitions:

The Slavery Convention (1926) says that “slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised”.

International Labour Organization Forced Convention, from 1930 defines forced labour as “All work or service that is extracted from any person under the menace of any penalty for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily”.

Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, The Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956), lists modern forms of slavery: “debt bondage, serfdom, forced marriage and the delivery of a child for the
exploitation of that child are all slavery like practices and require criminalization and abolition”.

3.2. Slavery in the Ancient Near East (ANE)

Society in ANE mainly consisted of three large social groups: freemen, semi-free population, and slaves⁶⁹ (Dandamayev 58). Slavery existed in all parts of the ANE, although it is from Mesopotamian and Hittite texts that we get a clear idea of how it functioned (Bienkowski 274-5). This fact does not allow us to name the society of ANE a genuine slave society, “because in the genuine slave societies slaves were found, as general rule, in every occupation and in all economic levels, for example Classical Athens and Imperial Rome” (Harrill, *Slavery* 299).

In the economies of Mesopotamia and much of ANE the slaves were employed mainly in the agricultural and commercial complexes of the major temples. A small group of slaves were also involved in the domestic work (Bienkowski 274). In the ANE some slaves also carried out business in their own names (Harrill, *Slavery* 299). Skilled slaves worked as craftsmen for their owners or were hired out for profit, and some others were given responsible administrative tasks. As a group therefore, slaves themselves did not constitute a “class” in the modern sociological sense and at no time did slavery compete with free labour.

In earlier periods of Mesopotamian history, free persons could be enslaved for debt or for violation of law (Bienkowski 274). For example, thieves were considered as slaves. The wife and children of a murderer who had been sentenced to death were also condemned to slavery (Dandamayev 59). Free persons who were enslaved were occasionally freed through “freedom edict”. For example, the Edict of Ammisaduga, king of Babylon *ca.* 1626 BCE, emanated a decree and ordered that free people who had been enslaved for debt should be freed. In this decree the King totally ignored the freedom of ‘regular slaves’ (Bradley, Cartledge 10).

⁶⁹ Freemen worked in their own fields and ran craft workshops. The group of semi-freemen, which can be called serfs or helots were subjected to extra-economic coercion and worked from generation to generation on land that belonged to the palaces and temples. A slave instead was a person deprived of the means of production and was merely a thing belonging to his master with regard to whom he had only duties and not rights whatsoever. In all probability, slaves were originally foreigners, mainly prisoners of war (Dandamayev 59).
Various forms of slavery existed in the ANE. Following are the four basic categories of slavery identified in the ANE: domestic slavery, debt slavery, temple slavery and State slavery.

The category of domestic or chattel slaves represented those individuals, normally foreigners captured in war, who became the exclusive property of an individual as a result of a market purchase, self sale or in-house breeding (Chirichigno 53). These slaves were under the control of an owner and obliged to fulfil the roles and tasks assigned to them. They could gain manumission, but were not legally required to (Byron 38). The slave’s status as either free or slave was at the discretion of the owner and suggests that permanent enslavement was probably the norm (Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the ANE* 19).

Debt slavery was one of the basic sources of replenishing the slave population in the ANE (Chirichigno). These individuals were usually not foreigners, but fellow countrymen who entered into slavery due to debt. In this system the debtors could gain freedom by paying off the loan to the creditor by means of their free work (Byron 38). According to the Code of Hammurabi “regardless of the amount of debt, three years of service by the debtor in the house of the purchaser or creditor was deemed sufficient to work off any debt” (Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the OT* 387). Besides, the creditor could no longer sell a debtor into slavery to a third person (Dandamayev 59). In order to prevent the perpetual enslavement of an individual, debt slavery was usually limited to three years. This limit clarified that it was not the slave who was the property of the creditor but the capacity of the slave to work in service of the debt (Chirichigno 53).

In the ANE individuals were attached to a particular deity or temple and rendered service to the state religion (Byron 38). Devout masters at times dedicated their slaves privately to temples (Bienkowski 275). Apart from that, slaves were transferred to temples by insolvent debtors, children of temple slaves, and finally the children of free persons were given to the temple for economic reasons (Dougherty 154). The freeborn orphans and impoverished children who lacked proper support were also brought to live and serve in the temple (Gelb 95-96). Life as a temple slave was often more difficult than that of a domestic slave and included more instances of violence and death (Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the ANE* 99-106).

State slavery comprised of prisoners of war, who were reduced as the property of the King (Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the ANE* 92). The Code of Hammurabi
contains decrees related to prisoners of war. This Code states that “the captive soldiers and state officials, who have no means of their own, shall be ransomed either by their city temple or by the state” (Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the OT* 384). They were often forced to work for the kings in mines, smelting refineries or similar labours that were considered too dangerous to use the slaves who had been purchased. This category actually represents forced labour more than it does slavery. And these groups were usually barracked together and identified as slaves by their ethnic or national connection (Byron 39).

There were various laws existed in the ANE to regulate the institution of slavery. The law collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, most notably the Babylonian *Code of Hammurabi* (ca. 1750 BCE; Bradley, Cartledge 10) prescribe a number of rules for the lives and deaths of slaves. There are paragraphs regulating slave sale, slave marriage, and the movement of slaves within and outside the city wall (Harrill, *Slavery* 299).

Theoretically slaves, just like livestock, constituted a basic form of movable property (Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the OT* 386). They were deposited as security, included in dowries, transferred by inheritance, etc. (Dandamayev 60). Although theoretically the slave was considered as a mere chattel and classed with movable property, both law and society could not disregard the fact that they were human beings. Thus here we have a highly contradictory situation in which, on the one hand, the slave was recognized as human beings, on the other hand, they were treated as a “thing” (Mendelsohn, *Slavery in the OT* 387). Slaves were frequently branded for the purpose of identification by tattooing or “writing” or an imposed slave haircut (Bradley, Cartledge 10). In Assyria, for example there was a practice in which ears of the slaves were sometimes pierced (Dandamayev 60).

A slave’s right to manumission belonged exclusively to the slave’s owner. According to Sumero-Babylonian law, the freeing of a slave took place either before a court or in the form of a contract between the slave and his master or through a ritual purification of the slave (Driver and Miles, 221-30). In a number of cases, the freeing of a slave was also effected through adoption by his master on the condition that the slave maintains his former master while he was alive (Dandamayev 61), which means the slave, should continue to serve the master or gain material support even after his manumission. Thus, the manumission of slaves was mainly limited to those cases
where the slave owner, advanced in years and without children, sought to arouse interest of a slave through the prospect of being freed in the future.

3.3. Slavery in the Old Testament

The Bible states that slavery has existed from the dawn of civilization. According to the Bible, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt (Exod. 13:3, 14; Deut. 5:15; 16:2; 24:18), and they were only obliged to perform forced labour for the pharaoh (Dandamayev 62). Although slavery was tolerated among God’s people, it is always portrayed in tragic terms, whether this tragedy is on a personal or a national level (Simmons 311). On a national level, the prophets continually point to Israel’s rebellion against Yahweh as the cause of its captivity in Babylon (Isa. 1:2-31; Ezra 5:12; Blenkinsopp 180-188; Brockington 80). In other cases, such as that of Joseph and of all the Jews enslaved in Egypt, an enslavement resulted from the sin and oppression of others (Gen. 37:28; Exod. 1:8-14; Wenham, Gen 16-50 350-356; Durham 5-9). In any case, deliverance from bondage is the work of the Lord, symbolizing. His will to save His people from all that oppresses them (Judg. 6:12; Acts 7:10 Boling 130-1; Harrington, Acts 117).

The first appearance of slavery in the Bible is, “the wonderful predication of the patriarch Noah” (Gen. 9:24-27). The Canaanites are notorious throughout the Old Testament for their aberrant sexual practices. Noah’s curse on Canaan thus represents God’s sentence on the sins of Canaanites (Wenham, Gen 1-15 200-202). According to Swartley, Noah’s curse upon Canaan prophesied the black African’s destiny (33).

Abraham, champion of faith for all Christians, was a slave owner (Gen. 12:5; 12:16; 14:14; 20:14; 24:35-36; 25:13-14). When Abraham travelled to Canaan he also took along with him “movable property” including herds and slaves (Gen. 12:5; Wenham, Gen 1-15 278-9). Scripture says that the Lord blessed Abraham by multiplying his slaves (Gen. 24:35).

In the time of Joseph, God approved slavery. God commanded that Joseph buy the people and the land, making them slaves to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:15-25). In this passage we can see the agrarian policy of Joseph to save Egyptians from famine. Joseph agrees to exchange or mortgage Israelites livestock for grain. It is therefore better for them to sell themselves as slaves and their land to Pharaoh. Joseph made them into slaves. Though this sounds harsh, now it is the responsibility of the Pharaoh to feed the Israelites, and as a consequence they survive during the famine. It is
therefore better for them to sell themselves as slaves and their land to Pharaoh to save their lives (Wenham, *Gen* 16-50 448-9).

