CHAPTER: 1
INTRODUCTION

The paid domestic work has become a focal point in research under labour economics, feminist stream of thought, law and public policy. The recent developments in this field of enquiry, like the burgeoning employment in the sector, the setting of international labour standard for domestic workers, the formalization of paid domestic work relations in some countries and the rising national and international activism has further accentuated the potential of domestic work as a promising research area. Paid domestic work has featured as an important theme in the following fields-

**Labour Economics** - An increasing incidence of paid domestic labour as a source of employment in the informal economy has been a point of intense academic and practical interest under labour economics. The extent of employment, wages, work conditions, migration and other labour market issues are of central importance in this regard. (Kundu 2008, Neetha N. 2004 Shashibala 2010) A branch of labour economics dealing with trade unions has also found its connection to domestic workers as the unions world over have started organizing informal workers in general and domestic workers in particular. The incidence of domestic workers organizing into their own non traditional forms of organizations at local, national and global level is also on the rise and offers a fertile ground for research. (Bonner2010, Mather 2012)

**Feminist Economics** – The engagement of feminist economics with domestic work goes back to the 1970s. The gendered notion of woman as a natural provider of household services has been challenged by feminists. The chief plank on which their engagement with domestic work rests is that the women’s work
inside the house, often treated as unproductive work, is actually the work that sustains the productive economy by sustaining the productive labour. Hence, the feminists argue, woman’s labour inside the household must be recognized and paid for. In fact, non payment of such work amounts to exploitation and creation of surplus value out of woman’s labour. This line of reasoning work well for situations where the male dominated capitalist production system exploits and fails to recognize the unpaid domestic work put in by the women. The argument, however, runs into trouble when the question is that of a woman hiring another woman for doing the menial, physically demanding and cumbersome household tasks. In such scenario, the gender based typical feminist argument takes a backseat and other issues like appropriate valuation of domestic work, the class, the caste and the race hierarchy prevailing upon the organization of paid domestic work come to the forefront. (Cock 1981, Anderson 2000, Lutz 2002)

**Law and Public Policy**- The attention of researchers in this field has to be attributed to the absence of legal measures in the field of paid domestic work. In spite of the fact that millions of workers worldwide are employed as domestic workers, an effective coverage under national laws is missing for many of them. The specificity of domestic work, especially the workplace being a household, has contributed to the gaps in the legal coverage of domestic work. In the recent past, the international labour standard setting for domestic work has inspired a series of legislations concerning domestic work across the nations. In countries where the legal and protective mechanisms are in place, research has taken place into the efficacy of such measures in enhancing the welfare of domestic workers. A strong demand for public policy on the social security for domestic workers has also emerged globally. The mechanisms,

The present study attempts to examine and relate three concepts namely the women domestic workers, women’s autonomy and the role of domestic worker’s organizations in enhancing the autonomy of their members.

1.1 Domestic work and Domestic Worker -

1.1.1 Terminology and Definition of Domestic Work and Domestic Worker

Use of terminology in respect of domestic work and domestic worker is a critical point. As the ILO report (ILO 2010) puts it, "...the language surrounding this occupation has varied greatly over time and according to geographical and cultural context. Their meaning can therefore vary from one country to another". The report uses the term ‘domestic worker’ with a claim that archaic terms of “maid” and “servant” clearly imply direct subservience and the shift to the term “worker” is particularly significant for the ILO, which is responsible for improving the conditions of all workers. In India the terms like maidservant, kamwali, molkarin and bai are often used which are derogatory, gender specific and imply subordination. Hence, a shift in the terminology towards a dignified designation that will underline the status of being a ‘worker’ is required. The lawmakers, activists and various organizations working for domestic workers in India have used the terms domestic worker and Gharelu Kamgar (Household Worker) while framing the draft bills and legislations.

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1 ILO (2010) Decent Work for Domestic Workers Report IV (1) pp 15
While presenting a survey of definitions of domestic work and domestic worker in various countries, ILO report (ILO 2010) comments that "...the definition of occupational categories and tasks is far from airtight, and that one of the characteristics of domestic workers in many parts of the world is that the jobs they are called upon to perform in private households are difficult to delineate."\(^2\)

However, there are some common elements found in the definitions examined in the report. Those are – domestic work refers to the work performed in or for the household; excluding assistance with commercial or “professional” activities i.e. it is not used in a lucrative profession for the employer.

Some of the definitions of domestic work and domestic worker are as follows:

The National Campaign Committee for Unorganized Sector Workers (2008) has proposed the following definition- "Domestic Worker" means a person between the age of 15 and 60 years working in any domestic employments, directly or through any agency or contractor whether exclusively for one employer or in a group or otherwise one or more employers whether simultaneously or otherwise and includes a casual or temporary domestic worker, migrant worker but does not include - any member of the family of an employer”.

The Maharashtra Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act, 2008 defines domestic work and domestic worker as- "domestic work " means household work like sweeping, cleaning utensils, washing clothes, cooking and such other manual work as is mutually agreed between the employer and domestic worker carried out at the work place ; and "domestic worker " means a worker who is engaged for doing domestic work; "work

\(^2\) Ibid pp 32
place" means any residential bungalow, wada, house, flat, palace, villa or such other premises, including precinct thereof, in which or in any part of which, any domestic work is being or is ordinarily carried on.

