



WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA - AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Dr. Jyoti K. S.

**Associate Professor, Department of Economics,
Government Women's First Grade College Kalaburagi.**

ABSTRACT

Domestic workers perform a variety of household services for an individual or a family, from providing care for children and elderly dependents to housekeeping, including cleaning and household maintenance. Other responsibilities may include cooking, laundry and ironing, shopping for food and undertaking other household errands. Such work has always needed to be done but before the Industrial Revolution and the advent of labour saving devices, it was physically much harder.



In India, the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, has acknowledged the importance of domestic work to households and the need to improve welfare and regulatory measures for promoting decent work for domestic workers. Also, for the very first time, domestic workers have been recognized as workers in the Unorganized Sector Social Security Act, 2008. At the international level, domestic work is being recognized as "real" work and there was a discussion in June 2010 at the International Labour Conference (ILO) to decide on a international Labour Convention for domestic work. Many countries such as South Africa, Brazil, Hong Kong, Philippines, Uruguay, Mali, Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, have labour laws or mechanisms to protect and promote rights of the women domestic workers.

KEYWORDS: *domestic workers, slavery, female etc.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Work is the hallmark tendency of the human being which can be classed into several kinds and situations. Amongst such work is the domestic work which was usually being attended by the member of family especially elderly women. However, the modern society is engaging the worker for the domestic work. Domestic workers constitute a major chunk of unorganized sector. Domestic work includes wide range of activities such as cooking, cleaning, washing, sweeping, driving, gardening, child care and elderly care in urban areas etc. In urban areas most of the housewives are engaged in formal jobs, for which they have to go out of their homes, hence they hire domestic workers to manage their household responsibilities. In nuclear family, where there is no backup support for working women, these domestic workers are gaining importance. Modern life style and status in society are other factors leading to increasing demand for these domestic workers.

Hence a domestic worker employed in household is playing a crucial role, especially in urban areas of India. Domestic work sector provides employment and generate earning for many women working in this sector. Most of the middle class people and upper middle class people employ prefer to female domestic servant in their household. The primary reasons for the sharp growth of this sector are increasing urbanization, increasing women participation in labour force, and declining joint families.

Domestic workers perform a variety of household services for an individual or a family, from providing care for children and elderly dependents to housekeeping, including cleaning and household maintenance. Other responsibilities may include cooking, laundry and ironing, shopping for food and undertaking other household errands. Such work has always needed to be done but before the Industrial Revolution and the advent of labour saving devices, it was physically much harder.

In India, the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, has acknowledged the importance of domestic work to households and the need to improve welfare and regulatory measures for promoting decent work for domestic workers. Also, for the very first time, domestic workers have been recognized as workers in the Unorganized Sector Social Security Act, 2008. At the international level, domestic work is being recognized as “real” work and there was a discussion in June 2010 at the International Labour Conference (ILO) to decide on a international Labour Convention for domestic work. Many countries such as South Africa, Brazil, Hong Kong, Philippines, Uruguay, Mali, Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, have labour laws or mechanisms to protect and promote rights of the women domestic workers.

In India, a draft bill has been proposed by National Commission for Women to govern conditions of work for domestic workers and is under review and discussion. The major areas covered by the proposed bill relate to definitional issues, such as who is a domestic worker, the age of the worker, the definition of employer, workplace, the placement agency, defining work hours, rest periods, weekly offs, annual vacations, wage levels, payment of wages, need for a written contract, creation of fund for domestic workers, registration of domestic workers, enabling them to use existing social security and maternity benefits and enrolment in future schemes and programs of the government.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

This study based on following objectives.

- 1) To study the concept of domestic workers in India
- 2) To study the problems of women domestic workers in India.

3. METHODOLOGY:

The present study is based on the data obtained from secondary sources. The secondary data has been collected from various journals, articles, books, government reports, and e-shrama portal, etc. This study analyzed women domestic workers in india - an economic analysis.

4. CONCEPT OF DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA:

When getting into the study of the subject, it becomes necessary to have a clear vision with what we understand with the term “domestic worker” and “domestic work”. It is not an easy task to define the term “domestic worker” as it is not a homogenous group. Rather it is difficult to define. It is quite difficult to cover in a single definition such heterogeneous group engaged in their jobs with diverse nature such as cleaning, cooking, etc. As per dictionary meaning, the term “domestic” in reference to the term “domestic worker” means and includes “servant who reside in the house of the employer they serve”. Thus, the dictionary simply defines “domestic worker” as servant who is working within the household of the employer.

So far as statutory definition of the term “domestic worker” is concerned, till now this term has been defined by only two legislations in India, namely, POSH (2013) and the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008 (the UWSS, Act, 2008). Out of which former legislation is general in nature and application and the later has now been repealed. Under the POSH (2013), this term “domestic worker” has been stipulated as “a woman who is employed to do the household work in any household for remuneration whether in cash or kind, either directly or through any agency on a temporary, permanent, part-time or full-time basis, but does not include any member of the family of the employer.

Thus, it is clear that, from here onwards, whenever the term “domestic worker” comes, it implies “woman domestic worker”, since the above definition stipulates that domestic work is done by woman worker. And also, the term “domestic worker” is not a gender-neutral term since in common parlance, it is believed to be a woman engaged in household chores. As per another statutory definition,

“domestic workers” mean and includes wage worker. As such “domestic worker” is an individual who is hired by households for wages which may be in form of money or in kind. Such worker may be employed either by an employer through any informal means or indirectly that is through formal means which includes agency or contractor. Such worker may be employed either merely for one employer or for more than one.