The problem of slavery first crops up in the history if Israel with the exile, where the Israelites were cut off from fellowship with the creator and guarantor of their existence, Yahweh (Gervais 590). The book of Exodus describes the life of Hebrews in exile, where they were forced into manual labour (Exod. 1-5).

In the book of Exodus liberation is described as “redemption”, the “purchase back” of slaves by the original owner from a foreign master. The Sinai covenant with Moses obligates the redeemed Israelites and their descendents to “serve Yahweh”, literally “to be slave to God” (Exod. 13:3-10; 20:2; Deut. 6:20-25; Lev. 25:42; Josh. 24:16-19; Judg. 6:7-10; 1 Kgs. 9:9). This covenant is also voluntary, clearly modelled on the ANE suzerain-vassal treaty, and obligates God to Israel just as it obligates Israel to God. The text thus mixes the language of vassalage and slavery in its description of Israel’s relationship to Yahweh (Sakenfeld 301).

The slavery experienced by Israelites was not as domestic servants in private Egyptian homes, but as the exclusive property of the Pharaoh retained to accomplish his private enterprises (Byron 47). As J. D. Levenson notes: “Bondage in Egypt was not a domestic slavery, but State slavery... the Israelites were not victims of the market, but of the State” (137). According to Callender, in the Exodus narrative, at least, “the Hebrew’s slavery in Egypt was a systematic program of Imperial oppression” (78).

The image of enslavement in Egypt is sometimes described or seen of as a cruel act which ends with manumission at the hand of Israel’s victorious God. According to Daube through the manumission of Israelites from slavery they changed their master (42-46). Therefore, the conflict is between two competing kings over “who will be the king of Israel and whom Israel will serve (Davis 60). The point of the Exodus, as Levenson points out, “is not freedom in the sense of self-determination, but service, the service of the loving, redeeming and delivering God of Israel, rather than the state and its proud King” (147). Israel was not removed from Egypt simply to be free, but so that they might serve God instead of Pharaoh (Ex. 14:12).

The consequence of Israel’s rejection of slavery to God was viewed as a return of Israel to the type of foreign oppression experienced in Egypt. In Judges, for example, there are numerous instances of Israel abandoning ‘service’ to the Lord for
‘service’ to other gods resulting in their subsequent oppression by foreign kings (Judg. 2:7; 3:8; 9:28; 10:6; 13:16). In 2 Chronicles 12:8 the result of Judah’s failure to be faithful and obedient in service to God is their deliverance into slavery under the Egyptian king Shishak: “But they will become his slaves so that they may learn the difference between my service”. And similarly in Jeremiah 5:19: “As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve strangers in a land that is not yours”.

The notion of enslavement to God persisted in spite of stipulations of captivity and it was believed that once Israel returned to God in repentance, they would once again become God’s slaves. This is found implicitly in the cycle of disobedience and oppression in Judges. Israel sinned by serving other gods and was oppressed by foreigners. When they repented, God would raise up a hero to rescue them. But with the significant impact of the Babylonian captivity, the idea of a return to enslavement to God was accentuated as in Jeremiah 30:8-9:

“And it shall come about on that day, declares the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off their neck, and will tear off their bonds; and strangers shall no longer make them slaves. But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their King, whom I will raise up for them”.

Not only was slavery to God reinstated in opposition to slavery under foreigners, but the ideals of the monarchy and its association with the deity were also reinstated. The hope of Israel was to become once again the slaves of God under the leadership of a righteous king whom they would serve and who would lead them in loyal obedience (Byron 53-54).

3.4. The Slavery in Greco-Roman world

There are two principal factors for calling or naming a society as a ‘slave society’: “the sheer number of slaves, relative to the populations as a whole, and the significance of the roles slaves played in society at issue, especially economically” (Bradley, Cartledge 48). Some scholars consider economics fundamental to the classification. A society is considered a slave society “if slaves played a vital quantitative role in production, and the material basis of that society absolutely depended upon slave labour” (Garnsey 2).

Enormous emphasis is placed on slavery as the key principal elements of social organization in Greece and Rome (Wiedmann, Greek 1). In the Greco-
Roman world slavery can be interpreted as a process than a permanent condition; a temporary phase by which an outsider is allocated a place within the society. When a Roman manumitted his slave, he would attain restricted citizenship. The ex-slaves continued to be in a special relationship of dependence towards the person who had owned them. The position of freedmen as dependent members of their patron’s household is symbolized by their right to share the family tomb, and the patron’s right to exclude them if they were disloyal (Wiedemann, *Greek* 3). But there were also economic obligations, which show that when an owner freed a slave, he retained the right to extract economic advantage from him (footnote).

Greek and Roman communities as well as individuals would use slaves to perform those services considered difficult or inferior. Because the slave was an outsider not involved in controversies between citizens, he could be entrusted with supervisory functions such as responsibility for the city accounts or weights and measures (Wiedemann, *Greek* 8).

### 3.4.1. Primary Sources of Slavery in Greco-Roman World

The first task in any historical study is to determine the nature of the available primary source material, and examine its usefulness and limits.

The primary sources of slavery in the Greco-Roman world are Archaeology, inscriptions, papyrus and parchment fragments, and literature (Harrill, *The Manumission* 21-30).

Some archaeological evidences provide limited insights into the physical conditions of slave’s life. For example, the structural remains of excavated Roman houses reveal that the Romans did not ordinarily build separate, free-standing slave quarters and slaves typically lived in rooms within the master’s walls (Wallace-Hadrill 78-81). Other archaeological evidence includes unearthed objects relating to slavery, such as shackles and collars. For example, the collar of a slave owned by a Christian cleric, which reads, “I am the slave of Archdeacon Felix: hold me so that I do not flee” (Horsley 140-1). Sculpture and plastic arts also provide important evidence. For instance, “eight shackled slaves are depicted on the stele of A. Kapreilius Timotheus” (Finley, *Aulos* 154-66).

The epigraphic evidences are mostly funerary since tombstones furnish nearly three-fourth of the entire corpus of Greek and Latin inscriptions. These epitaphs
commemorated slaves or ex-slaves, and often recorded the name of the deceased. However, tens and thousands of tombstones offer the historian a few further details, such as age at death, the name and relationship of the commemorator (Horsley 53).

The papyrological evidence is specific to Hellenistic and Roman Egypt; although useful, its application to other parts of the ancient Mediterranean world is limited. We have, for example, two official notices of runaway slaves that were posted in Alexandria in 156 BCE (Westermann 39; Wiedemann 192). Notices similar to these must have been posted by slave owners throughout the avenues and highways of the ancient world but not preserved, since most were likely written on papyrus or wood.

Finally we have the literary sources. At first, this evidence looks promising; after all, we have more of it than any other sources (Barrow 237-45). Because of its bulk, we should divide ancient literature into the following broad categories: legal material, histories, letters, moral literature, advice literature, and imaginative literature (Harrill, *The Manumission* 23).

The ancient historiography as a primary source poses problems, because ancient historiography concerned itself with politics, wars, and great personalities. Such narratives frustrate the efforts to reconstruct the lives of the majority of the population, who lived below the aristocratic orders. Much of the historical material on slaves is anecdotal and is mentioned only in passing, since senators and equestrians considered writing about the lives of individual slaves beneath the dignity of a historian (Momigliano 39-42).

Letters as a more promising source. The correspondence of Cicero, for example, gives us the fullest available impression of the constant use of slaves in non productive services, such as letter carrying (Harrill, *The Manumission* 25). The Pauline letters, especially the letter to Philemon also mention slaves. Letters, like Paul’s or Cicero’s, provide important personal details of how slaves functioned in domestic service. Yet letters are only one half of a dialogue. Often, the other half is lost, and this loss presents an obstacle for the historian to understand the real situation of slaves in the ancient world.

Moral exhortation literature, the fourth genre, offers additional evidence, yet also presents obstacles of its own. The writings of Plato and Seneca fall into this

---

70 It is important to remember that most slaves were buried or cremated without an inscription.
category. One of the most sustained discussions on slavery by an ancient moralist is Seneca’s Epistle, in which he delineates the elements of the master-slave relationship according to Stoicism. Seneca condemns “harsh” physical punishment of slaves as beneath the dignity of the self-controlled Stoic, but sees no problem with more moderate, regular disciplining of one’s slaves (Bradley, Slaves 119). Such calls to kindness towards slaves were part of the institution, but not its abuse by arrogant masters who did not abide by Stoic ideals. The calling for humane treatment of slaves were articulated to strengthen the institution, and not to abolish it (Griffin 256-85).