According to **Domestic Workers Welfare and Social Security Act (2010)** proposed by National Commission for Women - “Domestic Worker” means, a person who is employed for remuneration whether in cash or kind, in any house hold ‘or similar establishments’ through any agency or directly, either on a temporary or contract basis or permanent, part time or full time to do the household or allied work and includes a “Replacement worker” who is working as a replacement for the main workers for a short and specific period of time as agreed with the main worker;

Explanation: household and allied work includes but is not limited to activities such as cooking or a part of it, washing clothes or utensils, cleaning or dusting of the house, driving, caring/nursing of the children/sick/old/mentally challenged or disabled persons.

The **Domestic Worker Rights Campaign (2010)** provides a more elaborate definition - “Domestic Worker” means a person employed directly or through any agency, for wages, in any private dwelling to do any work, skilled, unskilled, and includes-

(i) any worker, who engages in domestic work in the household for remuneration- whether woman or man, stay-in (who lives on the premises of the employer), night worker (who is employed to perform work after 20:00 and before 06:00 the next day only for special type of agreed upon work at night) or live-out, local or migrant, on a full-time (8 hours of work) or part-time (not more than 5 hours of work) basis or as part of contracted work - provided that domestic work is the primary source of income;

(ii) Any remunerated work performed in a household other than
one's own for the employer and immediate members of the household; (iii) Household work refers to housekeeping, cleaning, marketing, care work for the elderly and children other than nursing, cooking, laundry and related household chores NOT done for commercial purposes.

The **Domestic Workers Task Force Report (2011)** defines a domestic worker as follows: the domestic worker means, a person who is employed for remuneration whether in cash or kind, in any household through any agency or directly, either on a temporary or permanent, part time or full time basis to do the household work, but does not include any member of the family of an employer.

The **ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (C189)**, defines “domestic work” and “domestic workers” in Article 1 as follows:

(a) the term “domestic work” means work performed in or for a household or households;

(b) the term “domestic worker” means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship;

(c) a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker.

The ILO definition stresses upon the continuous nature of the work as an occupation and thereby emphasizes upon existence of an employment relationship and excludes sporadic work.

The following aspects of domestic work emerge from the above definitions-

1. Domestic worker is employed by the household either directly or through an agency
2. The household is considered as the workplace
3. The work performed by the domestic workers must not bring any pecuniary gains to the employer
4. The work done by family members in not included in Domestic Work.

1.1.2 Classification of Domestic Work
The classifications of domestic work at the international and national level are discussed below. Domestic work is classified on the basis of –
1. the tasks performed
2. the industry of employment.

1. Task based classification-
The International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) identifies following categories of occupations that can be measured under domestic work:

**Domestic work according to the ISCO-1988**-
- Classification 5 of ISCO-1988 addresses commercial establishments, institutions and private households. It covers two key categories:
  - Minor group 512, which includes housekeepers and related workers and cooks; Housekeeping under classification 5121 emphasizes the supervisory work of the housekeeper.
  - Minor group 513 includes personal care and related workers, including childcare workers and home-based personal care workers.
  - Classification 5131 defines childcare workers as those who “take care of employers’ children and oversee their daily activities” and considers an elaborate list of tasks. ¹
  - Home-based personal care workers under classification 5133 “attend to various personal needs and in general provide personal care for persons in need of such care at their own homes because of physical or mental illness or disability or because of impairment due to old age”. ¹¹
• Classification 913 covers “domestic and related helpers, cleaners and launderers”.
• The classification 9131 includes domestic helpers and cleaners who sweep, vacuum, clean, wash and polish, take care of household linen, purchase household supplies, prepare food, serve meals and perform various other domestic duties.

**Domestic work according to the ISCO-2008**
• Minor group 512 - Cooks;
• Unit group 5120 Cooks Tasks- organize, plan, prepare and cook meals in private households.
• Minor group 515 Building and Housekeeping Supervisors;
• Unit Group 5152 Domestic Housekeepers. Domestic Housekeepers organize, supervise and carry out housekeeping functions in private households and small accommodations or establishments with or without the support of subordinate staff.iii
• Sub Major Group 53 Personal Care Workers;
• Minor group 531 Child Care Workers and Teachers’ Aides;
• Unit Group 5311 Child Care Workers who provide care and supervision for children in residential homes and in before school, after school, vacation and day care centres.iv
• Unit Group 5322 Home Based Personal Care Workers-who provide routine personal care and assistance with activities of daily living to persons who are in need of such care due to effects of aging illness injury and other physical and mental conditions in private homes and other independent residential settingsv.
• Sub Major Group 91 Cleaners and Helpers;
• Minor Group 911 Domestic Hotel and Office Cleaners and Helpers;
• Unit Group 9111 includes Domestic Cleaners and Helpersvi.
National Classification of Occupations (NCO) 2004 in India classifies domestic work under following categories.

