Chapter VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The unorganised sector in India remains intact from all the legal protection and economic benefits enjoyed by the workers in organised sector. A very high proportion of labour are relegated to the background due to their unorganised nature. Women who are bound by the traditional sense of domestic responsibility are concentrated in this sector i.e., Domestic Service. Due to poverty and reasons beyond their control, women from lower economic strata seek employment as servants. For various reasons ranging from personal to social purposes, women were employed in houses for the discharge of domestic work. So Domestic Servants are increasing day by day and forms an integral part of the Society. But the plight of these workers is not up to the mark and constitute the most neglected and exploited chunk of the labour force.

Realising this, the socio-economic conditions of the House wives and Servant maids, employment and working conditions of servant maids and Employer – Employee relations has been studied.
Servant maids started their labour at an early age and the presence of high proportion of young servant maids reveals that economic necessities at this stage of life cycle are more due to the growth of family and general preference for energetic servants by house wives. Contrary to this majority of the House wives are middle or old aged. As at this age, they need more assistance, so they employ servants. As Anantapur is an area of Hindus, most of the Servant maids and House wives were Hindus. However the presence of small percentage of Muslim servants shows that extreme economic necessity compelled them to work leaving their age old customs.

Majority of the Servant maids belong to backward community where as most of the House wives belonged to forward community. It upholds the view that forward communities employ servants who belong to backward community. It also confirms the general opinion that labour hails from the backward community. Though most of the servant maids are married, irrespective of their marital status, all women chose this job, as it is a less strenuous one.
The mean age at marriage of servant maids was found to be 17.47 years which is slightly lower than the mean age at marriage in India (18.32 years). 30.3 per cent of child marriages with regard to servant maids and 21.8 per cent of child marriages with reference to House wives were noticed. It indicates the prevalence of child marriages. The percentage of house wives who married after 20 years are more than their employees which reveals that these women were more influenced by Western values, women's education, dowry system etc., than the servant maids. Most of the respondents marriages were arranged and it shows the general preference for this kind of marriage.

More than four fifth of the servant maids felt that girls should be married between 15-20 years and boys should get marry between 16-25 years, where as House wives expressed marriage age for girls should be between 21-25 years and for boys, it should be above 25 years. Thus the ideal age at marriage for both boys and girls expressed by House wives is more than the Servant maids which may be due to the impact of Western values, increase in importance of education, dowry system etc.
Illiteracy has been rampant among the servant maids whereas most of their employers were literate. Economic and cultural background of House wives makes them to acquire education. But incase of servant maids, ignorance, lack of opportunities to study, restrict them to be more literate. Similarities between the respondents and their families in respect of educational status have been observed. But it is also observed that illiteracy among servant maids is more than the members of their families. It can be partly explained by the fact that servant maids are becoming more conscious about the importance of education and sending their children to schools. It is also noticed higher level of education in the House wife families than the respondent herself, which may be due to higher educational level of their husband and also their children.

Half of the servant maids have migrated to Anantapur with considerable rural background. Uneconomic agricultural land holdings, failure of monsoons and consequent failure of crops, glut in the cottage industries made these people to migrate and get employed as servants. Only 35 per cent of the House wives are migrated. The underlying reasons are business, education etc.
Majority of the servant maids and housewives belonged to Nuclear families which may be due to growing interest in separate families, influence of Western values, separation from the Joint Families in order to secure employment. The mean family size of the servant maid families was found to be 4.5, whereas housewife family size was 4. It shows that Housewives/Husbands have accepted the adoption of Family Planning methods widely compared to the Servant maids/Husbands. The bigger family size and meagre income of the Servant maids makes them still poorer.

According to 1981 census, the sex ratio for the whole country is 935. But this value is slightly less in the present sample (926 for servant maids and 901 for Housewives families). It is also noted that there are more females in servant maid's families than their employers. The presence of more children in Servant maid families than their employers may be attributed to the presence of more young married servant maids than their employers, most of whom were middle aged.

The number of live children born to the servant maids is more than their employers which may be due to ignorance, illiteracy, lack of Family Planing adoption. It is also noticed that the infant mortality is more in case of servant
maids. Lack of nutritious food, ignorance, illiteracy, early age of marriage, frequent pregnancies may be the reasons for the present situation.