Along with the above mentioned sources we can get more information from the legal evidences and we know of the slave laws for classical Athens mainly from these sources. The Roman legal evidence has a much wider base of source material, the Justinian compilation called the Corpus Iuris Civilis (containing the Digest, Institutes, and Code) and an extant second century law school textbook, the Institutes of Gaius (Crook 55-7). The compendium of Gaius, for example, reveals the enormous importance of slaves for commercial and other acquisitions (Watson 105).

3.4.2. Slavery in the Greek Society

In classical Athens most slaves were foreign captives or their descendents (MacDowell 79). It was the accepted practice in Greece for a person captured by an enemy in war to be the slave of his captors, unless his relatives or friends paid a ransom to get him freed. There were also some other ways in which a free person might become a slave in Athens: “enslavement could be imposed as a penalty for an offence”. In some Greek states a debtor who could not repay his debt became a slave of his creditor; and a person whose parents were both slaves was himself a slave from birth (MacDowell 79-80).

In Greek society, the owner could, if he wished, make a slave a “freedman” (Gk.: apeleutheros). In certain circumstances the state liberated a slave without the owner’s consent. A slave who gave information that his owner had committed sacrilege, if the information was found to be true, was liberated (Garlan 80-82).

71 In Athens enslavement for debt was abolished by Solon in the sixth century BCE. Plutarch says in his Life of Solon that previously some Athenians had sold their children as slaves, and that Solon made a law forbidding this, except for girls who had committed fornication before marriage. But it seems unlikely that Athenian fathers still sold even their naughtiest daughters in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE (MacDowell 80).
Athenian manumission procedures are difficult to reconstruct. Most of the evidence is epigraphic and specific to temple settings, although some civic registers survive. The city of Athens posted lists of manumitted slaves. In nearly every case, the ex-slave was required to remain with the former master for a specified length of time before the manumission became effective. This phenomenon was called *paramonē* (Gk.), and the documents are known as *paramonē* contracts. This practice survived into Hellenistic and Roman times, especially in Asia Minor where Ignatius of Antioch wrote about the manumission of Christian slaves, *paramonē*, which was the most common way to liberate a slave (Harrill, *The Manumission* 54).

According to Calderini manumission is divided primarily into ‘ordinary’ and ‘extra-ordinary’ (94-5). What Calderini calls ‘extra-ordinary’ and ‘ordinary’ may also be labelled ‘public’ or ‘private’, that is, manumissions initiated by the state and those initiated by private owners. Manumission was granted by the state to those slaves who participated in the war\(^\text{72}\). Grants of citizenship to slaves manumitted by a public decision were rare; these persons usually joined the population of free non-citizens (Abramovitz 69-70).

The category of ‘ordinary-civil’ or ‘private’ manumissions contains various forms. We can divide them according to the extent of public awareness of the act. The difference between private manumissions, manumissions announced by heralds\(^\text{73}\), and manumissions by testament\(^\text{74}\). In the case of testaments, only the relatives of the deceased, the manumitted slaves, and witnesses were aware of the act; whereas manumissions inscribed on stone and those announced by heralds made known the slave’s new status to a greater number of people (Abramovitz 71).

The first step towards manumission was a decision by the owner, whether of his or her own initiative or in response to the slave’s request. Most manumittors were adult men, but in the Hellenistic period women figure increasingly among manumittors (Garlan 74), and occasionally also children.

\(^\text{72}\) For example, the mass manumission by Athens, 406 BCE, of slaves who fought at Arginusae and the manumission by Rhodes, in 305 BCE who fought bravely during the siege of Demetrius Poliorcetes (footnote).

\(^\text{73}\) Manumission proclaimed by heralds could take place in the Theatre. The purpose of proclaiming in the theatre was to make all the Greek witnesses to the act of manumission; therefore we can presume that in the Greek society a great importance was attached to the publicity of the manumissions. Manumissions could also be proclaimed in a sanctuary (Abramovitz 71-2).

\(^\text{74}\) It is important to note that all the modes of manumission, whether performed in the house or in a public place, were conducted before witnesses. Family members, priests and visitors to temples, spectators in the theatres, and judges ensured the publicity.
In ancient Greece, manumission was not only a business transaction. In many cases it was an “exchange of freedom for services, or fulfilment of vows” (Abramovitz 130-53). In some cases it manifested close relationship between masters and slaves. This shows that the concept of slave was more than that of a piece of property.

3.4.3. Slavery in the Roman Society

The situation of slavery in the Imperial Roman society is important for understanding slavery in the New Testament world. In Roman society slaves were at all levels of economy and society, at least in Italy, Sicily, and a few other urbanized provinces. Therefore Rome was a genuine slave society.

The race of the slave was not a factor. The Romans acquired their slaves from all over the Mediterranean world, Britain, Greece, Palestine, and Ethiopia. The very fact that the slaves came from all ethnicities and nationalities led most Romans to doubt Aristotle’s theory of “natural slaves”. According to Aristotle some humans by virtue of their very body were naturally designed for slavery. Romans, instead favoured a Stoic Philosophy about a common humanity between slaves and free men, which argued for arbitrary fate as the creator of slaves and masters and not nature (Sakenfeld 304).

Among the Romans there was a particular ideology of “mastery”75 (Lat.: auctoritas; Bradley, Cartledge 223) which had a crucial influence on early Christian thinking on slavery. The Romans thought of the ideal slave not as a mere “living tool” but as an independent agent with recognized subjectivity. In the nature of slavery in the Roman world “the master had absolute authority over the slave, who was always a dependent being” (Bradley, Slaves 37). “Mastery” was achieved in a series of specific, concrete events in which the slave expressed acceptance of the master’s point of view so fully as to anticipate the master’s wishes (Bradley, Cartledge 217). The “good slave” competed and developed what the master had only suggested or even unconsciously desired (Sakenfeld 304). According to Bradley “this kinds of slavery and obedience arises less from virtue than from fear of punishment (Slaves 39).

75 The agricultural manuals of Cato, Varro and Columella spell out the practices of mastery in a consistent, self-conscious manner, setting out the feeding, clothing and housing of slaves, the means of ensuring their labour and techniques for preventing their dissatisfaction (Bradley, Cartledge 223).
In Roman society, slaves were found in every occupation and not segregated from free people in work or types of job performed (Bradley, Cartledge 265). Their role was to ensure the social maintenance of the elite, both through apparently ‘unproductive’ personal services and through educating and socializing the next generation of aristocrats (Bradley, Cartledge 265). Some slaves held positions of considerable power. For example, the slaves of the Roman Emperor (slaves of Caesar) held high posts in imperial administration (Bradley, Cartledge 281). In Roman society the slaves also worked as physicians, architects, business managers, artists, teachers, poets, professional philosophers, as well as in primary production (agriculture, mining and manufacture). But most slaves were of quite modest means and worked as ordinary labourers.

In Imperial Rome there were various sources of slaves. Following are the two main sources of slaves in the Roman society: Prisoners of war and Sale of slaves.

The Roman legal tradition makes it clear that capture in war caused loss of freedom (Bradley, Cartledge 294). The reduction to slavery of enemies defeated in warfare was one of the principal mechanisms by which Rome provided itself with slaves in the central period of history (Bradley, Slavery 31-33). In the last two centuries of the Republic, fighting against external enemies was more or less continuous, and although Rome’s armies met defeat from time to time the overall rate of success was so high that most of the Mediterranean fell subject to its control. The sheer efficiency of the Roman military machine cannot be denied.

Apart from the above mentioned sources of slavery in Roman society, the enslavement of abandoned newborns and the sale of children by their parents belong to a separate category. The self sale of adults were also common in Rome (Bradley, Cartledge 297).

Basically in Imperial Rome the slaves were a form of property, and as commodities they were disposable. Slaves could be sold by one person to another person, or left as part of a legacy without any obligation on the owner’s part to take into account his slave’s domestic relationships (Bradley, Slaves 32). Slaves could even be loaned by one person to another, or given away as gifts. This mechanics of

---

It does not follow, however, that all war captives were automatically conveyed from the site of capture for disposal in the market places of the Roman heartland. At times Roman commanders allowed prisoners to be ransomed, so freedom might be recovered fairly quickly if relatives or friends were available to pay the necessary price. Likewise captives were often sold off on the spot to itinerant dealers or distributed to the troops as a form of payment or bonus (Bradley, Slavery 31-3).
the slave-owning system thus involved forcible transference of slaves from place to place and from owner to owner.

Manumission in Roman society was a joyous affair, almost, a family event. The *lex Fufia Caninia*\(^\text{77}\) obliges slave-owners to use their powers of manumission wisely and to set free only those slaves who had proved that they deserved freedom. Indiscriminate and irresponsible manumission was to be avoided.