5121.20 House Keeper [Domestic]
5121.40 Governess
5121.90 Housekeepers and Related Workers, other
5122.30 Cook, Domestic
5123.30 Bearer; Waiter (Domestic)
5131.20 Ayah; Nurse Maid (Domestic)
5131.30 Child Care Worker

5133 Home- based personal care workers who attend to various personal needs and in general provide personal care for persons in need of such care at their own homes because of physical or mental illness or disability or because of impairment due to old age.

9131 Domestic Helpers and Cleaners
Domestic helpers and cleaners sweep, vacuum-clean, wash and polish, take care of household linen, purchase household supplies, prepare food, serve meals and perform various other domestic duties.

9131.10 Domestic Servant performs general house-hold duties and attends to personal comforts of master or employer. Performs domestic work of routine nature such as sweeping and dusting of rooms and furniture, making beds, serving meals, purchasing vegetables, meat, fish etc. from market, storing water and doing odd jobs. Prepares tea, coffee and meals; Lays table, cleans soiled and used plates and cooking utensils. May wash clothes and look after tamed animals such as cow, dog, etc. May look after children.

2. Industry based classification of domestic work

- Under Section P of the International Standard Classification of industries (ISCI) revision 3, Division 95 includes Private households with employed persons.
• Under Section P of the International Standard Classification of Industries (ISCI) revision 3.1, Division 95/ Group 950/ Class 9500 includes the activities of households as employers of domestic personnel such as maids, cooks, waiters, valets, butlers, laundresses, gardeners, gatekeepers, stable-lads, chauffeurs, caretakers, governesses, babysitters, tutors, secretaries etc. It allows the domestic personnel employed to state the activity of their employer in censuses or studies, even though the employer is an individual. The product, which is self-consumed, is considered non-market and assessed according to the cost of the personnel in the national accounts. These services cannot be provided by companies.

• Under International Standard Classification of Industries (ISCI) Revision 4, Section T includes Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services-producing activities of households for own use, under which group 97/ class 970 /subclass 9700 include activities of households as employers of domestic personnel. This class includes activities of households as employers of domestic personnel such as maids, cooks, waiters, valets, butlers, laundresses, gardeners, gatekeepers, stable-lads, chauffeurs, caretakers, governesses, babysitters, tutors, secretaries etc. It allows the domestic personnel employed to state the activity of their employer in censuses or studies, even though the employer is an individual. The product produced by this activity is consumed by the employing household. This class excludes provision of services such as cooking, gardening etc. by independent service providers (companies or individuals).

• In India section P, Division 95 of the National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2004, relates to activities of private households as employers of domestic staff. More specifically, Group 950/ Class 9500/ Subclass 95000 include activities of
private households as employers of domestic staff. This includes the activities of private households as employers of domestic personnel such as maids, cooks, waiter, valets butlers, laundresses, gardeners, gate-keepers, stable-lads, chauffeurs, care-takers, governesses, babysitters, tutors, secretaries etc. It allows the domestic personal employed to state the activity of their employer in censuses or studies, even though the employer is an individual. The product, which is self consumed, is considered non-market and assessed according to the cost of personnel in the national account. These services cannot be provided by companies.

- As per National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2008, Section T relates to activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods and services-producing activities of households for own use. Under this section, Division 97/ Group 970/ Class 9700/ Subclass 97000 include activities of households as employers of domestic personnel. This class includes activities of private households as employers of domestic personnel such as maids, cooks, waiter, valets butlers, laundresses, gardeners, gate-keepers, chauffeurs, care-takers, governesses, babysitters, tutors, secretaries etc. It allows the domestic personnel employed to state the activity of their employer in censuses or studies, even though the employer is an individual. The product produced by this activity is consumed by the employing household.

- In order to identify certain category of workers separately, the NIC-2004 industry class code 9500 (Division 95) is split into various occupational sub-classes in NSSO surveys.\textsuperscript{\textnormal{xv}}

1.1.3 The Functional Categories of Domestic Workers
The functional categories of domestic workers include the housemaids who are engaged in household chores of cleaning
and laundry, cooks, care givers (child care and care for the aged) and others which include gardeners, driver, gatekeepers etc.

Domestic workers are further classified as the ‘Live-in’ (who live in the house of the employer and are available for work at all hours) and the ‘Live-out’ (who do not live in the house of the employer and have an independent dwelling.)

The ‘Live out’ category is further classified as Full Time and Part Time workers. The full time domestic workers work at a single household for the whole day while the part time workers work at multiple households for specific jobs.

Chen (2011) has presented a typology of domestic workers based on their employment arrangements and employment status.

Based on their employment arrangements, domestic workers can be classified as follows:

Domestic workers may be hired by the employing households directly leading to a bi-lateral relationship which is often informal, personal and unequal. They also may be recruited by a third party agency or contractor, which could be a public, private for profit, or private non-profit agency. In such cases, the agency or contractor recruits the domestic worker and negotiates the contract with the employer. As a result, the employer-employee relationship becomes tripartite, more formal and less personal.

Domestic workers may work for a single household or multiple employers.

