Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION
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Domestic workers are addressed by different names - Maid, Ayah, ‘Dai’, ‘Aii’, ‘Bai’, ‘Kaamwali’. Whatever name may be used to address her, she is a most sought-after person in any household. The housewife waits for her arrival. The domestic worker is the only one who shares the housewife's tiresome, monotonous, domestic drudgery.

Generally, the domestic worker's work includes sweeping, mopping, dusting, cleaning dishes, washing clothes, cooking, clearing the table after meals, hanging up the washing, picking and dropping children to bus stops, running little errands, shopping, and, often more.

The amount of skill, technical know-how, and training required to do all these domestic chores may vary from little to vast. For example, culinary skills may vary and special training may be required. Also, special knowledge may 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 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, proceed for their homes. Quite often, domestic workers share the homes of their employers and are thereby bound to work day and night as and when demanded by their employer.

The working hours of domestic workers are not fixed. They may vary anywhere between three to fifteen hours. The work may be continuous or in installments spread over time. The working hours depend on the demands and requirements of the employers. The wages of domestic workers are abysmally low when compared to other categories of workers even within the informal sector, considering the amount of time, effort, and labour that goes into domestic work. Very often, wages are added along with food and clothes and the logic given by the employer is that the monetary value of all these taken together would amount to a value equal to (in monetary terms) the efforts put in by the worker.

The mode of payment of domestic workers may be in 'cash' or in ‘kind’. It has been observed that there is no fixed rule followed in this regard. Sometimes food and clothes form a part of the pay structure. At other times, food and clothes are understood to be ‘perks' or 'tips' or extra benefits given to the worker by a few benevolent employers.

Domestic workers are recruited through intermediaries such as relatives, friends, neighbours, middlemen, and moneylenders, thereby raising the chances of their being exploited. They have to work in adverse
working conditions. Labouring at odd hours of the day and bearing the severest of climatic and working conditions is a common feature.

Domestic workers rarely get leave. They are expected to put in extra work or effort on festive occasions or when there are guests to be entertained in the employer's home. Rest periods and leisure time are unheard of. This is specially the case with part-time workers, who are expected to work right from the time they enter the household up to the time they leave. At times, even full-time domestics meet with a similar fate. They are worse off as compared to part-timers as they have nowhere to go to because they live in shelters provided by their employers.

Domestic workers are vulnerable and open to exploitation. Right from being economically exploited by those who mediate and help them get their jobs, to employers, to being socially ostracized, to being physically abused, domestic workers have to take it all in their stride.

Domestic workers generally belong to backward castes and scheduled castes, different religions, regions. Sometimes, they may belong to the same group as their employers, but economically, they are in dire need of some stable source of income which is why they take up domestic work. Very often, familial and marital problems push these workers into this profession. It could possibly be migration due to several reasons which forces a group to take up such jobs as a community as a whole. The social status of these
workers is one of the lowest down the social ladder. There is no scope for upward mobility in this occupation. Often, it is up to the goodwill and paying capacity of the employer to consider a hike in the wages of domestic workers.

Culturally, too, domestic workers form a distinct group, usually different from their employers. They speak a different dialect and, at times, even a different language from their employers. At times, speaking a different language proves to be the chief obstruction in their skill development and training. It is also one of the causes of communication gap between the domestic worker and her employer. Food habits and dressing styles may also vary from those of their employers.

The level of literacy is negligible among domestic workers. Most of them lack formal education. Hence, they face difficulty in searching for jobs and obtaining alternative training and technical know-how. This makes them unfit for other jobs in the formal sector.

The root cause of poverty among domestic workers is poor wages. Poor wages force them into the vicious ‘circle of poverty’. At times, it may lead to indebtedness, too. Domestic workers do not have any savings.