According to the jurist Gaius (*Institutiones* 1.43) in the second century CE, the law provided as follows:

Someone who has more than two but not more than ten slaves is permitted to free up to half their number; someone who has more than ten but not more than thirty is permitted to free up to one-third. Someone who had more than thirty but not more than one hundred is permitted to free not more than one-fifth; nor does the law take account of someone owning more than five hundred to select a proportion from that number, but it prescribes that no one may lawfully free more than one hundred slaves. But if someone has only one slave in all, or two, this law does not apply and so he has full power to free (Bradley, *Slavery* 10).

### 3.5. Slavery in the New Testament

At the time of Jesus’ birth, the practice of slavery permeated every corner of the Roman Empire. Indeed, the church emerged in a world steeped in the bane of slavery. Furthermore, at no point does the New Testament present a thoroughgoing attack on the institution of slavery.

The sheer number of slaves in the first century guaranteed that many slaves were incorporated into the Church. This point is particularly applicable to the Church in Corinth. The city appears to have functioned as a clearinghouse for slaves, for a large market near the temple of Apollo served as a place for the buying and selling of slaves. In the first century church, becoming a Christian delivered one from the bondage of sin but not from socially endorsed enslavement to other persons.

### 3.5.1. Slavery in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles

There is no saying of Jesus or any Apostle have condemned the institution or ideology of slavery as intrinsically evil or sinful. Indeed there are many references and anecdotes about slaves and slavery in the Gospels and in the book of Acts. In the

\(^{77}\text{lex Fufia Caninia was one element of what is customarily called Augustan social legislation, a sequence of measures enacted in the principate of Augustus intended by and large to arrest a decline in civic responsibility that contemporaries perceived in the world around them.}\)
New Testament narrations one can find individuals like: the Centurion’s slave (Lk. 7:1-10; Matt. 8:5-13) the temple slave of the Jewish high priest (Mk. 14:47; Mat. 26:51; Lk. 22:50-51; Jn. 18:10), the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:27-40), the running maid Rhoda (Acts 12:13-15), and the prophesying slave girl at Philippi whom Paul shuts up and so reduces her market value to her owners (Acts 16:16-24).

Importantly the synoptic Jesus tells a number of parables whose plots revolve around the slave characters or servile types: the Parable of the Unforgiving Slave (Matt. 18:23-35) and the Parable of the Dishonest Manager (Lk. 16:1-13). The explicit fiction of these texts offered early Christian authors opportunities for literary imagination about the character portrayal of slaves and the morality of auctoritas (Lat.; Sakenfeld 305).

In the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30), a man leaving on his journey summons three of his household slaves and entrusts talents to each “according to his ability”. The narrative’s introduction makes explicit the inherent difference in moral worth among the three slaves. The one having the least ability is entrusted only with a single talent. Although the slave complies with the literal commands of the master, he is said to be “useless” because he has not internalized the master’s influence enough to anticipate and complete his master’s will. Paralysis from fear of merciless punishment caused the slave to act as an automaton and he hid the money in the ground. His more worthy fellow slaves went out and traded the talents to make more. The master, in Matthew’s reckoning, rightly rewards the entrepreneurial “good slaves”, who subsequently received greater household responsibilities and “enter into the joy of their master” and the master rightly punishes the bad slave. In the parable, the author of Matthew portrays a bland moralistic polarity of “bad slave” and “good slave”.

The literary theme recurs in the Parable of the Faithful and the Unfaithful Slave (Matt. 24:45-51). The master leaves home, placing one elite slave in charge of the other slaves, and the slave manager takes advantage of his master’s prolonged absence by abusing his fellow slaves. The parable ends with an eschatological warning about torture: the master will return, on a day not expected, and he, “will cut him” to pieces and put him where there will be weeping gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:51).

The Lukan version of the Parable (Luke 12:42-48) advances auctoritas even more explicitly: “That slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare
himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating (Luke 12:47). Instructing the faithful by making the examples of others who are unfaithful, the parable teaches about the theological point about delayed eschatology and the judgement of God. God will be like a harsh slave master. Christians, in the opinion of Synoptic Jesus, will be held accountable for their internalization and anticipation of God’s will as a slave must internalize and anticipate the master’s will even when the master delays in returning (Sakenfeld 306).

The theological message of such slave parables reinforced and depended upon the social hierarchy of master and slave. The goal was not to teach ancient audiences the behaviour of actual slave and masters, which they presumably already recognized and saw quite well in the stories, but to communicate early Christian ethics through the slave allegory.

These parables and other New Testament narratives reveal how slavery shaped the thinking of the early Christians. To borrow the famous formation of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, early Christians apparently found slaves “good to think with” (Sakenfeld 307). Indeed, the dramatic persona of “the slave” providing both Christians and non-Christians as a literary device for thinking about community, social categorization, and hierarchy. Slavery in the parables typically functions metaphorically, representing the Christian relationship to God (Glancy 103).

3.5.2. Slavery in the Pauline Letters

The metaphorical usage of slavery terms in the New Testament poses a problem for biblical interpreters due to the complex relationship the language appears to have with the institution. Terms that are used to address situations between slaves and masters are also used to explain aspects of early Christian theology. Predominant in metaphorical usage are the Pauline letters that employ the terms more often in the construction of theology than in actual address of the institution of slavery (Byron 1). A survey of the undisputed letters reveals that 1 Corinthians 7:21-23 and the letter to Philemon are the only instances in which Paul clearly addresses an aspect of institutional slavery. All other occurrences of slave language are related to Paul’s understanding of an individual’s relationship with Christ and others in the Christian community.

Paul, the Apostle to Gentiles uses the metaphor of slavery in the key passages of his letters. He calls himself a “slave of Christ”, an apostolic designation (Rom. 1:1;
Phil. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; 1 Cor. 9:16-18), and the “slave of all”, a commonplace trope of servant leadership (1 Cor. 3:5; 9:19-23; 2 Cor. 4:5). Paul urges congregations to accept the “good slavery” for themselves (Rom. 12:11; 13:4; 14:4; 2 Cor. 7:22-23; Gal. 5:13) and avoid the “bad slavery” to sin and desire (Rom. 7:14). The Apostle invokes favourably the triumph scene of war captives paraded as new slaves (2 Cor. 2:14), the slave market and slave trading (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 7:23), the indignity that the actual slave suffer (2 Cor. 11:20), and much manumission (redemption) language (Rom. 3:24; 6:6-23; 8:12-23; Gal. 3:13-14).

Paul addresses actual slaves only in three principal passages: the letters to Philemon, 1 Cor. 7:20-24, and Gal. 3:28.

The letter to Philemon is a letter of reference for the slave Onesimus, whom Paul met and converted while in prison, to the householder (master) Philemon. The letter is a clear example of “partnership” between Paul and Philemon, and Paul appeals to Philemon to accept back Onesimus, the runaway slave as a “dear brother” (Philem. 16), so that Onesimus can start a new future, namely to be of service to Paul in the Gospel (Philem. 13). And in Philemon 21 Paul says, “Confident of your obedience, I write to you, know that you will do even more than I ask”. Even if Paul is not seeking a legally binding manumission of Onesimus, he is certainly seeking a qualitative change in relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. In accordance with the rules of hospitality, Philemon is to receive Onesimus as he would receive the Apostle Paul, that is, as an equal.

First Corinthians 7:20-24 deals explicitly with the question of manumission. The occurrence of slavery in these verses is unique for three reasons. First, it is the only instance in the undisputed Pauline corpus in which Paul specifically addresses the situation of those in institutional slavery. Second, the occurrence of the phrase “slave of Christ” here is the only instance in which Paul combines his understanding of slavery to Christ with a situation of institutional slavery. Third, the occurrence

78 In the chapter two we have done an exegetical study on the letter to Philemon.

79 Under Roman law, those who harboured runaway slaves were subject to severe penalties. Such penalties were waived if the fugitive was returned to his/her owner within twenty days (Levy 110-119).

80 The Epistle to Philemon, of course, refers to Onesimus as a slave, but the epistle is not an instance of Paul addressing a slave but the slave’s master.

81 The situation in 1 Cor. 7:21-11 is still different from the household codes in the disputed and Pastoral Epistles. Here Paul does not dictate the way that slaves should obey masters and fulfil their roles as slaves. The issue is whether or not manumission affects their status in Christ. The household Codes, on the other hand, are focused on comparing the slave’s obedience to their earthly master with their obedience to God (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; Titus 2:9).
apeleftheros, a technical term used to denote one who has been freed from the situation of enslavement. These factors suggest that this passage is different from anything encountered in Paul thus far (Byron 234-235).

