CONCLUSION
CHAPTER-VII

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The relationship between the domestic worker and her employer is basically a woman-to-woman relationship. Of course, it is guided and protected under the shadow of patriarchy. Women whether employer or employee, are to be viewed across cultures from their distinctive spheres. For women, the primary location is their family and their household. They may have other structural sites for activity, especially in the market economy. The world market economy views all societies under the capitalistic model and sees women’s role in the social system only to the degree that their labour is a part of capitalism, i.e. they are within capitalist production and markets. The world system also reveals a vast subcontinent of non-capitalist production, coexisting, expanding, and interacting with global capitalism.

Marxian feminism analyses that the quality of each individual’s life experiences is a reflection, first of his or her class position, and only second of his or her gender. This is very true in the case of domestic workers. Coming from a different class background, having fewer life experiences in common with their employers, they may often turn antagonistic towards their employers. No wonder Kathryn Ward holds the view that women in peripheral global locations have a different experience of class-based inequality than women in core locations.
Third Wave feminism focuses on the issue of factual and theoretical differences among women. The implications of the differences are worth noting. The differences considered results from socially produced goods and services on the basis of position in the global system, class, race, ethnicity, age, and affectional preferences, and these factors interact with gender stratification. Thus, the vectors of subordination and privilege both interact structurally and intersect dynamically in people’s lives to create oppression and inequality as is seen in the case of the domestic workers.

If one begins with the assumptions of utilitarianism from which the modern day exchange theory has drawn heavily, it is clear that the domestic worker and the employer both attempt to exchange something in the contractual relationship that exists between the two of them. While the worker offers her services or exchanges her service with her employer, the employer, too, in turn, exchanges the labour/services for wages. While the employer, in Blau’s words, has ‘power’ because of his/her paying capacity or ability to pay (i.e. economic power), the worker, too, is equally powerful because of his/her ability to render or withdraw her valuable services. The only thing that the worker suffers from is ignorance or consciousness regarding her power over the employer. It is this recognition or consciousness (which is gradually taking the shape of workers’ movements) which needs to be enhanced. Not in the Marxian way of conflict, but in a functionalist way, through which both the parties will benefit under a global capitalist market economy.
Both need each other. The worker is the only one who shares the housewife’s domestic drudgery. The wages paid to the worker by the housewife helps her run her household or contribute towards it. Both the housewife and the worker are governed by the changing situation brought about by globalization and the emergence of markets. No wonder Yogendra Singh is of the view that the scope of trade and market, which are accelerated by the process of globalization, pose formidable cultural problems in both the developed and developing societies. In India, which traditionally had quite a developed pre-industrial base of trade and market, the impact of the changing roles of these institutions has been gradual. The market and trade relations continue to be located in local cultures even today. The economic policy of India up to the 1980s was that of import substitution and protectionism in trade and market. The full momentum of the globalization of the economy started from the 1990s onwards but many checks and balances continue to persist. Nevertheless, this historical change in policy has deep impacts upon local cultures, in addition to having an overall cultural impact on the society. The new changes have been noticed in the lifestyle, consumption patterns, production of cultural objects and their circulation (marketing) and usage, in the cultural ecology and habitat and even in religious practices. These changes have altered the traditional modes of cultural expression and the usage of language and communication media at the local, regional, and national levels. These have also created many subcultures of an entirely new kind in
the urban areas. The rise of popular culture is a new phenomenon with linkages both in the rural and urban centres.

Most of these changes have long been in the process of emergence and crystallization. The forces of industrialization and developments in agriculture had a major impact upon the consumption style of people. Rapid changes have also taken place at other levels of the consumption pattern and lifestyle. The electrification of villages have changed the energy use pattern, particularly in the suburban villages; in remote villages, the use of firewood and cow dung is still common. The use of kerosene oil is widespread, Gobar gas plants have yet to make a major impact, and the use of solar energy has only made a beginning. The expansion of road networks and means of communication has brought about some homogenization, in tastes and consumption patterns, such as increased popularity of tea, coffee, egg, meat and fish.

Singh (2000) further analyses the changes taking place in India with reference to the use of synthetic materials for utensils, jars, and cans, which is now common, yet most such artefacts still maintain ethnic tastes, designs, and traditional forms. A remarkable change in the style and pattern of women’s wear has taken place. It is marked by a shift from sarees to salwar - kameezes, a traditional dress of Punjab, which has now spread all over the country. The middle classes are increasingly taking to designer dresses marketed by multinationals. The use of cosmetics, soaps and detergents have reached all sections of people in India. The vocation of beauticians
and the number of beauty parlors and health clubs, etc., have grown very rapidly. These are no longer a preserve of the metropolises or the rich classes, they have moved even to relatively small towns in various parts of the country. The changes are more remarkable in the lifestyles of the youth and adolescents, but the elderly are not totally apathetic or untouched by these changes.