Domestic workers do not work for the same employer. Each worker works in a separate household on separate terms and conditions from either end. At times, an employer may employ more than one domestic worker,
but the work allotted to each one may be different. Also, part-time workers may sometimes be found to be working in two, three, or even more households, depending upon their capacity to work. The chances of their being organized are neutralized because they work in different households. The nature of work and the timings of work of each domestic worker may vary from household to household, making it difficult for them to get organized. Domestic workers work for different employers for varying periods of time, in different working conditions, and at different wage rates.

Domestic workers are also victims of macro-economic processes such as the New Economic Policy-91 (NEP-91), Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP), the policy of liberalization (1990s), and globalization. These macro-economic processes function in two ways. On one hand, it opens before a society a vista of job opportunities for the technically educated. On the other hand, it further works to marginalize the ‘poor’ (especially women) who have to struggle harder to support the failing incomes of their households as a part of the ‘survival’ strategy. Most domestic workers are forced into the labour market, not by choice, but by the sheer necessity to supplement their family income, as we have seen in the studies of feminist economists (Nirmala Banerjee, 1985; U. Kalpagam, 1994; Ela Bhatt, 2001 and Jayati Ghosh, 1996).
The factors which are pushing more and more workers into the informal sector are the effects of macro-economic processes on the labour market and on the economy as a whole, and declining purchasing power due to fall in the rate of capital (interest/profit), which is marginalizing more and more families and forcing them to look for survival strategies or, for that matter, to supplement their declining incomes. Overpopulation is another factor responsible for the weak bargaining position of these workers. Their weaker bargaining position influences the fixation of wages of the domestic workers. The correlation between labour and gender (Kalpagam, 1994) further marginalizes these women workers; they lack skills as well as means of skill enhancement. As a consequence, they are virtually without any choice as regards obtaining worthwhile jobs. They lack easy access to loans. As a consequence, they are in no position to reorganize themselves or to develop entrepreneurial skills.

Since the choices of upward mobility are minimal, domestic workers often suffer from job dissatisfaction. The general attitude of the worker towards her employer and vice versa leaves ample scope for research.

**Review Of Literature**

Domestic service is accepted as one of the self-evident facts of everyday life. There is very little sociological literature on domestic service. Even though the majority of domestic workers are women, yet, paid
domestic work has not received due attention from feminist scholars. This double silence, on the part of both sociologists and feminists, commands interrogation, for, contrary to the general impression and the predictions of modernization theorists (Mehta, 1960), the institution of domestic service has not only withered away in the natural course of time, but has actually become increasingly important in the contemporary global economy (Hansen, 2000). Heyzer et al., (1994) and Sanjek and Colen (1990) studied the living and working conditions of domestics in Asia, and Africa. Hosmer Martens and Miner (1994) studied the condition of domestic workers in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Chancy and Garcia Castro (1989) studied the condition of domestics in Latin America and the Caribbean Hondagneu Sotelo (1997, 2001) and Mary Romero (1992) studied the Maid in the USA.

Denir’s study (1983) focused on the Irish immigrant women of the 19th century. The Irish migration was conditioned by circumstances that prevailed throughout Europe-poverty, landlessness, and the change from socioeconomic feudal society to an industrial capitalist society. These conditions were exacerbated by the famine of the 1840s, and since they were coupled with the Irish system of Single inheritance and single dowry, Ireland increasingly became the home of the 'unmarried and the late married'. More than half of the Irish immigrants to the US were women, and as the century moved on, the migration became a female mass movement.
As Denir’s study demonstrated the root cause was that social and economic conditions in Ireland were such that Ireland became a country that held out fewer attractions to women as it had limited chances for marriage and employment. To attain either, most of them had to turn their backs on the land of their birth. Hence, not just famine and poverty, but what sociologists called 'the interlocking' relationship of land-family-marriage brought about the preponderance of women in the migration flow. The study indicated that one escape from family and spinsterhood was for women to join a religious order, another was migration. Consequently, the Irish exodus to the US was not only predominantly of young, single women, but extended to kin chain migration, in which women brought over other women - sisters, mothers, nieces, aunts, and friends. The major outcome of the predominantly female and single nature of the migration was that the Irish women entered domestic service.