In 1 Cor. 7:21-22 Paul is clearly addressing those who participate in institutional slavery. Even though some believers received their call by God while enslaved, Paul says, “do not worry about it”. But he also acknowledges the possibility that their situation could change at some point. Of particular concern for the present investigation is Paul’s use of the slave of Christ metaphor in 7:22 as a way to address the situation of the slave. He says: “For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ”.

A number of commentators agree that the well-balanced sentence in 7:22 is intended to mitigate the importance of slave/free status among the Corinthian believers by borrowing imagery from the Greco-Roman institution (Barrett 171; Fee 318; Collins 279). Paul’s use of the technical term “apeleftheros” here signals his familiarity with the Greco-Roman practice of manumission. The term acknowledges the possibility that slaves could become free, but it also recognizes that, ultimately, slaves do not become free persons but “freed” persons. The significant difference between these two statuses is that one is endemic at birth while the other is obtained after manumission.

Perhaps the most intriguing passage in the NT regarding slavery is found in Gal. 3:28. Here Paul proclaims, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. In this text although the precise meaning of Paul’s words concerning slavery is open to debate, the liberating message of the Gospel appears to have been extremely attractive to slaves of the first century. To be adopted into one family, one that shares the common hope of eternal inheritance must have been a welcome message to the disenfranchised (Simmons 321). To have equal access to God, to partake of the gifts of the Spirit, to be equally indwelt and empowered by the divine regardless of one’s social status in the must have been appealing to the slave community (Rom. 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:19-20; 12:1-23; Heb. 4:13).
3.5.2.1. Paul’s Self-Identification as “Slave of Christ”

It is now possible to examine Paul’s self-identification as a “slave of Christ” and to ask why it replaced the more traditional phrase “slave of God”.

Paul’s exhortation to the Philippians was an implicit call to act as slaves of Christ. The purpose of the exhortation was to ensure that the believers of Philippi would fulfil their obligation of obedience to God, which was the defining factor of the Jewish self-identification as slaves of God. In the same way, Paul’s call for his readers to imitate Christ and himself is a call to be obedient to God and, in the light of the Christ event, to be slaves of Christ (Byron 177-9).

In Romans 1:1 Paul’s self-identification as a “slave of Christ” may be interpreted as a declaration of his common position with all believers. His position as an apostle is a result of his position as a believer not vice versa. Paul is first of all one who follows the pattern of conduct that was set down by Christ (Barrett 16). He has identified with Christ through baptism, he was transferred from enslavement to enslavement to God, and he has submitted to the authority of Christ in the context of the community of believers. It is through slavery to Christ (i.e. obedience to the teachings about Christ in 6:17) that Paul is able to fulfil his obligations as the slave of God. Thus when Paul calls himself ‘slave of Christ’ in Romans 1:1, it is not an honorific title or designation of leadership but is a conscious recognition of his position as a Jew, as a slave of God, for whom the baptismal identification with the Christ event has provided a way to fulfill his obligation to God.

3.5.2.2. Paul’s attitude towards Slavery

In Paul, we see two distinct approaches on the subject of slavery. They might be called as “thesis” and “praxis”. These two focuses are logically distinct (Maxwell 27-28).

Thesis: It was proclaimed both to free citizens of the Roman Empire as well as to slaves that all who are baptized as Christians are equal, without discrimination, sons and daughters of the one heavenly Father, and are brothers in Christ. So in Christ there is neither slave nor free person; all whether slaves or masters, are one person in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28; Col. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Paul applied this “thesis” in the ethical command which he preached both to masters and slaves concerning their ordinary and legal duties in the existing circumstances of the Roman Empire under the Imperial Roman Law. These directives
are repeated in Col. 3:22-4:1; Eph. 6:5-10; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10, and they show that Paul was forced, during his missionary journeys and in his writings to his converts, to tolerate the binding social and economic relationships of the institution of slavery under Roman law. But he indicated that this master-slave relationship was not only meaningless because of “the end of time”, but only tolerable among the Christians in so far as it was an unavoidable evil (Selvaraj 50-1).

According to Paul brothers and sisters in Christ should not treat one another as slaves; for the master-slave relationship is a relationship of brethren (Philem. 8-20).

**Praxis:** From the praxis it would follow that where, for some reason, manumission is possible, the existing legal obligations should be made use of by Christians for the purpose of growth in Christ’s calling. In many cases manumission would be out of question for no other reason than that Christian slave might be serving pagan masters. So, Christians should be subject to the social institution of slavery for the Lord’s sake. However, being a slave counts for nothing because as a baptized Christian he is already a freedman in Christ. In the same way being a master also counts for nothing because as a baptized Christian he is a slave of Christ (Selvaraj 50-1).

Paul’s teaching on slavery has its application in the existing circumstances in the Roman Empire where the rulership of the master over the slave was defined by civil law. The Apostle was providing theological superstructures to existing legal relationships so that Christian slaves could more easily learn the virtues for caring for their legal subjects. Paul was not canonizing the legal relationship of master and slave as deriving from any divine institution or commandment.

### 3.6. Modern Understanding of Slavery

It would, sadly, be a mistake to believe that, slavery has been fully abolished by various International Conventions. Like many other human rights violations, today slavery exists in various forms. In this section we will deal with various forms of modern slavery. Modern slavery includes the slave labour of men, women and children, forced prostitution involving both children and adults, the selling of human organs, serfdom, debt bondage, and the use of humans for armed conflict.
3.6.1. Nature of Modern Slavery

As a human relationship, slavery has undergone changes throughout the centuries. Of course, the concept of slavery remains the same that one person has complete control over another person, but exactly how that happens changes from time to time and place to place. Slavery today is different from slavery in the past in three important ways: First, slaves today are cheaper than they have ever been. Second, the length of time that slaves are held has also fallen. In the past, slavery was usually a lifelong condition; today it is often temporary, lasting just a few years or even months. Third, slavery is globalized. This means that the forms of slavery in different parts of the world are becoming more alike (Bales 4). The way the slaves are used and the part they play in the world economy is increasingly similar wherever they are.

There are three key factors in the emergence of this new kind of slavery. The first is the dramatic increase in world population since World War II, which has increased the supply of potential slaves. The second key factor is rapid social and economic change. This is the result in part of the population explosion, which has created global conditions that make new forms of slavery possible. Corruption in Governments is the third key factor that supports this new form of slavery (Bales 4-7).

The population boom, the vulnerability of poor in the developing countries, and corruption in governments has led to new forms of slavery.

3.6.2. Forms of Modern Slavery

Slavery has never existed in a single form. In some ways every relationship of slavery that links two people might be unique, but there are patterns in this relationship. There are several forms of slavery. The three prevalent forms of slavery today, under which most modern slaves are held: chattel slavery, debt bondage and contract slavery.

Chattel slavery, so named because people are treated as the personal property, chattels, of an owner and are bought and sold as commodities, it is the original form of slavery. In chattel slavery a person is captured, born or sold into permanent servitude, and ownership is often asserted. The slave’s children are normally treated as property as well and could be sold by the slaveholder. This form is most often found in Northern and Western Africa and in some Arab countries, but it represents a small portion of slaves in the modern world.
Debt bondage is the most common form of slavery in the modern world. A person pledges him/herself against a loan of money, but the length and nature of the service for a repayment is not defined, nor does labour diminish the original debt (Bales 12). The debt can be passed down to subsequent generations, thus enslaving offspring, or “selling children into further debt bonds. Ownership is not normally asserted, but there is a complete physical control of the bonded labour. Debt bondage is most common in South Asia.

In many cases of debt bondage, the slaves’ work becomes collateral for debt. This means that all of their work belongs to the money lender until the debt is repaid. This establishes the trap of bondage. Since all their work is the property of the lender until the debt is repaid, debtors are unable to ever earn enough to repay the debt by their own labour. This arrangement is the common form of the debt bondage in India.

Contract Slavery shows how modern labour relations are sued to hide new forms of slavery. Contracts that are offered as guarantee of employment, perhaps in a workshop or factory, but when workers are taken to their place of work, they find they are enslaved. The contract is used as an enticement to trick persons into slavery; it is also a way to make slavery look legitimate. This is the most rapidly growing form of slavery, and it is probably the second largest form today. Contract slavery is most often found in Southeast Asia, Brazil, some Arab States, and some parts of India.

In addition to these three main types of slavery, several other kinds of slavery account for a small portion of the total number of slaves in the world. Most of these tend to be restricted to specific geographical regions or political situations. A good example of slavery linked to politics is what is often called War slavery and includes government-sponsored slavery.

3.7. Slavery in India

Slavery is a common problem faced in modern India. There are around 14 million people in India who in some way or other are enslaved (millions). Most of the slavery in India is debt-induced. The slaves are not only children but families and often time entire villages. Most of the families belong to a lower caste (Scheduled caste / Harijans / Backward caste) or other religious minority group. In modern Indian society slavery is present in the form of Bonded Labour, Child Labour, Prostitution, Traffic of human organs etc. There are various social problems which favour these modern forms of slavery in India. Before going into the real problem of slavery in
India it is important to analyze briefly various social problems that are existing in India. Some of the problems which are present in India are commonly found in many other developing countries, as well while some are peculiar to India.