The work arrangement that involves working at the same household for the entire duration of work day is called full-time as against the part-time arrangement wherein the domestic worker performs designated tasks in several households.
Based on the living arrangements of the domestic workers, they are classified as live-in workers who reside in the same household of the employer as against the live-out workers who return to their own dwelling after completing the work. Domestic workers working in their own country are referred to as resident while those working in other countries are migrant domestic workers. In some cases the resident and work status of the domestic workers is tied with the employer for example, by migrant visa.
Domestic workers may be performing single task e.g. cooking as against multiple tasks.

1.1.4 Size and Growth of Domestic Work
According to the ILO (2013) estimates, at least 52.6 million men and women were employed as domestic workers across the world in 2010. This sector grew significantly over the 15 years from 1995 to 2010 by almost 20 million and accounted for 1.7 per cent of global employment in 2010.
Asia and the Pacific region is the region with the largest number of domestic workers. This region accounted for approximately 21.5 million people who are employed by private households in 2010 up from 13.8 million in 1995. Domestic workers in China and India make up a significant proportion of the regional total. For India, an ILO analysis based on the National Sample Survey (2004-05) found that the number of persons employed by private households was 4.2 million, or about 1 per cent of total employment. However, the ILO report underlines the variations in estimates of domestic workers in India. It points out that the unofficial estimates range widely (from 2.5 million to 90 million) and even official statistics based on surveys conducted in 2009-10 produce somewhat contradictory results. The report adds that according to the 66th round of the National Sample
Survey (2009-10), only 0.8 per cent of all employed persons fell under Section P "Activities of private households as employers". By comparison, the Employment and Unemployment Survey (2010) found that 2.7 per cent of all employed persons were employed by private households as maids, watchmen or cooks. The Task Force on Domestic Workers (2011) also admits to the variation in estimates on domestic workers by different agencies, from 4.75 million according to NSSO 2004-05 to 6.4 million according to Census 2001. The task force also directs attention to the fact that domestic work has been growing at an astounding rate of 222% since 1999-2000 in India. The task force commented that data on domestic work may be underreported because of several reasons, the main being domestic work not treated as 'real' work leading to large instances of undeclared work, and secondly, domestic work can be a part time occupation, with workers taking up other seasonal occupations.

Neetha N. (2009) has projected the number of workers employed in private households as domestic workers to be 4.75 million based on unit level data of NSSO (2004-05). G. Raveendran (Vanek et al 2012) has arrived at a revised estimate of 5.2 million domestic workers in India after reanalyzing the NSSO (2004-05) data using a combination of national occupational codes, place of work and informal employment codes.

The National Platform for Domestic Workers (2013a), a national forum, in its petition to the Parliament has stated that a reliable

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4 Report of the Task Force on Domestic Workers pp 24
estimate of domestic workers in India is between 40 to 50 million.

1.1.5 Women and Domestic Work
ILO report (2013) states that women account for 83 % of all domestic workers worldwide, making it a heavily female dominated sector. Women domestic workers outnumber men in all countries and in every region of the world. Women’s share among domestic workers ranges from approximately 63 per cent in the Middle East to 92 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. This makes domestic work a particularly significant source of wage employment for women. Globally, one in every 13 female wage workers is a domestic worker (or 7.5 per cent), and the ratio is as high as one in four in Latin America and the Caribbean (26.6 per cent) and almost one in three in the Middle East (31.8 per cent).

In Asia and Pacific, like in other parts of the world, the sector is female-dominated where four out of five domestic workers are women (81.4 per cent). The domestic work sector employs more than 3 per cent of all paid employees in the region and approximately 7.8 per cent of all women in paid employment. Based on the larger proportion of women in this sector, the Task Force on Domestic Workers describes domestic work as the largest female occupation in Urban India. According to Neetha N. (2009)\(^6\), the female share in the various occupational categories is found to be highest among ‘maids and related housekeeping service workers’, accounting for 91 per cent of the category.

Chandrashekhar and Ghosh (2012) have underlined the trend of rising female participation in paid domestic work in India.

Through the decade of 2000s, 75 per cent of the increase in the total number of domestic workers was accounted for by women. Share of domestic work as a proportion of total urban women workers has also risen from 5.2% in 1999-2000 to 7.1% in 2009-10, thereby accounting for 14.4% of increase in all women workers.

Neetha N. (2013) has stated that the number of women employed in the subcategories of housemaid/servant, cook, and governess/babysitter within the industrial category of “private households with employed persons” is 1.83 million as per the 2009-10 employment data, indicating more than fourfold increase over the 10-year period from 1999-2000. The share of female workers in this category has also remained as high as 68%.

1.1.6 Child domestic workers

The international standards define the target population for measuring the child labour as “all persons in the age group from 5 to 17 years”. Under this framework, the term “child domestic work” refers to children aged 5 to 17 who are engaged to perform domestic tasks in the home of a third party or employer (with or without remuneration). It is therefore considered as an economic activity or a subset of children in employment. Based on this definition, ILO’s Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour used a task-based approach to identify child domestic workers. The results show that at least 15.5 million children aged 5 to 17 years were engaged in domestic work across the world in 2008. This includes an estimated 3.5 million children aged 5 to 11 years and 3.8 million

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children between the ages of 12 and 14 years working as domestic workers.  