Mary Garcia Castro’s study (1986) emphasized that Irish women entered domestic service in great numbers because this was an occupation in which there was a ‘labour vacuum’ because others did not want to do such work. Native Anglo Saxon Protestant women considered domestic work demeaning. Other migrant or poor women who were married felt that domestic work interfered with their family life. The work, indeed, lacked authority. But the work environment was healthier and safer than that of a factory- the job allowed women to be employed even in times of severe
economic recession; the environment exposed the women faster to middle-
class standards and lifestyles, promoting their Americanization; above all, it
allowed women to amass savings at an impressive rate. Those savings were
used to bring other female relatives over, to send money back home that
would help the family pay off their farm mortgages, and to finance their
upward mobility by providing a foundation for a small business or an
education that led them or their daughters into teaching, nursing, or
stenography. Thus, Irish women experienced higher rates of mobility than
Irish men.

Glenn’s study (1986) of three generations of Japanese women in
domestic service reflects that the labour market allocates particular
Jobs to certain types of people—on the basis of gender, colour, and class—
reserving unskilled, unprotected, poorly paid jobs for women and people of
colour.

Michele Ruth Gamburd’s study (2002) focuses on the link between
the local, rational, and international movement of people, commodities, and
ideas. It deals with female migration from Naeaeegama on the southwest
coast of Sri Lanka to the Middle East. The subtitle of the book is drawn
from the male chauvinistic proverb that ‘a woman’s understanding reaches
only the length of the kitchen spoon handle’. The research findings,
however, show that the women like those from this village have left behind
their metaphorical spoons and their reach extends beyond the environs of

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the kitchen to far-off lands. This transnational movement has enhanced their life chances by giving them greater say in family matters, prestige in the village, recognition of their work, and the power to improve the destiny of their kith and kin.

Since the early 1980s, the push factors of widespread unemployment and poverty led numerous Sri Lankan women to leave their homes to toil as housemaids in the Middle East. The Naeagama women moneylenders have carved out a space for themselves and their economic activities within the strict boundary of village restrictions and taboos. Money lending and ‘work’ done by women have been placed in the historical perspective of female economic networks and patron-client networks to delineate the interaction of gender identities vis-a-vis changing local attitudes towards capital and class. Western development theories evaluating the relative success and failure of women's migration have been discussed by Gamburd in relevant theoretical backdrop. Gamburd discovered that caste prerogatives still held sway, though discreetly, as remittances from the Middle East gave families the chance of gaining upward mobility and higher social status.

Gamburd’s book also deals with the issue of migration. Migration not only encompasses percentages and cash flows, but it possesses a human face, too, bringing change in the local and international patterns of love and affection. Gamburd is of the view that media representation of migration is
found to be largely a depiction of gory tales rather than the positive aspects of migration.

Interesting and novel changes have emerged in the international division of labour, in Sri Lanka's national economy, and in local social relations such as family structure, class hierarchies, and gender roles due to the triadic relations which exists between the migrant communities, their host countries, and homelands.

Aban Mehta's The Domestic Servant Class (1960) opens with a historical survey of the institution of domestic service from its supposed origins in primitive slavery through the domestic slavery of the ancient civilizations of Greece, Sparta, and Rome, and its forms in pre-modern China and ancient and mediaeval India and its transformation following the official abolition of slavery in British India by Act V of 1843. Mehta goes on to discuss how the functions and services that were performed in the households by slaves in bondage were gradually taken over by domestic servants who belong to the class of free-wage labour.

