

The "Digital Shackle": Researching Modern Cyber Slavery and Policy Responses in India

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Abstract—This paper explores why bonded labour, a form of modern slavery, still exists in India even though it was legally banned nearly fifty years ago. The sources explain that this exploitative system is deeply rooted in poverty, unpaid debts, and caste-based discrimination, which keep many families trapped in a cycle of forced work for little or no pay. The study focuses on a specific government program called the Central Sector Scheme (CSS), launched in 2016 to provide financial help, housing, and job training to rescued workers. However, the paper identifies major problems in how these programs work, such as long delays in giving money to survivors, inactive committees that rarely meet, and a lack of training for the officials involved. Furthermore, the research paper highlights a new and growing threat called "Cyber Slavery," where young people are tricked into going abroad for high-paying IT jobs, only to have their passports stolen and be forced to carry out online scams under the threat of torture. Beyond poverty, caste, geographical boundaries, cyber slavery has turned to be one of the most serious forms of slavery which is globally relevant issue in the present era. To address these issues, the paper suggests strengthening local committees, using digital tools to track cases, and ensuring that survivors themselves have a voice in the rehabilitation process. Ultimately, the study aims to provide a roadmap for the government to create a more accountable and effective system that can finally end all forms of bonded labour in India. Despite the formal abolition of the bonded labour system nearly five decades ago, it remains one of India's most entrenched human rights violations. This paper examines the effectiveness of the Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers (CSS) introduced in 2016. While the CSS provides a rights-based framework for socio-economic reintegration, its implementation is hindered by systemic gaps, including administrative delays and inactive monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, this research highlights the emergence of "Cyber Slavery" as a modern evolution of bondage, requiring an updated policy response.

Index Terms—Digital Slavery, Bonded Labour, Human Rights, Modern Slavery, Digital Exploitation.

I. Introduction

Cyber slavery is described as a "technologically mediated and transnational form of coercive labour in which victims are trafficked through fraudulent overseas job offers and forced to participate in cyber-enabled fraud". Despite its formal abolition nearly five decades ago through the **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**, bonded labour remains one of the most complex and entrenched human rights violations in India. This exploitative system is deeply rooted in historical socio-economic inequalities, including caste-based discrimination, extreme poverty, and cycles of indebtedness. Although the 1976 Act provides a legal mechanism for the identification and release of victims, its implementation has often been fragmented, leading to poor reintegration of survivors into society.

To bridge the gap between legislation and ground-level reality, the Government of India introduced the Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers (CSS) in 2016. This scheme offers a

multi-pronged approach to rehabilitation, providing financial assistance—ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹3 lakh depending on the victim's category—alongside non-cash benefits such as land allotment, housing units, and education for children.

However, the effectiveness of this policy is frequently undermined by systemic challenges. Field reports indicate significant delays in fund disbursement, a lack of coordination between central and state authorities, and the widespread inactivity of BLVCs, many of which meet irregularly or lack clear accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, the nature of bondage is evolving. A new and alarming frontier has emerged in the form of "**Cyber Slavery**," where tech-savvy youths are lured by fraudulent high-paying job offers in Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos. These individuals often find their passports confiscated and are forced to carry out online financial scams under coercive conditions, including physical torture.

This study provides a comprehensive policy review of the CSS, focusing on the institutional role by examining the systemic gaps that hinder effective rehabilitation, this research argues for a survivor-centric, data-driven approach to transform these committees into active platforms for justice. Ultimately, the paper seeks to offer actionable recommendations to strengthen India's response to both traditional debt bondage and modern digital exploitation.

Bonded labour in India is deeply rooted in historical, socio-economic, and structural inequalities, such as caste-based discrimination and cycles of indebtedness. The system was legally abolished via the **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**, yet implementation remains inconsistent. Victims often remain trapped in debt bondage across rural and informal sectors, working under coercive conditions for little to no wages.

In recent years, the definition of bondage has expanded beyond traditional sectors. The emergence of "**Cyber Slavery**"—where individuals are lured by fraudulent job offers to foreign "scam compounds" and forced to commit crimes under duress—represents a new, digital frontier of human rights violations.

II. Objective

The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive policy review of the Central Sector Scheme (CSS) for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers.

