



Faith in Action to End Slavery



Resources for Hindus

Hinduism originated in India, where slavery has historically been intertwined with the caste system. Varna religious tradition determined the division of labor in Hindu society, with the dirtiest and most difficult work relegated to the Dalits, or the “untouchables.” This classification made many Indians vulnerable to slavery, often through debt bondage. However, many Hindus see their belief in karma as a powerful motivator for fighting for social justice. The following are some examples of how the Hindu community is engaged in the fight against slavery.

Hindu Leaders Taking Action Against Slavery

Yoga Stops Traffick: This annual yoga event supports the anti-trafficking organization Odanadi Seva Trust. Around the world, supporters take timeout of one day a year to practice Ashtanga Yoga to connect with survivors of slavery and those fighting to end it. Shows of solidarity like this one are great tools to raise awareness about slavery and human trafficking. Learn more: <http://www.yogastopstraffick.org>.

Swami Agnivesh & Bandhua Mukti Morcha (BMM): Swami Agnivesh founded the BMM (also known as the Bonded Labor Liberation Front) to fight bonded labor in India. The BMM advocates for legislative action and enforcement. Though he had been imprisoned and survived assassination attempts, Swami Agnivesh said: “What good is all of this great talk about simplicity, love, meekness, sharing and cooperation, if it cannot be applied in daily life because of an economic ideology that puts profit before human happiness?” (As quoted from Hallegren, 1996 in Free the Slaves co-founder Kevin Bales’ book *New Slavery: A Reference Handbook*.)

Learn more: www.swamiagnivesh.com/aboutbmm.htm

For Individuals and Groups

Join or Start a Study Group Focused on Modern-Day Slavery: The concept of *dharma* insists that Hindus focus on the right way of living by fulfilling duties, virtues, and rights outlined in order to create harmony in the world. Vātsyāyana, a Hindu philosopher of the third century CE, discussed *dharma* in terms of being charitable and good, and *adharma* as being violent and deceptive. Slavery creates disharmony not only for individuals and local communities, but also for the world. Study groups can investigate the impacts that slavery has on both local and global communities.

Community Dinner: Host a dinner at your local temple, someone's home, or a local restaurant that is willing to sponsor the event and provide the food free of charge. This event could be dedicated to the millions of people around the world who are living in slavery, and will inform the attendees about the mission of Free the Slaves and the root causes of slavery and how each and every person can make a difference. This event can either sell admission tickets, or ask for a donation in lieu of paying for the meal. Remember to reinforce that this donation contributes to someone's freedom. Serve fair trade foods and keep table cards with information about slavery to encourage discussion.

Charity Work: Is your temple actively involved in partnering with organizations to help end social injustice around the world? It may seem like a small action, but presenting Free the Slaves to your temple's missions/outreach team can help lead to tangible change. We want to spread the word about our effective model for eradicating slavery, but we can't do it without you! The Hindu community has an important role to play in the anti-slavery movement.

Fund an Abolitionist: Free the Slaves works on the ground to help rescue and reintegrate those in slavery, and to cut off slavery at the source. Organize a fundraiser or donate to help us pay the salary of a liberator who risks his or her life to go on the front lines to rescue slaves. Learn more: www.freetheslaves.net/where-we-work.

Donate

Consider making a gift to Free the Slaves in commemoration of Hindu holidays such as Diwali. Stand alongside modern-day abolitionists who are on the front lines fighting for freedom of people around the world. Visit: www.freetheslaves.net/donate.

Learn More

Here are links to downloadable resources that you can use:

- Slavery Today, Slavery in History, Survivor Stories, Frequently Asked Questions: www.freetheslaves.net/about-slavery/
- Videos and books about modern slavery and innovative solutions to ending slavery worldwide: www.freetheslaves.net/building-awareness/
- Stay up-to-date with political actions to prevent slavery and care for victims and survivors by following Free the Slaves on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and participate by signing petitions or calling senators and representatives.