Such changes are not entirely alien to traditional Indian values. The Pol survey records a high incidence of meat eating, smoking, and drinking in India, and these are growing continuously. The culture of asceticism or self-denial was confined to a small section of the puritan upper castes and priests throughout the tradition. Culturally, therefore, the new changes may not have deeply subversive effects upon the core traditional values or the world-view of the people. Yet, one witnesses periodic incidence of Consumer resistance against multinationals promoting new consumer goods or agro-products; e.g. sporadic movements against products like McDonald’s hamburgers and Kentucky fried chicken, and farmers resisting the penetration of agro-multinationals in the production of seeds, herbs, new cereals, etc. The cultural history of modern India reveals, however, that such movements are not entirely new. Their dimension and orientation is no doubt changing with globalization as these have an impact upon the cultural identity of the nation in an entirely new mode of historical experience.

Singh writes that the changes in consumption and lifestyle have been accelerated by the market forces and their changing
structure. India has had a developed private market network since centuries in the past. Today, the markets are not only extensive in their network, they also perform qualitatively news functions. The Pol survey notes: “Market forces have become all-pervasive with members of 94 per cent of communities reporting direct links with it.” It also concludes that the monetization of the economy is now almost complete with only 2 per cent of communities, mostly tribal, reporting barter. With such an extensive network of markets and with the changing style of living, the challenges of globalization to local culture in India assume deeper significance. A part of the change is related to the shift in occupation, which has occurred in a very substantial measure. There no longer exists a link between caste or community and hereditary occupations. The average number of occupations per community stands at 5.3, of which 1.8 are traditional and 3.5 are newly acquired occupations. Economists have also observed a substantial rise in the non-agricultural occupations in the countryside due mainly to; the changes in the style of life consequent upon of consumer durables such as bicycles, motorcycles, Cars and electronic devices such as the radio, television, and audio/video systems. Links with roads and railways arid the proliferation of developmental institutions have further augmented this process.

Markets are the vital mechanism through which globalization extends its reach. Globalization is, however, just in a state of beginning in India. Some of its effects upon the Regional and national cultures may be modernizing, but there are significant areas
where it has a disruptive influence upon the local cultures. For example, globalization of markets has led to the conversion of traditional objects of art and aesthetics having mostly ritual uses in the local communities into marketable commodities. This has not only rapidly disrupted the autonomy of folk cultures, but also destabilized the life of the artisans by creating new networks of competition and price war and a new class of exploitative middle men in other areas, such as access of local-communities to forest resources, land, rivers, hills, and lakes, all of which were bound together in a long-enduring cultural ecology of the rituals and customs. The penetration of the market for profit has started rapid subversion of the ecology. It has disrupted the balance in the cultural, social, and economic life of many communities, including tribals, artisans, traditional cultural performers, etc. Being in a minority and economically vulnerable, these communities suffer loss of their cultural identity the most in the process of globalization (Singh, 2000:51-55).

It is true that the expanded role of the market is organically linked with diffusion, decentralization, and massification of the production processes of commodities. The traditional mode of commodity production has itself undergone revolutionary changes, increasingly, the relationship between capital and labour no longer remains as it did in the past. The incidence of labour pursuing capital is on the decline; now increasingly, capital pursues labour. The cheap labour in the developing societies attracts multinational
companies. These multinational companies no longer honour national boundaries, not only because of new market opportunities due to the rising middle classes, but mainly due to the availability of cheap labour power. Employing the economies of scale and efficiency, the production process is decentralized and automated. Market forces released by these floating multinational concerns create new structures of interdependency between societies and cultures. They generate new forms of human resources, skills and technologies], and infrastructures (ibid.: 241).

Due to globalization and the emergence of new markets in the Indian context, the nature of domestic work is changing and the domestic worker is gradually emerging to become the most sought after person for sharing the housewife’s burden of domestic chores in any household.

The domestic worker’s work includes sweeping, swabbing, dusting, cleaning dishes, washing clothes, cooking, clearing the table after meals, hanging the washing, picking and dropping children from and to bus stops, running little errands, shopping, and may be even more than all these at times, but in a changed situation. For all this work, the housewife waits anxiously for her arrival.

The work expected from these workers may be either part-time or full-time. Part-time work implies that these workers will perform their duties within a stipulated time - frame and then, after the work is completed, they will so back to their homes. Full-time domestic
workers share the homes of their employers and are thereby bound to work day and night as and when demanded by their employers.