1.1.7 Nature of work- work like any other, work like no other
One of the distinct features of paid domestic work is that the place of work is a private household which leads to the tendency to perceive it as something other than employment. The paternalistic relationship exhibited often in the form of claims that the domestic workers are “like one of the family” essentially reflect the master servant relationship. Domestic work is often perceived as a “status” which attaches to the person performing the work, defines him or her and limits all future options. These aspects of paid domestic work make a strong case for specific legislation and suitable implementation and inspection criteria. While recognizing that the paid domestic work exhibits the unique characteristics stated above, it is to be appreciated that the domestic workers must be acknowledged as real workers in order to encompass them in the general legislative framework. Thus, the personal character of domestic work should be taken into account without compromising the existence of an employment relationship. That is the essence of the phrase- ‘work like any other, work like no other’

1.1.8 International migration, Domestic Work and Human Rights issues
Domestic work is closely interlinked with international migration. Asia has substantial migration within the region, as well as beyond their region’s borders, in particular to the Middle East and to developed economies in Europe and North America.

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International migrant domestic workers, particularly irregular and undocumented migrant domestic workers often accept longer hours, lower wages, more work and, in general, conditions of employment more favorable to the employer. Their precarious legal status, their lack of knowledge of the local language and the laws creates a highly informal employment relationship making them dependent on their employer. Human Rights Watch (2006) claims that, the domestic workers around the world, almost without exception, suffered from some form of psychological abuse. Verbal abuse—harsh insults, threats and belittlement—often accompanies physical abuse and takes place in an overall context of excessive workloads, sleep deprivation, insufficient or poor quality food and substandard living conditions. This treatment reinforces employers’ domination and control over domestic workers, making them less likely to resist or seek redress for abusive employment conditions.

The ILO (2012) estimates that there are 20.9 million victims of forced labour worldwide, with domestic work one of the most frequently cited economic sectors.

1.1.9 Limited legal coverage

According to the ILO report (2010), domestic workers are one of the least protected groups of workers under national labour legislation. Inadequacies in national legislation are particularly evident with respect to the coverage of domestic workers by minimum wages, limitation of working hours, inclusion in social security schemes and measures to ensure occupational safety and health. The ILO report (2013) presents the coverage of domestic workers under national legislation for 70 countries. It states that only about 10 per cent of the world’s domestic workers, i.e.
5.3 million are covered by general labour laws to the same extent as other workers. On the other hand, more than a quarter of domestic workers – 29.9 per cent, or 15.7 million – are completely excluded from the scope of national labour laws. About 25.1 million domestic workers (or 47.8 per cent of the total), are covered partly by general labour laws and partly by subordinate regulations or specific labour laws. About 1.5 million domestic workers (or 2.8 per cent of the total) are covered only by subordinate regulations or specific labour laws, while 5 million domestic workers (or 9.5 per cent of the total), who live in federal countries, are protected by provisions that differ between different states.

In Asia, 61 per cent of domestic workers remain outside the scope of labour legislation. In Hong Kong (China) and Sri Lanka, domestic workers are covered by general labour laws, while in Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, some provisions of the general labour laws apply to domestic workers. In India, some states have enacted provisions that regulate some aspects of domestic workers’ working conditions like minimum wage while a central legislation remains long awaited.

No upper limit on normal weekly hours exists in national legislation for more than half of the world’s domestic workers (29.7 million, or 56.6 per cent). At a regional level, the coverage is weakest in Asia and the Middle East, where statutory limitations on the normal weekly working time of domestic workers are almost universally absent.

About 44.9 per cent of all domestic workers, or 23.6 million worldwide, are not entitled to any weekly rest under national legislation. Most of them live in Asia and the Middle East: in both regions, only a small fraction of domestic workers are entitled to a weekly day of rest under national legislation, namely domestic workers in Iran and Jordan.
Domestic workers are frequently excluded from minimum wage coverage – despite the fact that some form of minimum wage legislation is almost universally in place e.g. in Japan and the Republic of Korea, the Minimum Wage Act exclude domestic workers from their scope. In Indonesia, the minimum wage legislation excludes private households as employers. These exemptions cause a significant gap in protection. About 21.5 million domestic workers are not covered in countries where there are minimum wage regulations in place. In total, some 22.4 million domestic workers (or 42.6 per cent of the total) are not entitled to any minimum wage, and are therefore left vulnerable to abusive wage practices.

15.6 million women employed by private households (or 35.9 per cent of the total) have no legal entitlement to maternity leave at all. In Asia, three out of four domestic workers lack the right to take maternity leave. Some 39.6 per cent of all women domestic workers (or 17.3 million) are not entitled to maternity cash benefits and such entitlements are absent in the Middle East, and more than three-quarters of domestic workers in Asia are excluded from any entitlements.