Mehta’s study is based on a sample of 500 live-in and live-out domestic servants, men and women, from the Christian, Gujarati, and Marathi communities in Mumbai (ibid.). The survey covers aspects of the servants' marriage and family life, their housing conditions, wages, hours and Conditions of service, overall economic level, educational status, and leisure activities and modes of relaxation.
The study does not cover the relationship that exists between the employers and the women domestic workers. Mehta has not paid attention to the ‘gender’ dimension of domestic service. He has attributed the low status of domestic service, not to its conceptual and practical contiguity with unpaid domestic labour (typically women’s work), but to its historical continuity in the Indian context with slavery and bonded labour on one hand, and more immediately, to its invisibility and lack of regulation compared to contemporary working class employment in the formal industrial sector. Mehta has also not remarked on the 'migration' aspect of domestic service.

A report, entitled The Tribal Domestic Worker at the Cross-roads: A Search for Alternatives’ (1993), deals with both - the migration as well as the gender dimension of domestic service. The study deals with the steadily expanding stream of tribal women workers from the Chotanagpur area of Jharkhand migrating to work as maidservants in middle-class homes in the city of Delhi. A new dimension in this study is the sex-specific nature of the current migratory stream of domestic workers that calls into question the conventional demographic opposition between employment-related male migration and marriage related female migration.

In the case of the tribal women domestic workers in Delhi, the class hierarchy of the employer-employee relationship is complicated by the ethnic overlay. The difference is further accentuated by the fact that almost
all of the maids are Christians whereas the employers are mostly upper-caste Hindus. They are single women between the ages of 17 to 30. Almost one-third of the maids are illiterate, while another third had only primary education, and most came from quite poor backgrounds, their families living at minimum subsistence levels and routinely in debt. As live-in maids, their wages were low, and hours of work long and unregulated. Conditions of service-holidays, leave, leisure, medical care were dependent on the whims of the employers.

Balgovind Baboo and Laxmi Panwar’s case study (1984) of maidservants in Haryana deals with the issue of the working conditions of domestic workers. Similarly, Abha Bhaiya’s study (1982) deals with the life of domestic workers in Pune. A. Elenjimistiam’s study (1960) compares the working conditions and wages of domestic workers with general working class and concludes that their condition is static, that there is little scope for upward mobility in the lives of domestic workers. K. Murli Manohar and V. Shobha (1980) studied ‘Servant Maids in Semi-Urban Areas’. The study presents the lifestyle, working, and socio-economic conditions of servant maids and the factors that influence them to take up and continue these jobs. Veena Mazumdar’s article (1999), entitled 'Maid in India', throws light on the plight of domestic workers and how as a country, India was close to gaining defamation for practicing slavery in the form of domestic workers. Anarja Pawar’s study (1984), entitled 'Organizing the Unorganized
Domestic Workers in Pune: Struggle for Better Working Conditions’,

attempts to analyze the domestic workers' organization in Pune, that is the
Pune Malkarni Sangathan and its struggle to provide unitedly, better
working conditions to domestic workers.

P. Sengupta’s article (1954), ‘Women as Domestic Servants in Small
Trade’, discusses how women domestic servants are deprived of almost all
benefits which other workers in large-scale industries enjoy and suggests
five-year plans for small industries in municipal or rural areas, which can be
developed by the Planning Commission.

V.S. D’Souza (1959) has pointed out that the problems of domestic
women and girls is important as this problem has not received due attention.
He further mentions that due to industrialization and changes in the
socioeconomic life of the people, more and more people want to depend on
domestic servants. Therefore, the movement of the poor from rural to urban
areas has- been steadily increasing and they have been employing
themselves in domestic services, but this area of study is a neglected one.

E. Ravichandran, in his study (1979) on women domestic workers in
Chennai slums, revealed the deplorable socioeconomic conditions of women
domestic workers. His study further indicated that 60 per cent of women
workers belonged to scheduled castes. More than 50 per cent were illiterate
and the remaining had just primary education. The lowest salary paid to
them was twenty rupees and the maximum was seventy rupees. More than half suffered from some physical problems.