Specific Objectives

- Fig. 1. **Evaluating CSS Effectiveness:** To assess how far the 2016 scheme has succeeded in achieving its core mandates of **rescue, relief, rehabilitation, and socio-economic reintegration** for victims of bonded labour. **The role, composition, and functionality of Vigilance Committees** at the district and sub-divisional levels, identifying why many remain inactive or meet irregularly.
- Fig. 2. **Identifying Systemic Gaps:** To pinpoint **administrative, financial, and legal barriers**—such as delays in fund disbursement, weak inter-agency coordination, and a lack of standardized monitoring tools—that hinder the rehabilitation process.
- Fig. 3. **Addressing Modern Bondage:** To explore the emergence of "**Cyber Slavery**" and **digital bondage**, examining how these new forms of exploitation challenge traditional legal frameworks like the **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**.
- Fig. 4. **Formulating Policy Recommendations:** To propose **actionable measures for reform**, including the use of digital monitoring tools, the inclusion of survivors in monitoring platforms, and the institutionalization of capacity building for officials.

Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the policy discourse by advocating for a rights-based, survivor-centric, and data-driven approach to achieve a bonded labour-free India.

III. Research Methodology

The research methodology for this paper adopts a **qualitative and policy-analytical approach**, specifically designed to evaluate the implementation of the Central Sector Scheme. The study situates bonded labour within a rights-based and institutional analytical framework, viewing it not merely as an economic problem but as a fundamental violation of human rights that requires a coordinated, justice-oriented policy response.

To achieve the research objectives, the following methodology is employed:

Data Collection Strategy

The study utilizes a combination of primary and secondary data sources to provide a holistic view of the rehabilitation landscape:

Desk-Based Secondary Review: A comprehensive review is conducted of government policy documents, official circulars, and reports from the **Ministry of Labour and Employment**. This includes analyzing evaluation studies, judicial pronouncements, and secondary literature from academic and civil society sources.

Government and Institutional Records: The research draws on RTI data, minutes of BLVC meetings (where accessible), and reports from the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** and the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** regarding forced labour.

Primary Stakeholder Consultations: The analysis is enriched through interviews and interactions with government officials, social workers, and NGOs actively engaged in the eradication of bonded labour. The methodology includes the use of **Focus Group Discussion (FGD) questionnaires** and interview schedules to gather ground-level insights.

IV. Field-Level Observations and Case Reviews

The research incorporates **field case reviews** to bridge the gap between policy theory and practice. This includes:

Case Studies: Examining specific instances of traditional bondage and the emerging trend of "**Cyber Slavery**"—such as the rescue of Indian nationals from scam compounds in Southeast Asian countries like Myanmar and Cambodia.

Comparative Analysis: Optional state-wise comparative analysis (e.g., Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Rajasthan) based on rescue and rehabilitation data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

V. Scope and Limitations

While the research is comprehensive in its policy review, it acknowledges certain limitations, such as the **limited availability of official data** regarding the exact number of victims in modern "cyber slavery" contexts and the irregular maintenance of BLVC meeting minutes across different districts.

Analytical Framework

The study employs an **institutional analysis** to identify systemic gaps in the implementation mechanism, such as delays in fund disbursement and the inactivity of Vigilance Committees. By focusing on **victim-centered service delivery**, the methodology evaluates how effectively the CSS links survivors to developmental schemes like **MGNREGA, PM Awas Yojana, and Skill India**.

The major discussion in this research centers on why bonded labour continues to exist in India and how modern technology has created a dangerous new version called "cyber slavery." **Bonded labour** is a system where a person is forced to work to pay off a debt or because of their social status. Even though India banned this system in 1976, it still exists today because of poverty and discrimination. While it used to happen mostly in places like brick kilns or farms, it has now evolved into a new, dangerous form called "**Cyber Slavery**". In **Cyber Slavery**, young people who know how to use computers are tricked by **fake ads for high-paying IT jobs** in countries like **Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos**. When they arrive, their **passports are stolen**, and they are locked in guarded buildings called "scam compounds". They are **forced to work 16 hours a day** making fake social media profiles to trick other people into losing their money through online scams. Thousands of Indians have already been rescued from these places.

Neeraj Soni, a senior researcher at Cyber Peace, warned in August 2024 that "**cyber slavery is a form of modern exploitation that begins with online deception and evolves into physical human trafficking**". He describes a "**disturbing continuum of online manipulation**" where victims, primarily tech-savvy young professionals, are lured by fake advertisements for high-paying jobs in Thailand or the Philippines, only to have their "**travel documents confiscated**" upon being diverted to compounds in Cambodia or Laos. Soni recommends that because cybercriminals utilize social media as a tool for targeting, it requires "**collective efforts from social media companies and regulatory authorities**" to develop preventive measures and empower netizens to "**cross-verify details from authentic sources**".