The amount of skill, technical know how and training required to do all these domestic chores may vary from little to huge. Special knowledge may also be required to operate domestic electrical gadgets in the household. Thus, the amount of time and labour involved in domestic work will vary from household to household.

The market of domestic serves is gradually becoming more and more feminized and it demands more and more young girls. Domestic workers generally belong to backward and scheduled castes, Domestic workers have not yet achieved a minimum level of literacy as most of the workers are school dropouts. Education still remains a distant dream for the workers and the heads of their families, too. Women who are unmarried, divorced, and separated are preferred as the ‘married’ status entails bearing the additional responsibilities of her household. There is a significant change in the structure of the family among the domestic workers. The quality of life of the families is deplorable, but the domestic workers themselves dominate in the decision-making process of their families and take several decisions regarding themselves and their families due to their working and earning status.

The relationship between the domestic workers and their family members is changing. The domestic worker tries to appease members of her family because without their consent and participation in household activities, it is not possible for her to work
for wages outside her home. She even works outside the home in the interest of the quality of life of her family members. While working, workers, too, have to make arrangements for the care of their children. Quite often, the non-working husband, in-laws, and older children look after the younger children of the domestic workers. At other times, the children are left like vagrants on the streets with no one to care for them at home. Sometimes, the workers even carry the children to their workplace (employers’ place). The wages of the workers are the barest minimum. Very few have other sources of income. Since most members of the workers’ family are landless or with barely any land, they do not have any other economic support.

Globalization, both of the economy and information systems, accelerates the process of migration, tourism, and travel. Its cultural and social homogenizing effects proceed along with the creation of pluralism and cultural diversity. The cultural diaspora is created by migrants settling down in countries which offer them better income and employment opportunities. The studies of the Indian out-migrants suggest that most of them continue to maintain their traditional ways of life and customs. More than this, their cultural self-awareness becomes more protective and strengthens their commitment to the traditional modes of culture (Y. Singh: 2000: 60-61). Most of the domestic workers have migrated to Agra from the neighboring districts and, at times, neighboring states. The lure of earning simply by going to a nearby city or town draws these workers horn rural areas in large numbers. A major portion of the
workers’ earnings go towards the upkeep of the family. To some extent, debts are cleared, mortgaged land is freed, consumer items of everyday use are purchased, and portions of their income go towards the purchase of fashionable clothes, bags, fancy footwear, wrist watches, artificial jewellery, and cosmetics.

Irrespective of kinship and family network, neighbors and acquaintances are playing a major role in helping domestic workers find jobs in domestic service, which is based on verbal negotiations. There are few options to choose the work within the household because it is separately related to the wages paid to the workers. It is quite significant that workers keep shifting from one household to another on some pretext or the other. Workers do not work in any one household for a long time. Working hours are not fixed for either the part-time or full-time domestics. Though the wage structure in this service is minimal, yet, it does not mean that the workers have no aspirations regarding their wages. They all want higher wages.

The quality of life of the domestic workers is not at all satisfactory. The food and clothes allocated by the employers are not sufficient. Quite often, the workers do not enjoy proper leave and leisure time. Policies and programmes regarding family planning and welfare, being propagated by the governmental and non-governmental organizations, are not known to most of the domestic workers. Domestic workers do not even know about contraception
and methods of birth control. Domestic workers do not have access to proper civic amenities.

The communication revolution has brought about a number of visible changes in the society. Domestic service is also influenced by this revolution. The workers are being exposed to the means of mass communication, especially television and radio. The ideas, behaviour, manners, and particularly the relationships of the domestic workers with others are gradually undergoing change and they are also being ‘westoxicated’ to use Dipankar Gupta’s term.

Women are lagging behind in political participation. They are few in number in the Parliament, assemblies, panchayats, and other local bodies, and especially in policy making organizations. Their participation is not satisfactory as compared to their male counterparts though they are qualified, skilled, efficient, and courageous. The organizations for women are doing their job well in the words of Nilika Mehrotra, but they are not sufficient and they are yet to achieve their goals in Vibhuti Patel’s terms. The case of the domestic workers is the same and they are not untouched by this present scenario in the women’s world.

To conclude, there is the persistence of the ‘tradition-modernity continuum’. Yogendra Singh ideology, views, and assumptions are well established here. The relationship of domestic workers with their employers and others is changing. To exercise Dipankar Gupta’s views on modernity, the relationship between the
domestic worker and employer is definitely mistaken here and nobody is ‘modern’, neither the domestic worker nor the employer.

**References**