1.2 Women’s Autonomy

Women’s autonomy in decision making has been a well explored concept involving discussion of the following factors:

- Autonomy involves access to and control over resources (physical, human, intellectual, financial,) and ideology (values, beliefs, and attitudes,)
- Resources such as education and employment can be regarded as “enabling factors” that can foster an empowerment process and enhance autonomy.
- A related concept is women’s agency, i.e., women themselves have a right to make choices and should be
involved in determining which choices make the most sense for them and their families.

- Another critical factor is the multidimensional character of the concept of autonomy.

Some of the definitions and discussions are presented below.

Dixon (1978) defines autonomy as "the degree of women's access to and control over material resources (including food, income, land, and other forms of wealth) and to social resources (including knowledge, power, and prestige) within the family, in the community, and in the society at large".

Dyson & Moore (1983) define female autonomy as the capacity to manipulate one's personal environment. Autonomy indicates the ability-technical, social, and psychological-to obtain information and to use it as the basis for making decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates.

Keller and Mbwewe (1991) describe empowerment as "a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination".

According to United Nations (1995) "the empowerment and autonomy of women and improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is highly important end in itself. Improving the status of women also enhances their decision-making capacity at all levels in all spheres of life. The full participation and partnership of both women and men is required in productive and reproductive life, including shared

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responsibility for the care and nurturing of children and maintenance of the household"^{11}

Rowlands (1995) relates the meaning of 'empowerment' to the user's interpretation of power. In the conventional sense, empowerment must be about bringing people who are outside the decision-making process into it. It is about individuals being able to maximise the opportunities available to them without or despite constraints of structure and State; empowerment also includes access to intangible decision-making processes. It is concerned with the processes by which people become aware of their own interests and how those relate to those of others, in order to participate from a position of greater strength in decision-making and actually to influence such decisions. In the economic sphere, this ascribes an element of centrality to the access to markets and incomes that enable people to participate in economic decision-making.

An important aspect of autonomy i.e. its multi dimensional character has been explored by Malhotra and Mather (1997). Differences in the nature and determinants of the financial as opposed to the social and organizational dimension of power in Sri Lankan households have been reported. Women who control one of these aspects of family decisions do not necessarily control the other. It is also concluded that, while education and employment play an important role in determining women's input in financial decisions, they are largely immaterial in determining household decisions related to social and organizational matter.

Jejeebhoy (2000) considers autonomy and empowerment as more or less equal terms, and defines both in terms of women

“gaining control of their own lives vis-a-vis family, community, society, markets.”

Casique (2000) opines that wife's autonomy refers to a married woman's ability to perform a given activity without needing her husband's consent.

Jejeebhoy & Sathar (2001) define autonomy as the control women have over their own lives—the extent to which they have an equal voice with their husbands in matters affecting themselves and their families, control over material and other resources, access to knowledge and information, the authority to make independent decisions, freedom from constraints on physical mobility, and the ability to forge equitable power relationships within families.

Malhotra et al (2002) have identified six dimensions of autonomy/empowerment including economic, socio cultural, familial/interpersonal, legal, political and psychological dimensions that can be gauged at household and community level as well as regional/national level. It is also argued that the multi-dimensional nature of the autonomy, the correlation among these and the explanatory variables that influence the different dimensions differently must be taken into account while measuring autonomy.

For Anderson and Iswaran (2005), female autonomy is typically defined as the ability of women to make choices/decisions within the household relative to their husbands'.

According to Basu and Koolwal (2005), autonomy encapsulates a woman's ability to take charge of things in general and their own lives in particular. Further, autonomy is defined as an expansion of choices and freely made choices.

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Kabeer (2005) analyses empowerment and autonomy in terms of the ability to make choices. To be disempowered means to be denied choice, while empowerment refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. Further, a real choice constitutes presence of alternatives and awareness about the existence of alternatives.

Kabeer further explores the concept of empowerment through three interrelated dimensions viz agency, resources, and achievements. Agency represents the processes by which choices are made and put into effect. It is hence central to the concept of empowerment. Resources are the medium through which agency is exercised while achievements refer to the outcomes of agency. Agency in relation to empowerment, therefore, implies not only actively exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenge power relations. Perceived in this sense, agency comes close to the term autonomy. Kabeer also distinguishes between 'passive' forms of agency i.e. action taken in the absence of choice, and 'active' agency or purposeful behaviour. There is also a further important distinction between greater 'effectiveness' of agency, and agency that is 'transformative'. The former relates to women's greater efficiency in carrying out their given roles and responsibilities, the latter to their ability to act on the restrictive aspects of these roles and responsibilities in order to challenge them.