Emerging Trends: The "Digital Shackle"

Modern slavery now includes **Cyber Slavery**, as evidenced by recent cases where youths from regions like Bareilly were lured to Myanmar with promises of high-paying IT jobs. In these "scam compounds," victims:

- Have their **passports seized** and their freedom of movement restricted.
- Are forced to create **fake social media profiles** to defraud others.
- Face **physical and mental torture** if they refuse to comply. This shift necessitates that BLVCs and law enforcement develop digital literacy and international coordination capabilities to address modern bondage.

The harrowing experience of a 24-year-old survivor named **Pipi** serves as a stark example of how traditional debt bondage has evolved into cyber slavery. After being lured to Cambodia, Pipi was sold four times between different gangs, eventually being held in a scamming compound in Sihanoukville where her "purchase price" of USD 25,000 was converted into a debt she was forced to repay through online scamming. She faced severe physical abuse and torture for refusing to comply with the criminals before her eventual rescue in July 2022. In a similar case involving Indian nationals, seven youths from the Bareilly division, including individuals like Shumanshu Gupta and Ravi Rajput, were rescued from scam centers in Myanmar after being lured by the promise of high-paying IT careers. Upon arrival, their passports were confiscated, their freedom was taken away, and they were forced to operate fraudulent social media profiles to dupe others; those who resisted the work were subjected to daily mental torture and beatings. These case studies highlight a consistent pattern where victims are stripped of their liberty, confined in guarded compounds, and coerced through debt and violence to commit online financial crimes.

The Indian government helps victims through the Central Sector Scheme, which provides financial grants based on an individual's specific situation, such as 1 lakh rupees for adult males, 2 lakh rupees for women and children, and up to 3 lakh rupees for extreme cases like trafficking. In addition to money, the program

offers essential life support by linking survivors to benefits like housing, agricultural land, and schooling for their children. To carry out this work at the local level, every district is supposed to have a Bonded Labour Vigilance Committee made up of local officials and social workers who are responsible for finding victims and making sure they get the rehabilitation help they need.

However, there are major problems with how these programs work in real life. Many **local committees are inactive** and rarely meet. There are also **long delays in giving money** to the survivors, and the current laws were not originally designed to handle modern crimes like cyber slavery that happen across international borders.

Bonded labor in India has evolved from traditional rural debt bondage into a complex, transnational crisis known as "**Cyber Slavery**," where tech-savvy youth are lured by fraudulent overseas IT job offers and forced into committing cyber-enabled fraud. While the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, and the Central Sector Scheme (CSS) 2016 provide a framework for rescue and financial rehabilitation—offering grants between ₹1 lakh and ₹3 lakh for victims—these mechanisms are primarily designed for domestic exploitation and struggle to address modern digital coercion. Recent official data reveals the alarming scale of this new threat, with thousands of Indian nationals—including 2,265 from Cambodia, 2,290 from Lao PDR, and 2,165 from Myanmar—rescued from international "scam compounds" where they faced indicators of bondage such as passport seizure, confinement, and forced criminality. There is an urgent requirement for a survivor-centric and digitally-aware policy reform that modernizes the current institutional architecture to bridge the gap between labor laws, anti-trafficking efforts, and international cybercrime enforcement.

Chiang, Mina, and Sharlene Chen, in their report *Cyber Slavery in the Scamming Compounds* (Humanity Research Consultancy, Sept. 2022), write that "**cyber slavery is emerging as a form of organized crime of unprecedented severity and scale**," and they warn that "**tens of thousands of victims are held captive in scamming compounds**". The researchers emphasize that while fraudulent messages have become a daily inconvenience for many, this industry is actually rooted in a "**malignant new form of modern slavery**" where victims are forced to conduct scams virtually, allowing criminals to easily shift operations across borders to evade arrest. This form of exploitation involves **debt bondage, restriction of movement, and forced criminality**, as seen in the case of a survivor named **Pipi**, who was **sold four times** and held for a "debt" of **USD 25,000** representing her own purchase price. Because these operations exploit the loopholes in **international telecom and financial systems**, the authors argue that we "**urgently need a systemic and coordinated approach from governments and NGOs**" to dismantle the scam compounds and rescue the hundreds of thousands of individuals trapped within them. This emerging "**digital shackle**" challenges traditional definitions of bondage but functionally mirrors the **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**, through the **forfeiture of liberty and forced service** under the threat of violence.

