FINAL PAPER

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**Introduction**

Slavery is widely measured as an unethical dilemma in the present times. Slavery is not just wrong because it is wrong, it has deeply rooted ethical implications which stand ground in within the functioning and social structure of the society. It is referred to as the process of sale, purchase, and ownership of labor which is unpaid. Since the labor is unpaid it is subject to immoral and inhuman practices. Slavery dismisses the notions of basic human rights of equality, dignity, and freedom. The slaves are synonymously used to achieve extensive labor through violent means and inappropriate behaviors by the slave owners. The concept degrades the human status of individuals to objects that are owned and controlled by their owners. The human liberties of the slaves are deliberately controlled and limited by the masters. Today the dilemma has largely diminished from the world, however, glimpses from the history still show the brutality associated with it.

Slavery was practiced all over the world by Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Babylonians, Aztecs, Indians and in many parts of Africa. The dynamics of slavery, however, changed after imperialistic regimes by the Europeans, which concentrated the slave in some parts of the world such as the United States of America. The existence of slavery has remained persistent as historical truth. It was considered a measure of status for the societies in the past. Although slavery provided with free labor, it was not a cheap investment, the costs of slaves were high, other costs of maintaining and supervising them were also high, and it could not guarantee high productivity as well but it was deeply rooted in the social structure. This is one of the reasons eliminating slavery caused damage to the economy of many countries because the prices of labor had been kept considerably lower from centuries (Gold, 2015).

**Discussion**

Slavery and serfdom had been treated as a norm for a very long time. Slavery is rhetoric which challenges the freedoms of individuals through brutality, intimidation, and dehumanization. The traditional notion of slavery is called Chattel slavery, whereby the slaves were considered as personal property and commodity. Slavery is mostly associated with an agrarian economic system. The status of slaves was ascribed and the cycle remained continuous. The slaves are unable to withdraw from this type of arrangement unilaterally without the owner’s consent. The owners held so much over the lives of the slaves that they determined all important decisions of their lives from settlement, living conditions to marriage. Slavery was considered synonymous to dependency on the masters. In the past, many slaves were treated and lived lives better than normal citizens. Although this may be a situation in ancient times their status deteriorated in the coming years. Slavery in the colonial era was brutalized by Europeans for their economic gains. The individuals majorly from Africa were deprived of their homelands, separated from their families and treated merely as unemotional commodities. The slaves were identified by distinctions in their clothing, jewelry and lack of footwear in some cases branded through stamps, which furthered to particular ethnicities and races especially the Blacks from America. The Africans were sought as slaves and supplied to colonies in the Americas, Australia, and European continents. Post-colonial years still brought complexities and struggles for the blacks to gain equal right, opportunities and status in the society (Links, 2018).

**Terms associated with Slavery**

**Deprivation**

The core theme of slavery lies in the denial and dismissal of the dignities of individuals. Slavery encourages unethical and immoral behaviors which deprive individuals of their basic personal and social liberties.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination is defined as a treatment towards a person and groups on the basis of particular identities and characteristics they hold. The slaves were considered less favorable due to their economic status and ethnicities by their white masters.

**Racism**

Slavery led to the social construct of racism in many ways in America, Europe, and Brazil especially. In the post-abolition years, black Africans still face discrimination due to their heritage and race associated with slavery.

**Labor**

The work and services received were unpaid and exploitative. Slaves were bought to fulfill the purpose of labor. The slaves were compelled into coerced and forced labor.

**Oppression**

Slavery has a direct relationship with the atrocities. These vulnerable groups were physically abused, tortured, punished and even killed by their owners, to sustain fear and suppression amongst them.

**Forced Prostitution**

The slave women were forced to offer sexual services for commercial purpose. It usually involved high levels of coercion and physical abuse. Women and girls who were slaves did not have to escape or ignore such services to their master, due to severe consequences attached to them.

**Freedom**

Freedom ensures certain privileges and liberties in decision making, movement, and opportunities. The slave owners limited and controlled the lives by breaching these notions and interfering in their lives.

**Equality**

Slavery violates the idea that all humans are equal, therefore they are entitled to equal human rights. Human rights are referred to as shared values of dignity, fairness, justices, independence, and respect.

**Abolition**

Abolition is the motive of eliminating and diminishing the evil of slavery from the society. The idea tends to attend the legal ending of slavery from the world.

**Declaration of Human Rights**

Slavery demeans the human status of individuals to objects. The Declaration of Human of Human Rights reinstates the basic human values and makes slavery illegal ensuring the needs for fulfilling life.