1.3 Organising as a Critical Factor

The trend of informalization of labour witnessed in the post liberalization years has expedited the transfer of jobs from protected to unprotected categories and heightened the need for union protection for the vulnerable sections of informal workers. The organizing of informal workers is expected to address and to
some extent ameliorate the decent work deficits in informal economy by creating visibility, voice and representation for the labour in informal employment. For women, who form a disproportionately large section of informal employment, organizing can indeed serve as a catalyst for improving work conditions as well as empowerment in a broader sense. As Ella Bhat puts it- "When women organise on the basis of work, a woman's self-esteem grows - in the self-recognition that she is a 'worker', a 'producer', an active contributor to the national income, and not only somebody's wife, mother or daughter. While participating in the organisation and management of her cooperative or union, her self confidence and competence grow, a sense of responsibility grows, leadership within her grows."\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Chen et al (2007)} state the need and rationale for creating and expanding membership based organizations of the poor in the following way- "...that the poor need to be organized, need to be recognized, and need to have a "seat at the (policy) table."\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Kaye Broadbent and Michele Ford (2008)} present an array of case studies on women organizing themselves into unions and other forms of organizations despite the numerous economic, political, structural, religious, cultural and social obstacles faced by women workers in Asia. It is claimed that a critical mass of women workers is vitally concerned with work-related issues and interested in actively pursuing these issues through mainstream mixed unions, women-only unions or non-union organizations such as NGOs.

\textbf{Hill (2010)} shows union membership to be the pivotal experience around which workers exchange a language of fear,

\textsuperscript{13} Chen et al (2005a) Towards Economic Freedom: The Impact of SEWA, pp.1
\textsuperscript{14} Chen et al eds (2007), Membership-Based Organizations of the Poor, Routledge New York; pp 5
anxiety and exclusion for the language of happiness and well-being. Membership eliminated fear from the lives of informal sector workers and produced positive change in how respondents felt about themselves and their freedom to engage in the institutions that shape their well-being and security.

Gallin (2011) has stated that trade unions were, and still are, self-help organizations of workers who, through collective action, seek to regulate their wages and working conditions so as to eliminate the worst forms of exploitation. This in fact amounts to first steps towards formalizing an informal situation. He adds that an "incredible sense of freedom" – that is what organizing is all about.\(^\text{15}\)

The preceding sections have outlined the three concepts that are central to the present research study viz. the domestic workers, the autonomy in decision making and the organizing of domestic workers into membership based organizations. The study aims at exploring the three concepts and their interrelationship. The objectives and hypotheses of the research are as follows.

**1.4 Objectives of the Research**

1. To understand the specific as well as general socio-economic conditions of women domestic workers in Pune city.
2. To evaluate the extent of freedom of decision making/autonomy by women domestic workers in Pune city.
3. To study the role of domestic workers’ organizations in the betterment of women domestic workers in Pune city.
4. To bring about a comparison between organized domestic workers and unorganized domestic workers in Pune city.

1.5 Hypotheses
1. The extent of autonomy in decision making of women domestic workers in Pune city depends on education, age and family structure.
2. The extent of autonomy in decision making of women domestic workers in Pune city depends on income levels and locality.
3. The working of domestic workers’ associations in Pune has been instrumental in bringing about progressive changes in work conditions of women domestic workers in Pune city.
4. The organized women domestic workers exercise better autonomy in decision making as compared to the unorganized ones.

1.6 Data and Methodology
Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the following research methodology is to be adopted.

- The part-time, live-out women domestic workers are to be covered under the study.
- The geographical limits for the study are set in terms of Pune Municipal Corporation limits.
- In the absence of any official data on domestic workers in Pune city, a sample size of 600 is aimed at based on discussions with and opinions from the experts in the field.
- It is to be ensured that the sample is geographically representative of Pune city.
- In order to identify the sample for the study, a simple random method is to be used.
- For collection of data, interview method using a questionnaire is to be adopted.
• The data collected is to be analysed with the help of suitable statistical techniques.

Notes:

1 Tasks include (a) assisting children to bath, dress and feed themselves; (b) taking children to and from school or outdoors for recreation; (c) playing games with children, or entertaining children by reading or storytelling; (d) maintaining order in children’s bedrooms and playrooms; (e) taking care of schoolchildren at lunch or other school breaks; (f) taking care of schoolchildren on excursions, museum visits and similar outings; (g) performing related tasks; (h) supervising other workers.

2 Tasks include (a) assisting persons in getting into and out of bed and making the appropriate change in dress; (b) changing bed linen and helping persons with their bath and toilet; (c) serving food – prepared by them or others – and feeding persons needing help; (d) giving or ensuring that persons take the necessary medicaments; (e) watching for any sign of deterioration in the person’s health and informing the relevant medical doctor or social services; (f) performing related tasks; (g) supervising other workers.

3 Tasks include- Supervising workers employed in households as domestic staff; Purchasing or controlling the purchase of supplies; Controlling the storage and issue of supplies; Assisting in case of minor injury or illness by performing such tasks as taking temperature, giving medicine and putting on bandages; Sweeping, vacuum cleaning, washing and polishing floors, furniture and other fixtures; Making beds, cleaning bathrooms and supplying towels, soaps and related items; Taking care of household pets and plants, receiving visitors, answering telephones, delivering messages and shopping for groceries; Preparing and cooking meals, setting and clearing tables and serving food and beverages; Cleaning kitchens and generally helping with kitchen work, including dishwashing.

