

Man was born free, but he is in chains everywhere.

Outline

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2. Black Africans were literally enchained and exported to Europe and America for slavery
3. The British imperialism enslaved the entire sub-continent
4. People of Kashmir are in chains since 1947
5. The Palestinian people have been subjugated in their own homeland
6. Conclusion

According to Thomas Hobbes, individuals entered civil society by surrendering certain natural rights previously enjoyed in the state of nature. In exchange, living under societal laws was meant to preserve order. Over time, human groups began to emphasize differences—such as race, colour, ethnicity, language, geography, and culture—leading to social stratification. Powerful groups asserted superiority, establishing systems, laws, and customs to subjugate and dehumanize those deemed inferior. Indeed, the misuse of law to control the weak has accompanied human society since its inception. Consequently, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously noted, though man is born free, he is everywhere in chains. This paper substantiates this thesis by examining key historical instances where human freedom has been systematically restricted.

History vividly remembers the grim reality of the 17th and 18th centuries, when European powers—intoxicated by dominance and racial superiority—trampled weaker nations, particularly across Africa. European colonizers did not merely enslave indigenous populations in their native lands; they physically chained African men, women, and children, shipping them across the Atlantic as forced labourers. Between 1640 and 1807, the transatlantic slave trade forcibly relocated over 12 million Africans, with the British alone trafficking more than 3.5 million slaves. Enslaved human beings were auctioned in open markets, stripped of dignity, and held in severe captivity. Meanwhile, imperial nations systematically plundered the wealth of conquered lands, dehumanizing the rightful owners of those territories. These dark chapters demonstrate how human societies have repeatedly weaponized power to keep others in chains. [125]

Just as in Africa, European powers extended their colonial ambitions across the globe. In the late eighteenth century, British power turned toward the Indian subcontinent, seizing upon the decline of the Mughal Empire as regional rulers sought independence. Through military supremacy and political intrigue, the British established control over the entire subcontinent. To maintain dominance, they enacted oppressive laws stripping locals of their right to assemble, express themselves, and exercise self-determination. Key historical events—from the defeat of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah in Bengal to the horrific Jallianwala Bagh massacre—demonstrate the violence used to enforce colonial rule. Systemic racial discrimination ensured that even high-ranking local dignitaries were denied equal social standing with British masters. For nearly two hundred years, the people of the subcontinent remained trapped under this system of foreign domination. The colonial power's stooges are still keeping the people of the subcontinent in chains. [150]

The ongoing crisis in Kashmir demonstrates that the imposition of power over human liberty persists well into the modern era. Having maintained a distinct identity for centuries under various rulers, Kashmir saw its modern status abruptly transformed during the 1947 partition. The accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh ushered in an era of dense militarization, where demands for self-determination under UN resolutions were met with heavy security measures,

cordon-and-search operations, and widespread human rights violations. This state-enforced control reached a flashpoint in August 2019 with the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution, stripping Kashmiris of their constitutional autonomy. Accompanying internet shutdowns and severe curfews effectively silenced the population, prompting critics to label the region the world's largest open-air prison. The reality of modern Kashmir confirms that humanity remains in chains even in the twenty-first century. [145]

The ongoing plight of the Palestinian population provides another poignant case study of modern geopolitical subjugation. The displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians during the 1948 *Nakba* marked the beginning of a prolonged territorial and political displacement that continues to shape the region. Over subsequent decades, human rights organizations and international bodies have documented systemic restrictions on Palestinian movement, land loss, expansion of settlements, and frequent military encounters resulting in severe civilian tolls. This humanitarian crisis reached an unprecedented severity during recent hostilities in Gaza, characterized by widespread destruction of urban infrastructure, heavy civilian casualties, and severe impediments to the delivery of critical aid. The ongoing conditions in the Palestinian territories underscore how structural power dynamics and geopolitical conflicts can override international legal frameworks, leaving vulnerable populations bound by systemic restrictions in the modern age. [136]

In conclusion, freedom is an inherent birthright of humanity. While early civil societies instituted laws to preserve order and ensure collective security, the emergence of perceived group differences fostered systemic bias, inequality, and division. Driven by material ambition and a desire for dominance, powerful factions continuously leveraged their strength to subjugate weaker groups, stripping the vanquished of their resources and autonomy. As history demonstrates—from imperial expansion to modern political control—dominant forces consistently devise institutional frameworks, laws, customs, and traditions to reinforce their authority. These structural barriers operate as pervasive chains across every sphere of human existence: social, political, economic, and cultural. Ultimately, the trajectory of human history confirms that while individuals are born free, they remain everywhere bound by systems of control. [125]