3.7.1. Casteism

Casteism is a social problem associated with caste system. Casteism is understood as a partial or one-sided loyalty in favour of any particular caste. It makes members of a caste conscious of their membership of the caste and look at everything from the standpoint of caste. According to Kalelkar “Casteism is an over-riding, blind and supreme group loyalty that ignores the healthy social standards of justice, fairplay, equity and universal brotherhood” (Sharma 47).

In caste system people are born into castes. Once a person is born into a certain caste, social mobility becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible (Sebastian). Division of labour done according to the caste system brought into society a sort of economic inequality. As a result of economic inequality people of outcastes or lower classes are forced to borrow money from the landlords or money lenders for their daily needs. Once these people do not succeed to pay back the borrowed money the borrowers are forced to work for the landlords or money lenders to pay back the money with its interest. Therefore casteism is to some extent is one of the causes of bonded labour in India.

3.7.2. Dowry

Dowry is generally understood as money, goods, estate, ornaments or any other kind of wealth that a woman brings to her husband at the time of marriage. Ram Ahuja defined dowry as “gifts and valuables received in marriage by the bride, the bridegroom and his relatives” (260).

The age old practice of dowry has now assumed the form of a social evil because the bride’s family is compelled to give dowry as a price for marriage. The custom has now assumed scandalous proportions. It has become a social bane and a kind of bargain, which causes unhappiness, misery and ruin of the bride’s families. Huge amounts of money are demanded at the time of marriage and the failure to give the promised amount would make the bride suffer the consequences at the hands of her in-laws and also husband.
The practice of dowry which has assumed the form of an institution over the years has caused lot of hardships to a large number of people in Indian society. At one time, dowry was being given willingly by the bride’s parents, and it was being “accepted” by the groom’s party as a kind of voluntary gift. But today, dowry has become a demand. In marriage negotiations, very often dowry considerations become primary ones, and all other considerations become secondary. Hence, in many poor families the birth of a girl child is feared. From the day of the birth of a girl child, the problem of dowry haunts the minds of the parents. Dowry has virtually become a menace in the Indian society.

Due to the demands of high dowry, poor families have to depend on other people, to mostly money lenders. This situation will leads to the bonded labour.

3.7.3. Corruption

Corruption as a phenomenon is both universal and historical. It is one of the social evils found in all societies of the world. In some societies it is more rampant than in some others. Unfortunately, India is regarded as one of the most corrupt countries. Corruption is one of the factors that have contributed to the degradation of Indian politics (Rao 665). Corruption in India has become deep-rooted and its growth is unchecked and unhindered. Andriski considers corruption as “the use of public power for private advantage in ways which transgress some formal rule or law” (Rao 666). In short, corruption, as it is understood today refers to any irregular, illegal and immoral practice associated with our public life. It involves the practice of giving and receiving bribes not only for getting wrong things done, but also getting right things done at the right time.

C.B Mamoria enlisted some of the causes responsible for corruption in India: “economic insecurity, high rate of Income Tax, meagre salary paid to Government servants, emergence of new sources of wealth and power, the system of democracy in India and the very presence of black money” (844-847). And it has affected very badly the social and economic development of the country.

Corruption in a country will brings social and economic instability and widens the gap between the rich and poor. The rich become richer and poor remain poor. Poor families in the corrupt countries are forced to opt to work as bonded labour and work for low wages.
Understanding the social problems in India is essential to analyze the various forms of slavery existing in India. To a certain extent the above mentioned social evils encourage various forms of slavery in India, like bonded labour. Here we will examine the nature and pattern of the incidence of bonded labour in India.

3.8. Bonded Labour in India

The system of bonded labour in India has its origin in the uneven social structure that is characterized by feudal and semi-feudal conditions, and this problem of bonded labour which is haunting Indian society is one significant socio-economic importance. The status of various categories of labour in India has been historically circumscribed by the social structure which has also determined the access of various groups to land and other productive assets. The specific characteristics of bonded labour in India is related to the transition in the economy and society and have to be largely understood in terms of the articulation between poor and developed regions and between traditional and modern sectors (Srivastava 2). In fact, the system of bonded labour as prevalent in India appears as a relic of feudal hierarchical society (Rao 675). The magnitude of the problem of bonded labour in India is highly distressing for the millions of people including men, women and children are permanently condemned to servitude under its yoke.

The Debt bondage in India has its historic origin in the customary forced labour extracted from members of the socially discriminated Dalit (Scheduled Castes’) and Adivasi (Scheduled Tribes’) communities by the caste landlords in the feudal society (Kumar).

Bonded labourers in India are known by various names in various parts of the country. For example, they are known as Jeethadalu in Karnataka, Jeethams in Andhra Pradesh, Pandiyals in Tamilnadu, Adiyas, Paniyas and Kattunaikens in Kerala, Koltas, Sevaks and Halis in Uttar Pradesh, Halis in Gujrat, Harwahas and Halis in Madhya Pradesh, Kamias or Kamiantis in Bihar, Gothees in Orissa, and so no (Rao 675).

3.8.1. Bonded Labour in Agriculture

Most of the bonded labours in India are found in the agricultural sector. The Bonded Labour Abolition Act (1976) identified a large number of traditional labour systems which reproduce bondage, with or without debt.
Bonded labours in the farming sector is mostly due to caste-based prejudices practiced against the Dalit communities and due to the absence of proper land reform policies.\(^{82}\)

Punjab’s agriculture has been among the most developed in India. Initially most of the bonded labourers in Punjab were from the Scheduled Castes, but due to the rise in literacy of Scheduled Caste and their entry into services, higher aspirations and wage demands led to a decline in the number of labourers from the scheduled castes. They have been replaced by migrant labourers from Bihar. The labourers were brought to work in the agricultural fields through recruitments. The recruited labourers were confined locally and sold to their employees. Once employed, the labourers were kept in bondage. They were paid a pittance and had to pay interest on advances (Singh).

The bonded labourers had no freedom to choose employment and had to endure long working hours. In Punjab the wives and children of the bonded labourers were also involved in bonded labour in an indirect way. The cattle shed cleaners, for example, are usually the wives of the bonded labourers and the children assisted in the agricultural works. Protests from the farm servants, including attempts to escape from bondage, have been met with physical violence and social boycotts in a number of cases (Srivastava 12-13).

In several parts of India Tribal have long been subject to exploitative debt relationships, resulting in bondage. A study of Kol tribals in Uttar Pradesh found that large numbers of tribals were indebted to land lords, in some cases for more than one generation. The initial loans (taken for marriage or for some other purpose) were relatively small, but the tribals were unable to repay them because of their meager wages and because eventual freedom required repayment at high compound interest (60 percent annually). The bonded labourers could also be sold to other employers and the debt obligation transferred (Shankar).

From evidence it appears that agricultural bondage had strong roots in the traditional and colonial systems of exploitation of tribal and low caste labour. But the nature of bondage has been undergoing changes in the course of time in the pattern of production and labour used in agriculture, and with higher labour mobility. Large

\(^{82}\) In states like Kerala, where land reforms have been implemented by statute since the past four decades, bonded labour virtually has been eliminated as opposed to the states like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamilnadu, and Karnataka where large extents of land are still held by families that practice feudal forms of land ownership and labour employment.
employers, in several parts of the country, have tried to adapt and modify systems of bondage to meet their new labour requirements. These changes have occurred in dry land agriculture, as well as in commercial, capitalist and modern agriculture.

3.8.2 Bonded Labour in Brick Kilns

Brick kilns operate in rural areas throughout the country, for six to eight months a year. There are varying estimates of the number of workers in the industry. The NCRL estimates that there are about one million workers but according to the All India Brick Kiln Manufacturer’s Association, its membership extends to 22,000 units with about 3 million workers (Srivastava 18).

The pattern of labour recruitment in the brick kilns, and the mechanisms of deployment, payment of advances and wages bear a striking similarity across the country. Recruitment is almost through middlemen based on a system of advances. There are distinct processes within the brick kilns, giving rise to a segmented workforce including moulders, loaders, stackers, firers and removers. The wage payment systems are different for different processes and the labour contractors are usually paid a commission through an informal deduction from the labourers’ wage. The workers are paid a part of their wages during the employment period on weekly basis, with the remainder being adjusted at the end of the season. This system binds the worker (and her or his family) to the kiln during the season, whereas the carryover of advances from one season to the next ensures their availability for the next season. The work usually entails long working hours and very low payment. In a number of cases, a high degree of coercion is used to discipline the workers and to curb protests against breach of contract, which are very common.