**Slavery in the United States of America**

Slavery in the United States of America played an unrewarded role in the economy, demographics, and politics of the state (Crane, 2013). The first slaves in the American continent were brought by the Dutch in Virginia in 1619. Slaves were treated well initially as they were considered a luxury. However, with the coming the situations of the slave deteriorated, as they could n0t make demands for better treatment, justice, and rights. The slaves were brought to the American colonies to work for agriculture in the rice, cotton, coffee and sugar plantations. This developed a relationship in of masters and the slaves. The whites who owned the slaves considered them morally inferior to them. To further legalize this relationship laws were passed to make it legal for them. Although these slaves were given places to settle, food and learn forms of art. They were also subject to brutal treatments, atrocities, harsh punishments, and abuse regularly. The threat of being sold away from immediate relations was one of the worse forms of punishment after mutilation. With the advent of time, the slaves realized their status in society and initially began resistance by escaping these conditions (Fields, 1990). However, they were soon captured and sent back to face further harshness from their masters. This was a wakeup call for many activists who stood for the rights of these vulnerable groups. Therefore, certain laws were passed to facilitate the slaves who had run and crossed boundaries between the slave states and free states, this also put a stop to the import of slaves from Africa. The real issue now remained the African black slaves who were already living in the slave states of Southern America. Hence a war broke out between the slave states and the free and the North won with the support of slaves from the south. This concluded in passing13th Amendment in 1865, ending all forms of slavery. Although slavery ended in centuries ago the glimpses of the oppression and subservience still remained in the forms of racism and discriminative treatment amongst the Black Africans (Andrews, 2002 ).

**Kant’s Categorical Imperative**

Categorical Imperative is a philosophical concept that belongs to the primary branches and models of ethics. The theory is associated with the deontology morals philosophy. It was initiated by Immanuel Kant, hence popularly referred to as Kant’s Categorical Imperative (O'Neill, 1993). The theory suggests that the individual acts are not dependent on the ideals of right and wrong but on fulfilling one's duty. Kant believed it to be the supreme principle of morality. The Categorical Imperative is universal in nature. He provides three formulas to aid his theory, the universalization of Law of nature, the formula of Humanity and formula of Autonomy (Ellerman, 1988).

Kant uses categorical imperative as the foundation of this moral theory. He believes that one acts out of the mere obligation of duty. Therefore Kant suggests that any rational action shall be aligned with a principle. Kant’s perspective on lying is wrong since we owe the truth to others as part of universal law can be extended and applied to slavery. The moral wrongness of slavery can be determined by Kant's Formula of Humanity. He believes that slavery is merely used as a means to meet ends. In this way, slavery fails to respect the free will exercised by individuals as a rational act. The theory further asserts that it is an individual’s duty to not use their or anybody’s humanity to meet any ends. Moreover, slavery hinders and halts the autonomy of individuals which limits their rights to basic necessities in life. Therefore, it denies freedom to individuals as a means to meet ends for others. Kant views slavery as irrational or an issue of law but morally wrong, and not because it is accepted behavior by the slave himself but the master who is accepting such demands. Hence, it suggests that the moral worth of slavery lies in the treatment of slaves which makes it wrong (Kant, 1998).

**Consequentialism**

Consequentialism states that the morality of an act depends upon the consequences they produce. It claims that the act is only morally right if it maximizes the overall good as compared to the bad. (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2003) Consequentialism is a strong proponent of the ideals of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. It is a class of a normative ethical theory stating that any act is the ultimate basis of determining the rightness or wrongness of that act. The theory centralizes its moral philosophy on the foundations of maximization of happiness and minimization of pain.

Slavery is only permissible if it produces significantly higher levels of positive utility. The oppression by the slave owners only leads to higher productivity producing the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people. Although it does produce unhappiness amongst the slaves, it is still ethically moral because of the happiness it is delivering to the masses. Slavery according to consequentialism can be held morally right if it leads to happiness and satisfaction for the maximum number of people at the expense of a few mistreated individuals. Consequentialism holds that slavery is not always ‘wrong'. Total pleasure would maximize if the benefits to the slave owners are greater than the harm incurred to the slaves. This theory suggests that it would only be possible if the slave owners are fully satisfied and pleased from having slaves. Consequentialists argue that slavery is not immoral because it complements the demographic features of a society. They support their claims by deriving historical comparisons between slaves and free men; the ratio of affliction to the benefit of the happiness of the society. The misery of the minority i.e. slaves benefits the majority and is therefore justified. Slavery is considered ethically right by consequentialists because both the slaves and the slave owners have direct interests tied to each other.

**Analysis**

The two schools of ethical models carry significant approaches to ethics. Kant’s Categorical Imperative suggests an ethical system whereby duties and laws are determined as the basis of morals. While the consequentialists argue that the essence of ethical morality is captured in the ends and not in the means. Kant’s theory of deontology reflects upon the immorality and unjustified practice of slavery. He justifies his claims by universalized mediums of humanity which cannot be exploited or manipulated as part of duty for personal means. Slavery is considered unjust and ethically wrong by Kant. He creates a substantial case against its morality. He implies that slavery creates discrimination, racism and personal limitations. His theory dismisses brutalities and atrocities against the slaves. His ideals propose moral slavery which does not signal loss or freedoms of individuals. Consequentialism does not place much attention to the act itself but to the outcome of that action. It justifies slavery under the ideals of maximum happiness of a greater number of people at the cost unhappiness of the slaves. However, the ultimate aim of satisfaction and better life opportunities remains with the Kantian categorical imperative which promises human rights, equality, and freedom for all under the universalization of duties of individuals (McCain, 1991). Hence, the deontological ethical principle is more suited to address the morality, because it motivates equal liberties and moral autonomy of individuals. This notion consequently leads to the abolishment of slavery in all forms as a universal law.

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