5. PROBLEMS OF WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS:

1) Lack of education:

Lack of education is a great disadvantage and can be the main reason behind a person taking up menial jobs. A person who is not educated cannot expect a job that is enough to support him and his family. The consequence is that he will have to accept any job that is available even if it is very lowly paid. Thus education widens the horizons of mind and equips a person with suitable skill to earn a living and fight for his rights. He becomes more aware of his rights and to some extent he can save him from scrupulous exploitation from others.

2) Lack of opportunities:

Lack of opportunities in the village and tribal belt is another reason for the existence of domestic servants in modern society. Lack of opportunities makes the people to migrate from villages and tribal areas to the towns in search of better opportunities and work. With no formal education they are under a compulsion to work in the towns as domestic aids. Many of them are promised and brought from the tribal area to the towns promising lucrative jobs but soon they realise the reality and end up as domestic aids due to non-availability of suitable other avenues to them.

3) Population growth

Population growth is another major reason for the continuation of this evil. A large number of people in India are in need of work and they are willing to accept any job which is thrown at them even for a pittance. Thus the demand is much lesser than the supply of labour, it is quite possible that it may lead to a situation of exploitation as the employers have choices galore and even at very low rates or even for food and shelter.

4) Joint Families

In many households the size of the family is big and without adequate income they cannot survive or meet the needs of the family. In such circumstances, it is a compulsion that every member of the family must work and this forces the family to send their children and women folk to work as domestic servants to the urban household even at a very small wage. They also hope that their girls might have a better life in the cities. Some parents also prefer to send them for domestic work because it is a lighter task for the girls when compared to other avenues of employment.

5) The lure of big city

This is yet another reason why the rural folk make a beeline to the city. Those who send their children to the urban areas consider it as a window of opportunity. Thus domestic work is a stepping stone for them to better opportunities in life. They also hope for some overseas opportunities if luck favours them. Due to a variety of reasons many parents believe that domestic work in a city is a better opportunity than suffering poverty back at home.

6) Women Slavery

The woman of a slave girl was authorized, in case of her running, stealing or disseminating any rumor about him to beat her down, pull and drag her by hair, tie her, and set her again to work as a slave. If she did not obey his orders the owner could kick her and beat her with sticks till she was killed and this would not be an act of guilt for the master. There are numerous other such examples about the cruel trouncing, or whipping which the slave received. The slave girls are asked to serve their masters throughout their life, which is a compulsory binding. Janma Grahaka is the term assigned to a

purchaser of a lifelong slave and his rights over the life of the slave. It is also interesting to note that here that the text does not have any reference or provision about the manumission of slaves.

7) Poverty

Poverty is the main reason for many evil practices prevailing in the society and a person can be under compulsion to work as a domestic aid if he is penury. It is not that he wants to work as a domestic aid, but the circumstances are such that he was compelled to work and there is no way out of the situation. The masters also exploits this aspect as they know very well that poverty may compel him to work for even very less amount as wages and they live in perpetual state of exploitation. With very little financial resources and no money to provide education or skill to support, or any member decently earning for them, many rural families push their children to work in urban households and dhabas from a tender age itself.

6. CONCLUSION:

Undenably, domestic labour is one of the oldest and one of the most important occupations for many females in many countries including India. It is linked to the global history of slavery, colonialism and other forms of servitude. In its contemporary manifestations, domestic work is a global phenomenon that perpetuates hierarchies based on race, ethnicity, indigenous status, caste and nationality. In eastern and western countries, the historical evolution of domestic work can be traced back to the early days of human civilization. As one group conquered another, there arose inferior classes like slaves or serfs who were deprived of civil rights as members of the community.

7. REFERENCES:

- 1) National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector,-Report on the Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganised Sector 154 (Government of India, August, 2007).
- 2) S.C. Srivastava, Legal protection and Social Security in Unorganised Sector, 10 (Bookline, New Delhi, 2017)
- 3) International Labour Organisation, -Persisting Servitude and Gradual Shifts Towards Recognition and Dignity of Labour – A Study of employers of domestic workers in Delhi and Mumbai|| (ILO Decent Work Team for South Asia and Country Office for India, 2017)
- 4) POSH (2013) here means-the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (Act No. 14 of 2013)
- 5) National Human Rights Commission of India, A Report on Trafficking in Women and Children in India 2002-2003, (2004).
- 6) Basudh Chattopadhyay, "Why Do Women Migrate? Some Answers by Rural-Urban Female Migrants", Vol XXV No.1 Urban India, 75 (2005).
- 7) Lekhapaddhati, C. D. Dalal and G. K. Shirgondkar, Gaekwad's Oriental Series. No. 19, G. K., Central Library, Baroda, 1925, pp. 45-47.
- 8) Vyavaharamayukha of Nilkantha Bhatt, trans. by P. V. Kane, Stokes Whitley, Vidya Prasarak Mandal, Thane, 2014, p. 114..
- 9) Madatithi on Manu, IX, Manusmrti with the Manubharya of Medaishi, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1999, p. 143.