VI. The Reality of Traditional Bonded Labour

Even though bonded labour was legally banned in 1976, it remains a serious problem because of deep-rooted issues like extreme poverty, unpaid debts, and social discrimination based on caste. Many families in rural areas stay trapped in a cycle of forced work for little or no pay because they cannot pay back small loans. While the law says these workers are free, the actual practice of finding and helping them is often slow and inconsistent. **The Ministry of Labour & Employment**, in an official statement from March 2023, emphasizes that the Government has adopted a "**multi-pronged strategy for abolition of bonded labourers system**," which includes the empowerment of Executive Magistrates to trial offences and the prescription of "**Vigilance Committees at District and Sub-divisional levels**" to identify and rehabilitate victims. Under the Central Sector Scheme (CSS), the government provides financial assistance alongside essential non-cash support such as the "**allotment of house/site & agricultural land**," land development, and even "**education for children**". However, as noted in recent policy reviews, while the 2016 CSS marked a shift toward a "**rights-based rehabilitation framework**," its potential is often limited

by "systemic implementation failures, including delays in disbursement" and the "functional inactivity of Vigilance Committees".

The Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs, Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh, provided critical updates on December 11, 2025, regarding the repatriation of citizens trapped in digital bondage, stating that dubious firms have "lured Indian nationals mostly through social media channels" to Southeast Asian countries to carry out "cybercrime and other fraudulent activities from scam centres". The Ministry confirmed that through concerted efforts, thousands of Indian nationals have been rescued, including "2,265 from Cambodia, 2,290 from Lao PDR, and 2,165 from Myanmar". To combat these fraudulent agencies, the government has notified a list of "3,505 unregistered agents" on the e-Migrate portal as of October 2025 and shares complaints with state governments and the "Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C)" for further action.

VII. How the Government Tries to Help (The CSS)

The Central Sector Scheme for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers, introduced in 2016, provides a comprehensive rights-based framework designed to support the long-term reintegration of rescued workers. A primary feature of this program is its graduated financial assistance, which offers 1 lakh rupees for adult male survivors, 2 lakh rupees for women and children, and up to 3 lakh rupees for extreme cases involving trafficking, disability, or sexual exploitation. Beyond direct monetary aid, the scheme ensures vital life support through various non-cash benefits, such as the allotment of agricultural land and house sites, animal husbandry support, and dedicated education for the children of rescued laborers. To foster economic resilience and prevent individuals from falling back into debt cycles, the scheme utilizes a convergence model that links survivors with other major national programs, including Skill India for vocational training, MGNREGA for wage employment, and PM Awas Yojana for housing. This integrated approach aims to provide survivors with the tools and resources necessary to achieve sustainable social and economic independence.

VIII. The New Frontier: Cyber Slavery

A major part of the discussion is the rise of "Cyber Slavery," a modern form of human trafficking where technology is used to enslave people. The cycle of cyber slavery begins when tech-savvy young adults are lured by fake social media advertisements for high-paying IT and customer support jobs in Southeast Asian countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR. Upon arrival, the reality of the situation is revealed as their passports are confiscated and they are confined in heavily guarded scam compounds surrounded by high fences and constant surveillance. Victims are then coerced into working 14 to 17 hours daily to carry out online financial fraud, most notably pig-butcher scams that use emotional manipulation to trick targets into fake investments. Those who refuse to comply or fail to meet their scam quotas are subjected to brutal punishments, including physical beatings, electric shocks, and severe mental torture.

IX. Constitutional and Legislative Safeguards

The Indian Constitution, under **Articles 23 and 24**, prohibits forced labour and child labour. The primary legislative tool is the **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**, which provides the mechanism for identification, release, and rehabilitation. Other relevant laws include the **Child and Adolescent Labour Act (1986)** and the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act**.