In a significant proportion of cases, the debts are carried over from one season to next, with the contractors acting as informal guarantors of the loan. The labourers exiting to other kilns can have their debts transferred to the new employer who redeems the debt from the first employer. The brick kilns are heavily guarded and restrictions are placed on worker’s movements. Wage rates were very low, nevertheless above the legal minimum, which has not been revised for several years (Srivastava 17-9).

In the last several years, a number of cases of bonded labour in brick kiln have been reported from the states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Utter Pradesh, Madhya
Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Most of these labourers are from the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe and are migrants.

In almost all the regions, brick kilns rely primarily on recruitment of migrant labour through contractors, based on a system of advances which matches the cash needs of labourers from the poor regions. It is not unusual for the labourers to use the cash advances to settle their debts at home. Once labourers are recruited, various devices such as the use of force, recurrent loans, and one-time settlement of payments are used to tie the workers to the kiln for the season. Wage rates are usually low, given that in processes such as moulding and carrying bricks, entire households are involved. The local influence of the brick kiln owners, the remoteness and rural location of the kilns and weak regulations lead to the non implementation of labour laws. Existence of strong trade unions may have led to a decline of bondage in a few states.

3.8.3. Bonded Labour in Stone Quarries, Crushers and Mines

The Study Group on Bonded Labour for the National Commission on Rural Labour reported a high incidence of bonded labour in stone quarries, crushers, sandstone, marble and slate mines in a number of states including Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The mines are operated on leases from government and are small scale. The leases are broken up into small parcels, each mine under the supervision of a piece-rated worker who has a group of a family-based time-rated labourers working under him. A small percentage of labourers come from the villages in the mining area, but the vast majority are the migrants who retain links with their areas of origin, since the mines function for only about eight months in a year. The system of advances is widely prevalent, and both categories of workers borrow from the lease operator or the supervisor. The daily wage workers are paid a pittance and female labourers are paid around half of what the men receive. There is also a significant incidence of child labour. The debts are passed on from one family member to another or from one generation to the next, and can cause the labourers to be “sold” to another contractor (MLPC).

The condition of quarry workers in Karnataka came to light following the release of five workers from a quarry in Srirangapattna Taluka of Mandya district, who were made to break stones with heavy chains around their legs. Most of the
workers in this quarry were from other districts of Karnataka or from Andhra Pradesh. They included also children who were paid wages of Rs 10 per day. The labourers had taken paltry advances of Rs 500 to 2,500 and were paid only about half the designated minimum wages. The labourer’s advances carried compound interest rates and there was hardly any prospect of repayment. Heavy fines were imposed on any kind of absence and workers were subjected to corporal punishment (Srivastava 24).

In the quarries, the contractor or the sub-contractor advances money to the labourers, and supervises the gravel production. Apart from the element of debt, the workers are provided accommodation in the quarry and have limited mobility. They can only change employers if a new employer is prepared to meet their existing debt obligation. Constant watch is kept over them so that they cannot mix with other labourers.

Extensive granite, stone and other quarrying sites are found in the districts of Guntur, Rangareddy, Warangal, Vishakhapatnam and Nellore in Andhra Pradesh (CEC, 2004). These workers take advances from traders and money lenders in their home villages in order to tide over lean periods or to meet financial emergencies. These are them squared off with advances from labour contractors who hire them to work in quarries and mines. There, they are paid a fraction of their promised wages, the remainder being adjusted towards their advances or retained by the employer till the end of the season. A vicious circle of debt is thereby created, which obligates the workers to return to work in the mines year after year (Subrahmanyam).

3.8.4. Bonded Labour in Power looms and Cotton Handlooms

Labour bondage has been reported in handloom and power looms in different parts of the country, especially from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh.

CEC has reported on the basis of interviews that there are several thousand weavers who are bonded to master weavers in the districts of Prakasam, Guntur, Krishna, East Godavari, West Godavari, Vijayanagaram, Srikakulam, Medak, Nalgonda, Warangal and the South Telangana region districts of Nellore, Chittoor, Kurnool, Anantpur and Cudappa of Andhra Pradesh (19).

Tamil Nadu Commissioner’s Report (1995) noted that cotton handloom and power loom labourers were spread all over the state. About one third of the weavers were in the fold of the cooperatives. However, whether the master weavers take yarn from the merchants or the co-operatives, the work was done by weavers who were
bonded. The owners advanced money to the weavers who could not change employers unless they repaid the loan. Most of the workers were from the scheduled caste community. The weavers’ wages were less than the prevailing wage rate. The workers, whose movements were restricted, were paid a paltry wage and were required to work 18 to 22 hours a day (Srivastava 25).

3.8.5. Bonded Labour in Other Sectors

Construction: - Labour in large public works and construction sites is often organized through middlemen and contractors, leading to well-entrenched systems of advances and resulting bondage. The workers work for about 12 hours each day, and are paid a small wage which is adjusted against advances and loans at the end of 8 to 9 month contract period. During this time, they are provided food for themselves and their dependents (adjusted against wages). Women labourers not only have to hand over the advances to the men flock, but are also sometimes subject to sexual exploitation at the sites.

Plantations: - There have been reports of bonded labour in commercial agricultural systems such as plantations and floriculture. The Tamil Nadu Commissioner’s Report found that the conditions of bonded labour in plantations are not acute. The report also found that in the floriculture industry, a large number of children were engaged as bonded labour on payment of very low wages.

Beedi Workers: - Bondage among bidi workers, who are predominantly women and children, has been reported from Andhra and Tamil Nadu. Children and women are in bondage to the bidi agents who advance money to them; in many cases the entire family is bonded. The workers are employed in small decentralized units, which are either their homes or small factories, through the agents. The average advance in the beedi industry is 1500 rupees. The average number of beedies a bonded labour (child) rolls in a day is 1500, for an average daily wage of nine rupees.

Fish Processing: - Warrier in her study of women workers in the sea-food industry, described their employment under captive and bonded conditions in the cities of Mumbai, Tuticorin, Calcutta, Veraval, Porbandar and Mangalore, Goa and the other coastal towns of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh (Warrier; CEC 35). They are housed in the factory premises, and are paid a pittance after the deduction of the contractor’s commission and charges for their food (CEC 23).
The other sectors where the bonded labourers exist or prevail are: Gem Cutting, Rice Mills, Silver Works, Mat Weaving and Salt pan workers.

3.8.6. Child labour in India

Most of the developing countries of the world including India are facing a social tragedy found in the form of child abuse and child labour\(^83\). A large number of children below the age of 12-14 are made to work as labourers in many places both in formal and informal sectors. The physical, emotional, educational and medical needs of these working children are conveniently ignored. These children are made to work for long hours, and they are often battered by their employers and harassed by their senior colleagues. Unlike the adult labourers, these child labourers do not have a labour union of their own to fight for their rights and safeguard their interests. Hence, their exploitation continues without any protest.

The term “child labourer” is considered equivalent to the term “working child” or “employed child”. According to the Constitution of India, child labourer may be defined as “a person who is below the age of 14 years and is working for an earning” (Rao 718). Home Floks defined child labour as “any work by children that interfere with their full physical development, their opportunities for a desirable minimum of education or their needed recreation” (Rao 718).

Children in India are exploited in the worst form of child labour, with the majority of working children employed in agriculture, including in the production of rice and hybrid seeds. Children who work in agriculture may carry heavy loads, and apply harmful pesticides. A large number of children also work in the informal economy, with child labour increasingly found in home-based production rather than in organized factory setting. Children are also found engaged in work on the street which may include vending food and other goods, repairing vehicles and tyres, scavenging and rag picking, shoe shining, car washing and begging.

Using child workers is the most effective way for employers to keep their labour costs as low as possible. The agreements between employer and child-employee are usually informal without a written contract, and the number of years

\(^{83}\) For the period 2000-2009, UNICEF estimates that 12% of Indian children who were between five and fourteen years old at the time of the survey had been involved in child labour (UNICEF The State). Among them, at least 15 million are being held in bonded labour in India. Government statistics say that there are 2 crore (20 million) child labourers in India, whereas the Non Governmental agencies assert that the figure is more than 6 crore (60 million) including agricultural workers; some claim that the number could be 100 million, if one were to define children out of school as child labourers.
required to pay off the debts are undetermined, making it impossible for low caste, illiterate and poor children and their families to escape from the bonded labour system. When the Child labourers become adults, employers might agree to release them, but they usually ask to secure the debt by passing it on to other children, often younger siblings of the freed slave.

The problem of child labour has become a colossal one. India has the largest number of child labourers in the world who are engaged in both organized and unorganized sectors. As per the Census 2001, there are 12.6 million economically active children in the age group of 5 to 14 years, of which approximately 0.12 million are working in hazardous occupations. However, as per the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) the number of child labourers in 2005-06 is estimated at 0.89 crore (India 815).