Servant maids, frequently suffered from Anaemia and other ailments. General poverty, lack of nutritious food and illiteracy which are the characteristics of low income group have been identified as the main obstacles to their health condition. Majority of Servant maids are making use of the Government Hospitals for consultation and medical treatment. The common diseases of servants are Tuberculosis, Asthma, Epilepsy etc. General Health of most of the House wives was found to be good, which may be due to intake of nutritious food, immediate care by expert doctors, living in healthy environment etc.

Majority of the Servant maids reside in huts, in slum areas; without any basic amenities. The design of their huts is such that it afford bare shelter. Lack of privacy due to over crowding may lead children as social offenders. All the House wives reside in houses with all amenities though there may be some variations according to the differences in their economic status. Housing conditions of both Servant maids and House wives is considered as an indicator of socio-economic status.
Economic background have always been important to the individual and group as well as in interpersonal and inter-group relations. A significant feature of the Servant maid's families was that there were more earners than the dependents. This is but expected in keeping with the labour force participation rate amongst the poorer sections of the society, where as far as possible each one in the family irrespective of age and sex has to work in order to prevent starvation. The fact of fewer dependents per family also enables them to survive at such low wages.

Of the 496 members distributed in 110 families, earners formed 55.5 per cent, whereas 44.5 per cent were dependents. In housewife's families, there were more dependents (61.2 per cent) than the earners. In these families of high economic strata, there is no need for all the members to earn, as one or two members earn sufficient money for all the members. As high level of education make to yield higher income occupations, they spent more time to attain higher education resulting in dependency. If the dependents can be compared to non-earners in the maids families, it is seen that each earner has to support on an average, less than one person (0.84 person) but in Housewife families, each person has to support on an average more than one and a half person (1.58 persons).
Majority of the Servant maid family members were rickshaw pullers, construction workers, petty traders etc. Casual nature of labour their by inconsistent earnings makes them to face many difficulties. The trend however confirms the occupational pattern of the low-economic strata. Occupations in organised sector are under-represented in their families where as most of the House Wife family members have jobs in organised sector followed by business, which put them in high economic strata.

In Servant maids families, the average monthly income per family was found to be Rs.422, average per capita income was Rs.93.6 and income per earner was Rs.171.93. If the per capita income of Rs.88 per month at the 1980 prices was taken to be the poverty line, then all the families were above poverty line. But their income was eroded by price hike. Besides most of them do not get any annual wage increase. Though most of the income was earned from their primary occupations, meagre amount of income is from their secondary occupations.

In the House wife families, the average monthly income per family is found to be Rs.2,864, average per capita income is Rs.711 and the average income per earner is Rs.1831. Most of the income get from their primary occupations.
Most of the servant maids do not possess any assets except small huts, whereas most of the housewives possess land, house, plots etc. Thus the high economic status of the housewife is depicted in the nature and ownership of assets.

The average monthly expenditure of servant maids families and their per capita expenditure was found to be Rs. 433.6 and Rs. 96.16 respectively which was slightly more than their monthly family income and per capita income. It enables them to have deficit budget. The average monthly expenditure of housewives families and their per capita expenditure was Rs. 2979 and Rs. 740 respectively which is more than their monthly income and per capita income which shows that they are under deficit budget. But it is not applicable to all the families as there are more variations in the housewife's family income and expenditure pattern.

Though major income (62.3) was incurred on food in servant maid families, but it was also observed that it is slightly less than the expenditure spent on food in other low-class households. It may be due to the fact that servant maids get some amount of food from their employers house. Next major amount was spent on repaying the loans with high rate of interest as most of the families are in debt. It is
followed by expenditure on alcohol which reveals that most of the male members in the Servant households were addicted to alcohol. Expenditure on clothes is slightly less than their neighbours in the slums. The reason may be that most of them secure free clothes from the housewives.

In housewife's families, the important items of expenditure were food, shelter and clothes. A comparative analysis indicates that the percentage of money spent on food, habits, loan repayment was less in housewife families than the Servants. But expenditure was more on shelter, clothes, education, transportation, buying assets etc., in housewife families. Thus varied expenditure pattern is noticed in both Servant maid and Housewife families because of their economic differences.