X. The Central Sector Scheme (CSS) 2016

To bridge the significant gap between legal abolition and the actual practice of rehabilitation, the Ministry of Labour and Employment introduced the **Central Sector Scheme (CSS) for Rehabilitation of Bonded Labourer in 2016**. This rights-based policy substantially enhanced **financial assistance** by providing higher rehabilitation grants—specifically ₹1 lakh for adult males, ₹2 lakh for women and children, and up to ₹3 lakh for extreme cases involving trafficking or sexual exploitation. Additionally, it established a **District Bonded Labour Rehabilitation Fund** with a minimum corpus of ₹10 lakh to ensure that rescued individuals receive **immediate relief funds** of at least ₹5,000 (and up to ₹20,000) right after their rescue, regardless of the status of legal proceedings. A critical feature of the CSS is its **convergence model**, which seeks to achieve long-term social reintegration by linking survivors with various developmental schemes such as **MGNREGA for wage employment, Skill India for vocational training, and PM Awas Yojana for housing**. Furthermore, the scheme demonstrates **gender sensitivity** by including specific, higher financial provisions for women and children to address their unique vulnerabilities and ensure they have the resources necessary to escape the cycle of bondage.

XI. Policy Gaps and Recommendations

To solve these issues, researcher scholar suggests that the government must **make local committees more active**, use **digital tools** to track every case, and **include survivors** in the planning process to ensure they get the help they truly need. Information should also be shared through **radio, SMS, and social media** so that young people do not fall for fake job offers. In order to strengthen the rehabilitation of bonded labourers and address the growing threat of cyber slavery, several key recommendations are proposed to bridge the gap between policy and practice. First, it is essential to speed up help by revising the Central Sector Scheme guidelines to ensure that rehabilitation funds are released in a strictly time-bound manner, which prevents survivors from falling back into poverty or debt cycles due to administrative delays. To improve long-term outcomes, technology should be utilized to create a national digital database and district-level registers that track every rescued person, ensuring they are actually being rehabilitated and linked to necessary welfare schemes. It is also vital to listen to survivors by formally including them in the statutory Bonded Labour Vigilance Committees, as their participation provides better ground-level advice and ensures monitoring is truly survivor-centric. Finally, because cyber slavery is a transnational crime that happens across borders, India must strengthen global cooperation by working closely with foreign governments and international agencies to conduct raid-and-rescue operations and shut down scam centers. These institutional reforms are necessary to modernize the existing enforcement architecture, which currently suffers from functional inactivity and is not yet fully equipped to handle digital exploitation.

XII. Systemic Improvements

To prevent rescued individuals from being re-entrapped in debt cycles, it is critical to revise the Central Sector Scheme guidelines to ensure that rehabilitation funds are released in a strictly time-bound manner. The current system often faces administrative delays and functional inactivity, which can be addressed by implementing digital monitoring tools to track the real-time status of survivor rehabilitation across different districts. This technological shift should be paired with a survivor-centric approach that includes rescued persons within the Bonded Labour Vigilance Committees. Including these individuals as committee members ensures that the monitoring process is participatory and informed by valuable ground-level insights into the actual challenges survivors face during their reintegration.

XIII. Institutional Strengthening

To effectively combat all forms of exploitation, the government must prioritize regular capacity building and training for District Magistrates and members of Bonded Labour Vigilance Committees so they can recognize traditional debt bondage as well as the emerging threats of digital slavery. This initiative

should be supported by improved inter-departmental coordination, where labour departments, law enforcement, and social welfare agencies work together in a more unified way. Strengthening this convergence is essential to ensure that rescued individuals are not only freed but are also successfully linked to various government welfare schemes and social protection programs for their long-term recovery.

XIV. Policy and Legislative Reforms

To strengthen the rehabilitation process, it is essential to revise the Central Sector Scheme (CSS) guidelines to guarantee the time-bound disbursement of funds, ensuring that rescued individuals do not fall back into debt cycles because of administrative delays. Alongside these financial reforms, the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, should be amended to include more robust enforcement mechanisms and harsher penalties to deter offenders more effectively. Furthermore, integrating CSS records with national labour databases is critical for maintaining accurate data and tracking the long-term social and economic reintegration of freed labourers to ensure they remain sustainably independent.

XV. Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Convergence

To ensure that the rehabilitation of survivors is both effective and immediate, the District Administration is mandated to provide financial assistance of up to ₹20,000 right after rescue, a critical relief measure that is granted regardless of the legal status or conviction proceedings against the employer. This initial support is part of a broader "convergence" model under the Central Sector Scheme (CSS) 2016, which aims to strengthen the reintegration of rescued labourers by automatically linking them to essential national welfare programs such as MGNREGA for wage employment, PM Awas Yojana for housing, Skill India for vocational training, and the public distribution system (PDS) for essential commodities. Beyond immediate financial aid, the framework prioritizes long-term stability by offering non-cash assistance that includes agricultural land allotment, animal husbandry support (such as dairy or poultry), and dedicated education for the children of rescued workers to ensure they are mainstreamed into the formal schooling system. By combining immediate relief with these comprehensive socio-economic supports, the system strives to provide a sustainable path to freedom and prevent survivors from falling back into the cycle of debt bondage.