4 Tasks include- Assisting children to wash, dress and feed themselves. Taking children to and from school or outdoors for recreation. Playing games with children or entertaining them by reading or story telling. Assisting in the preparation of materials and equipments for children’s educational and recreational activities. Managing children’s behavior and guiding their social development. Disciplining children and recommending or initiating other measures to control behavior such as caring for own clothing and picking up toys and books. Observing and monitoring children’s play activities. Keeping records on individual children, including daily observations, and information about activities, meals a served and medication administered. Examples of the occupation classified -- baby sitter, child care worker, crèche ayah, family day care worker, nanny, out of school hours care worker.

5 Tasks include- assisting clients with personal and therapeutic care needs such as personal hygiene, feeding, dressing, physical mobility and exercise communication, taking oral medicine and changing dressings, usually according to care plans established by a health professional; maintaining records of client care, changes in condition and responses to care and treatment and reporting concerns or providing referrals to a health or social services professional; positioning and lifting clients with physical mobility challenges, and helping transport them in wheelchairs and motor vehicles; Providing clients and families with emotional support, information and advice on topics such as nutrition, hygiene, exercise, caring for infants or adapting to disability or illness; Maintaining client’s environmental hygiene standards, such as changing bed linen, washing clothes and dishes, and cleaning living quarters; Providing psychological support to clients such as through conversation or reading aloud. Planning, purchasing, preparing or serving meals to meet nutritional requirements or prescribed diet; Providing support to clients and care for the newborns during the postpartum period; scheduling and accompanying clients for appointments with medical doctors and other health professionals, or performing other errands.

6 Tasks include- Sweeping, vacuum cleaning, polishing and washing floors and furniture, or washing windows and other fixtures; Washing, ironing and mending linen and other textiles; Washing dishes; Helping with preparation, cooking and serving of meals and other refreshments; Purchasing food and various other household supplies; Cleaning, disinfecting and deodorizing kitchens bathrooms and toilets; Cleaning windows and other glass surfaces.
organises and supervises work of Domestic Servants for maintaining house in clean and orderly manner. Allots work to various staff under control and supervises their work. Ensures proper maintenance and cleanliness of house. Purchases provisions and other necessities as advised and maintains accounts. Looks after needs and comforts of guests and visitors. May also look after children. May assist in shopping.

Cares for children in private home and looks after their recreation, diet, health and development. Teaches children good health and personal habits and assists them in their studies. Arranges parties, outings and picnics for children. Takes disciplinary measures to control children’s behaviour. Ascertains cause of behaviour problems of children and devises means for solving them. May teach foreign language to children cared for. May be designated as NURSERY GOVERNESS if engaged to care for young children.

Includes other workers who organise, supervise and carry out housekeeping functions in hotels, clubs, boarding schools and other enterprises and institutions and in private households not elsewhere classified.

Prepares and cooks meals in private households. Plans menu according to own judgement or employer’s instructions and prepares vegetables and meats. Cooks food stuffs according to recipes or own judgement. Cleans or supervises cleaning of kitchen and cooking utensils. May serve meals, perform duties of valet and be designated as COOK-BEARER.

Lays tables and serves meals and beverages in private house. Prepares tables for meals by spreading clean linen or plastic cover and placing glasses, condiment-holders, flower-vases, plates and cutlery over it. Places dishes on table in front of persons and serves food and supplies additional food and water when required. Removes soiled dishes from table. Performs other domestic work such as keeping of ward-robos, dressing persons, cleaning clothes, polishing shoes, making beds. May prepare food and clean utensils.

Takes care of children in private households. Attends to the requirements of the children and watches over their activities. Assists children in bathing, dressing and feeding. Takes them out for walks and recreation and plays and exercises with children. Washes their garments. Takes infants out in hand-cart or pram. May perform other house-hold work, not connected with child care. May be known as WET NURSE if she feeds infant with her own milk.

Attends to children at schools, businesses, private households, and child care institutions. Performs a variety of tasks, such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play, supports children’s emotional and social development, encouraging understanding of others and positive self-concepts. Cares for children in institutional setting, such as group homes, nursery schools, private businesses, or schools for the handicapped. Sanitises toys and play equipment. Disciplines children and recommend or initiate other measures to control behavior, such as caring for own clothing and picking up toys and books. Identifies signs of emotional or developmental problems in children and bring them to parents’ or guardians’ attention. Observes and monitors children’s play activities. Keeps records on individual children, including daily observations and information about activities, meals served, and medications administered. Instructs children in health and personal habits such as eating, resting, and toilet habits. Reads to children, and teaches them simple painting, drawing, handicrafts, and songs. Organises and participates in recreational activities, such as games.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housemaid/Servant</td>
<td>95001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>95002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardener</td>
<td>95003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatekeeper/Chowkidar/Watchman</td>
<td>95004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governess/Baby-sitter</td>
<td>95005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>95006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>95007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>95009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, the household as the place of work has been identified and emphasized. NSSO (Schedule 10.2: Employment & Unemployment and Migration Particulars, 64th Round pp c-18; available at http://mospi.nic.in/mospi_new/upload/nsso/ins64_102.pdf accessed 16/5/2013

ILO (2010) “Decent work for Domestic Workers” Report IV (1) illustrates the legal mechanisms for domestic workers across 72 member nations. (Appendix, ILO 2010)