Majority of the Servant maids (67.3 per cent) were running under debt, ranging from ₹200 to ₹10,000. Due to addiction to alcohol and other unforeseen expenditure, most of the maids' families were under debt. The most distressing feature of these indebted families is that, majority of them have taken loan on interest ranging from 5 per cent to 12 per cent from money lenders which is really usurious. The rate was sufficiently high to keep the family under constant tension and turmoil. The Servant maids disclosed that every
month they have to pay large sums of money from the wages towards interest and repaying loans. They repay the loans on instalment basis only. The mode of repayment is irregular. Some of them are not in a position to repay the loans due to unavoidable problems. These respondents confessed that it is a "vicious circle" and they have completely failed to plan their family budgets without any debts and these debts continue to chase them for several years. They have taken loans even to clear off their old debts. This experience is more agonising for Servant maids.

Inspite of high income level of House wives, 26.4 per cent of them were under debt which ranges from ₹5,000 to ₹50,000. The reasons are to defray the expenses in connection with marriage, followed by investment in business. However, the rate of interest is low which ranges from ₹1 to ₹3. The analysis contradicts the general opinion that high income group are always under surplus budget. The people of high income strata are also incur loans according to their needs and also to maintain their status. The comparative analysis reveals that the most exploited feature that keeps Servant maids still in low economic status is the high rate of interest to be paid to redeem debts.
The amount of savings are very meagre in Servant maids families which may be due to low income and high cost of living. Where as it is high in House wife families which may be due to their high income level.

Illiteracy, lack of skills, unorganised nature of occupations, inconsistant meagre income, alcoholism, debts high rate of interest are the main reasons for the low economic status of servant maids. Where as occupations in organised sector, business, thus yielding high income, the presence of more assets made the House wife families in high income group.

Working conditions of the Servant maids depends on the socio-economic background of the House wives and also on their nature. The recruitment of maids is mainly on informal basis. Generally, there are two types of Servant maids (a) part-time Servant maids(92.7 per cent), (b) Permanent Servant maids (7.3 per cent).

Though poverty is the general reason put forward by majority of the Servant maids for securing the job, the other important reasons are husband refusing to give money, insufficient income, debts etc. The important reasons for the preference of securing the present job are viz., no other
choice of job, requiring less physical stamina, more secure than other jobs etc. Majority of Servant maids showed interest to work in families which offer more wages/benefits with less work. Usually maids prefer to work in families with less number of persons, as in these kind of families, there will be less work.

Majority of House wives employed Servants to relieve them from the work load and where the work could not be attended to by themselves. Usually House wives prefer young and energetic servants. It is surprising to know that 14.5 per cent of House wives preferred servants of higher caste. It reveals the prevalence of age old caste distinctions.

The working hours vary and much depends on the number of houses and the nature of work. Though the Servant maids work for a limited time with each house wife, their total number of working hours are quite more than those of employers in organised sector. Usually working hours ranges from 6 to 9 hours. Securing employment throughout the year is not a problem to the Servant maid and it invariably depends upon the willingness to do the work.

Wages are the key determinants of the Employee - Employer relations. Cleaning utensils, washing, dusting which are the main duties of the majority of the Servant maids
do not require much time, skill and intelligence. Day long work in several houses fetch them only meagre income. 57.3 per cent of the House wives paid the wages ranging between Rs.20-40, 19.1 per cent paid between Rs.40-50. Half of the Servant maids received only wages ranging between Rs.75 to Rs.125.

The average earning per women in organised sector in 1981 came to be Rs.963 per month where as the women in the unorganised sector earned on the average, Rs.227 per month. When we compare the Servant maids income with this data, it is revealed that only 3.6 per cent of them received wages equal to that of workers in unorganised sector. From this, it is crystal clear that Servant maids are the most exploited, lowest paid employees even in the unorganised sector due to the nature and less significance of duties, inability and unwillingness of the House wives to pay/offer better wages/benefits. 35.5 per cent of the House wives felt that wages paid by them are very high when compared to their ability to pay, where as majority of the Servant maids opined that wages received by them are very low.

Wages received by Servant maids are very less than their counterparts in unorganised sector and also in comparison to their services rendered. But majority of the Servants accepted these wages only because of other benefits. Most of
the servants preferred to do the job because of the left over food which to some extent relieved their children from hunger. The next important benefits are offering old and new clothes, helping at urgent times etc. However most of the Servant maids are dissatisfied about the level of benefits where as the most of the House wives expressed that benefits provided are more than their ability to pay.

The unorganised sector usually, provides only insecure and unprotected employment to women and the nature of grievances of these unorganised labour relates mostly to wages, benefits and the treatment.