### 3.8.6.1. Causes of Bonded Child Labour in India

Various factors have contributed to the problem of child labour and following are some of the main causes: Economic Causes, Familial Factors, and Social Factors.

**Economic Causes:** Child labour is commonly found in all the developing countries where poverty is usually found. Many families with extreme poverty are compelled to send their children for work so that they contribute something for the family income. A study conducted by the ILO Bureau of Statistics found that “Children’s work was considered essential…”. In some cases the study was found that a child’s income between 34 and 37 percent of the total household income. This study reveals that a child’s income is important to the livelihood of the poor family. Apart from the poverty, employers of many enterprises search for child labourers because they can extract more work from them for lower wages wages.

**Familial Factors:** Family disorganization often leads to child labour. Divorce, desertion, rigid family relations, and cruelty at home, parent child conflicts, criminal tendencies of the parents often compel children to run away from the unpleasant family environment. In order to while away their time such children wander here and there as street children and finally get into some jobs. A large number of such working children neither have families nor can rely on family support. In these circumstances, if the children do not go for work the alternative left for them is idleness, destitution, or crime.
Social Factors: Children belonging to poor families often become the victims of certain bad and costly habits such as smoking, gambling, purchasing lottery tickets, seeing movies regularly, consuming alcoholic drinks etc. When they don’t get enough pocket money from home they often resort to outside work to earn money to satisfy their bad habits. There are also anti-social forces which often kidnap children and take them to a different place for selling them to some employers who are in search of cheap human labour.

Apart from the above mentioned causes the failure of Governments and the breakdown of legislative system. Though the Government has a constitutional obligation and a moral responsibility to promote welfare of the children, it is not serious about the problem of child labour. The half-hearted legislations undertaken in this regard are a big failure. The Government bureaucracy is also indifferent to the problems of working children.

There are number of industries where children’s labour is pledged against loans taken by their parents, and children have to work for long hours under intolerable conditions.

3.8.6.2. Forms of Child Labour in India

The practice of forced or bonded child labour is considered to be the most exploitative and egregious form of child labour. There are millions of children whose labour can be considered forced, not only because they are too young to choose to work, but also because they are, in fact, actively coerced into working (WLR 1993). These include child bonded labourers, children whose labour is pledged by parents as payment or collateral on debt, as well as children who are kidnapped or otherwise lured away from the families and imprisoned in sweetshops or brothels. In addition, children also are employed in domestic service, and are often given or sold at a very early age to another family.

Debt Bondage: The Debt bondage occurs when, in return for a money advance or credit, a person, having no other security to offer, pledges his or her labour for that of a child for an indefinite period of time. In many cases a parent takes a loan for the labour of his entire family in return. In other cases the child alone is subjected to bondage by parents or a guardian who pledge the child’s labour in exchange of a loan. Most of these children are put into bondage in exchange of comparatively small sums of money: two thousand rupees-equal to about thirty-five US dollars is the average
amount “loaned” in exchange for a child’s labour. To India’s vast number of extremely poor, however, this money can be, literally, a life saver.

Two players create the debt bondage arrangement: the creditor-employer, who offers money in an impoverished parent in an attempt to secure the extremely cheap and captive labour of his or her child, and the parent who accepts the money, agreeing to offer the child’s labour as surety for debt. The child is a commodity of exchange. In some cases there is an “intergenerational” bondage, debts are passed down from parent to child. Once the parent is no longer able to work, the debt is assumed by the child.

Trafficiking of Children: The abduction of children leads to some of the most exploitative and abusive situations of child bondage. In some cases children are kidnapped, taken far away from home and sold into prostitution. In other cases abducted children are sold to work in small scale industries.

Many children are sold by their parents or lured away from their homes by recruiters. Poor families are commonly seduced by false promises of middlemen such as recruiting agents or contractors. The recruiters promise well-paying jobs and a brighter future for the children, often misrepresenting the type of work the child will perform.

Domestic Servants: The use of children as domestic servants is widespread and occurs in India. Child domestic servants, usually young girls, work as virtual slaves. They are given or sold to families or distant relatives to serve as household help. They generally work extended hours, and are sometimes treated harshly by their employer, beaten or sexually abused. They are often not paid. Strangers to the city or town where they work and isolated from their parents, the children are powerless to change their position.

A number of myths underline and perpetuate child labour, justifying it on the grounds that the system “benefits” everyone involved: the country, the community, the family, the craft and the child. Children must be trained at the right age or they will never learn skill; children must be trained in a profession appropriate to their background and class; children are particularly suited for certain kinds of work because of their “nimble” fingers; and child labour is a natural and desirable function of the family unit. These myths have widespread support. Any number of justifications are available at the community level in support of children taking up
jobs at an early age. Whatever be the truth behind the general belief, it ensures continuous availability of child labour at low wages.

**Conclusion**

Slavery in the ANE was not always a permanent condition, and the terms and conditions of enslavement were specific to the circumstances under which enslavement was established. Apart from birth, slavery often originated out of financial crisis, criminal behaviour, family disintegration, capture of wartime, or other crises.

The institution of slavery had a profound influence on the social structure, ideology, law, social psychology, moral and ethics of the various cultures of the ANE. However, the idea of a slave as exclusively the object of rights and as a person outside regular society was apparently alien to the laws of ANE. The institution of slavery was taken for granted not only by the free persons but also by the slaves themselves, who never demanded its abolition. Therefore ideology of the ANE contains no condemnation of slavery or any protest against it.

In the OT slavery is closely related to the relationship of the Israelites with God. First, the slave of God tradition was based upon the twin axioms of covenant fidelity and monolatry. Israel’s deity initiated a special relationship contained in a covenant that was maintained by stipulation prohibiting from association with other deities. The slave of God tradition is subordinate to these axioms and developed in that tradition. The identification of Israelites as slaves was a response to the requirement of monolatry which disqualified them from serving other deities.

Second, slavery in one form or another was regarded as unavoidable. Israel was never given a choice between slavery and freedom, but only between to whom they would be enslaved, whether to God or someone else.

Third, along with these axioms was the emphasis was laid on national identity. The Mosaic covenant not only set out legal stipulations to govern Israel’s relationship with God, it also distinguished them as a people from all other nations by incorporating slavery’s ideology. The prohibitive nature of these stipulations was intended to prevent Israelites from serving other gods and to underscore that they were a nation of slaves to their God/king.

Finally, the covenant fidelity and monolatry, and the importance of national identity suggests that the title “slave of God” occupied an emblematic status.
The institution of slavery was the key element of social organization of Greece and Rome. We have analyzed various aspects of the institution of slavery in the Greco-Roman world to have a better understanding of the concept of slavery in the NT era, especially to understand in a better way the social world of Paul.

At the time of Jesus’ birth slavery was part and parcel of the Roman Empire, and slaves had an active role in society. This was reflected in the fact that in the first century many slaves were incorporated into the Church. Since the institution of slavery was well established in the Roman Empire New Testament at no presents a thoroughgoing attack on the institution of slavery.

In the use of slavery metaphors, Paul is both similar and dissimilar to his contemporaries. The notion of slavery to God observed in the life of Israelites is present in Paul, but is somewhat overshadowed by his preoccupation with enslavement to Christ (Rom. 1: 1; 6: 22; Gal. 1: 10; Phil. 1: 1; 1 Thess. 1: 9). Slavery to vices and sin is also referred to, but then so is slavery to righteousness and the law. Some of these concepts find resonance with Philo including the idea of creation in a position of enslavement (Rom. 8: 21). Noticeably absent, though, is any indication that Paul regarded slavery as a form of punishment for sin and disobedience.

Paul’s different approaches to the problem of slavery were based on his distinctive world view and his special interest in proclaiming universal salvation in Christ have combined together in giving different approach to the problem of slavery. From the study of the Pauline texts 1 Cor. 7: 21- 24; Gal. 3: 28; Philem. 8- 20 emerge three distinctive perspectives:

a) **Eschatological**: In this passing world, one should give primary prominence to the “call of God”.

b) **Mythical**: Being a baptized Christian one should inwardly grow “in Christ”.

c) **Sociological**: Relationship among the members in the Christian community should however, be nothing but that between “brothers in Christ”.

Finally, we have introduced the concept of modern slavery its various forms. The objective of this chapter is to understand better the institution of slavery in the ancient world. Historical knowledge on ancient slavery enables us to have a better understanding of various forms of modern slavery. Keeping together the concept of slavery in two different historical period and confronting them we will be able to understand in a better way the evolution of the institution of slavery that had
undergone throughout the centuries. This chapter is also an introduction to understand better the question of bonded labour, a form of modern slavery.