XVI. Addressing Cyber Slavery and Digital Exploitation

To dismantle the transnational infrastructure of scam compounds, a systemic and coordinated approach is required involving the Indian government, foreign administrations in Southeast Asia, and NGOs to conduct effective raid-and-rescue operations. Protecting citizens also involves strengthening international telecom systems to prevent scammers from harvesting personal data and enhancing financial monitoring to flag or block large-scale, suspicious transfers linked to fraudulent activities. Potential job seekers are strongly advised to utilize the e-Migrate portal to verify the credentials of recruitment agents and companies before accepting any overseas employment offers, as thousands of unregistered agents have already been flagged on the platform. Finally, the government and partner agencies must leverage SMS, radio, and social media to launch mass awareness campaigns that expose the deceptive tactics of "cyber-enslavers," such as advertisements for fake, high-paying IT jobs.

XVII. Community and NGO Engagement

To achieve a bonded labour-free India, the government must move beyond legislative prohibition and foster active partnerships with civil society organizations to improve the identification and social reintegration of victims. Empowering the public through accessible helplines and help centers is equally vital, as these tools allow netizens to report suspicious recruitment activity or online coercion before they become victims. While the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1976 legally dismantled the system, exploitation

remains deeply rooted in historical socio-economic inequalities, poverty, and indebtedness. The introduction of the Central Sector Scheme in 2016 was a progressive step toward providing comprehensive rehabilitation, yet its effectiveness is frequently undermined by delays in fund disbursement, poor inter-departmental coordination, and a lack of consistent data maintenance.

Furthermore, the emergence of cyber slavery represents a dangerous evolution of bondage that necessitates an urgent policy update. With thousands of Indian nationals trapped in international scam compounds in countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR, where they are forced into online financial crimes under duress, the traditional understanding of debt bondage must expand to address digital exploitation. Combating this digital shackle requires more than local enforcement; it demands international coordination to raid compounds, strengthened telecom and financial systems to disrupt scamming operations, and mass awareness campaigns through radio and social media to prevent fraudulent recruitment. Ultimately, the successful eradication of both traditional and modern forms of bonded labour depends on institutional accountability and systemic reform. By strengthening the vigilance committee mechanism, ensuring the timely delivery of rehabilitation grants, and maintaining high international pressure on cyber-slavery networks, India can fulfill its constitutional promise of protecting fundamental human rights and ensuring the social reintegration of all freed labourers.

XVIII. Conclusion

The path toward a bonded labour-free India requires more than just legislative prohibition; it demands an accountable and justice-oriented policy response. Strengthening the BLVC mechanism and modernizing the CSS framework to address both traditional and cyber-based slavery is essential for ensuring the fundamental rights and social reintegration of all victims.

In conclusion, India stands at a crossroads where ancient forms of exploitation are meeting 21st-century technology. While the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1976 legally ended the practice of debt bondage nearly fifty years ago, the reality on the ground shows that the "shackles" have not disappeared—they have simply changed form. Today, bonded labour is no longer just found in rural brick kilns or farms; it has evolved into a global crisis known as "**Cyber Slavery**". The emergence of international scam compounds in Southeast Asia represents a terrifying new frontier. Over 6,700 Indian citizens have already been rescued from countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Lao PDR, where they were held against their will, had their passports stolen, and were forced to commit online crimes under the threat of torture. This proves that our current laws, which focus mostly on domestic labour, are not yet ready to handle transnational digital coercion.

To achieve the vision of a "Viksit Bharat" (Developed India) by 2047, the protection of human dignity must be the top priority. We must transform our local committees from "paper bodies" into active, digital-savvy teams that include the voices of survivors. Ending bonded labour in the modern age requires more than just making arrests; it requires a survivor-centric approach that combines social support, international teamwork, and a constant update of our legal strategies.

In short, whether a person is trapped by a debt in a village or by a "digital shackle" in a foreign country, the core injury is the same: the loss of human freedom. India's success will be measured by its ability to ensure that no citizen—regardless of their background or location—is ever forced to trade their liberty for their survival.

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