The main problems faced with the Servant maids are absenteeism, late coming, not showing interest in work, demanding more wages/benefits. Most of the Servant maids abstain from the job without any specific reason and inorder to pacify the employers, they generally make false excuses. They finish the work in hustle-bustle manner and prefer more wages/benefits for less work on the other hand. The reasons revealed by Servant maids for their late coming or absenteeism are bad health of herself or other members in the family, heavy work load at other employers house. It is understood that most of the Servants turn up for 3 to 6 days in a month.
The other important problem with the Servant maids is turnover. The reason expressed by Servant maids for their turnover are illtreatment, work load, low wages, lack of leave provision, bad health etc.

Low wages, stagnant wages, lack of leave provision cuts in wages, conflict in doing work at different houses are the major problems faced by Servant maids at work place. Having no authority in spending their wages, suspicious nature of the Husbands, not getting help in doing house work, husband not giving money for the House hold expenditure, physical punishment are the problems faced by Servant maids at home. Due to over burdened work, these women were faced with mental and physical strain. The analysis reveals that Servant maids are exploited not only at work place but also at home by their better halves or parents.

The artful mistress - Servant manoeuvring to gain advantage depend much on their personalities. According to most of the Servant maids, the power imbalance finds expression in the authoritative, abusive nature, rude behaviour of House wives and also through maintaining social distance. In view of House wives, most of the Servant maids are irresponsible, selfish behaviour, demand oriented, business like (contractual), less work oriented. It is also
observed that most of the Servant maids (60.9 per cent) are dissatisfied with their employers and 58.2 per cent of the House wives expressed their dissatisfaction about their Servants. Thus the conflicting views expressed by House wives and Servant maids reveals their disharmonious relations.

Servant maids are unaware of various welfare measures which may be attributed to their illiteracy and ignorance. However Informal Unions have been emerging among the Servant maids which benefits them in securing higher wages, better benefits and further provide avenues for security of job.

Thus the working conditions of the Servant maids found to be sour due to long hours of work, low and stagnant wages, lack of leave provision and medical aid, illtreatment etc. In addition to these problems, the difference in perception of the house wives and servant maids about the job, working conditions and employment relations are also responsible for the strained relations between the House wives and Servant maids.

In view of the low economic status, sour working conditions of the Servant maids, disharmonious relations between the employer and the employee, the following suggestions are made.
Low economic status of the Servant maids can be improved by increasing the literacy rate, providing training in various skills, thus getting employment in organised sector, encouraging them to take loans from the co-operative banks, thus decreasing the rate of interest, decreasing the family size by adopting Family Planning methods, restricting alcoholism by educating them about its evil effects etc.

Most of the domestic Servants have a poor image of themselves and lack of organisational set up to fight for their rights. Hence unless the domestic servants understand their own importance and worth, they continue to work from dawn till night just for a pittance.

Government must enact comprehensive legislations dealing with the maids service conditions on similar lines of other unorganised sector. Wages should be standardised and regularised according to the work, weekly holidays, medical aid, regular increase in wages, housing facilities, educational facilities for the children should be provided.

Opportunities for suitable practical training programme in specific household skills should be provided, so that they can give good service and get well paid. A well staffed employment bureau should be established for placement of Domestic Servants after studying the personalities and skills of the employees and the requirements of the employers.
Besides, they must be registered with police so that employer can be safe-guarded against untoward happenings which arise out of their employment.

The mere legislative approach will not solve the problems completely. Added to this some times it may aggravate the situation. Unless both sides are made to realise the contribution made by the domestic servants to the smooth running of a home, their situations will not improve. The House wives should develop sympathetic attitude towards Servant maids, who are all human beings deserving human treatment and can offer better wages benefits etc. However, the House wives should adopt this policy very tactfully with a view to nullify the negative effects of humanitarian approach.

In the same way the Servant maids should not have the negative attitude of "enemy concept" towards the mistress. Further, it is suggested that the House wives and Servant maids should get the co-operation of their family members as the effort of both the parties to secure and maintain mutual harmonious relations as it will not bear any fruit if it lacks the co-operation of their family members.

Thus, the problem of Domestic Service can be approached by the planners, administrators, policy makers, legislators or social workers with the guidance of humanitarian approach. It may change the conditions of Servant maids and transcends the harmonious relations between the House wives and Servant maids.