Another study conducted by V.T. Nayak (1984) on women domestic workers in south India found that only 20 per cent employed women were paid salaries, while 13 per cent did not even know the amount they received as salary. The socioeconomic conditions of these workers indicate their helplessness. Most of the families of the women had incurred heavy debts. Accordingly, alcohol abuse and domestic violence were common practices in many families. Their families looked poor and ill fed.

A study was conducted by Alphonse Miranda and Wadya Mahadevan (1988) on the socioeconomic and health conditions of women in Chennai. The major findings of the study show that more than 50 per cent of employed women were part-time domestic workers and most of them were employed in more than two houses. Stomach ailments, menstrual problems, anemia, and general weakness were the common medical problems reported by the women domestic servants.

Behura and Behera’s study (1991) indicates that out of 165 cases of women, thirty-two are domestic servants. It further reveals that the caste, religion, and family background of women are considered while recruiting them. However, due to increasing poverty in rural areas, they migrate to urban areas and get absorbed in any jobs that are available to them.
J. Kanungo (1981) has worked on girl domestic workers in Orissa. This study revealed that out of the fifty girl respondents, thirty-five girls were working as full-timers. Two per cent of them were below nine years. Out of all part-time domestic workers, only 60 per cent were literate who could just read and write, and 20 per cent of them had received formal schooling of two to three years. About 48 per cent were recruited by their parents, 40 percent through middlemen and 12 per cent by self-approach. The part-timers worked for more than nine hours, whereas the full-timers had no fixed hours. Their Work often went on till eleven in the night. The average income of these girls was between thirty to sixty rupees per month. The work done by these girls included cleaning of utensils, floor and rooms, and cooking and serving meals. In addition to this work making beds for the family members, fetching milk, escorting children to school, looking after children, helping wives in kitchen work, looking after cattle of households, etc., were also expected from the girl domestic workers. The health conditions of these girls were not satisfactory. A good number of them suffered from stomach problems due to irregularity of food.

Gracious Thomas (1992) worked on the status of female domestic workers in the Stuna community of Indore (Madhya Pradesh). He has found that illiteracy was rampant among the respondents. Further, more than 70 per cent were from backward castes. In most of the cases, the women were the sole breadearners. Thirty-six per cent had 'Six to eight dependent
children and, in some cases, their husbands were either unemployed or underemployed. As many as 57 per cent reported that there were frequent quarrels in their houses. These women have developed badly chapped hands due to continuous work in water and the use of abrasive powders and soaps. Nearly one-third of them did not even know the salary that was paid to them. They were made to sleep under the staircase or in the verandah. They had no fixed time for work, nor were they given care in illness. They looked deprived of respectful treatment. Nearly 25 per cent of them belonged to rural areas. When they returned to their native places, they were looked down with suspicion and, in many cases, marriage proposals were rejected.

A.N. Singh, in his study (1995) on the problem of child ragpickers found that a large percentage of child ragpicker’s mothers are engaged in domestic work and, because of their poor income, they find it difficult to bear the economic burden of their children.

Another book by Singh (2001), Women Domestic Workers, is an outcome of an investigation carried out into the dynamics of working life, family adjustment of maidservants and the approaches to be adopted for their resource development. It attempts to focus on the problem of working mothers in general and women domestic workers in particular. The book deals with the socioeconomic background of workers being forced to take up domestic work, their present working conditions, family life, and the effect of the work on their health. It also suggests useful approaches for
human resource development, employee-employer relationship, and improvement in work performance of the women domestic workers. The book, however, fails to cover several other aspects related to the lives of domestic workers, which have been covered in this book.

Seemin Qayum and Raka Ray’s study (2003) explores the culture of servitude encouraged by Kolkata's respectable classes against the backdrop of their projection of modernity. In societies with long and unbroken histories of domestic-servitude such as in India, the institution is central to understand self and society. The relations of paid domestic work are intimately tied to the self-conscious evolution of a modern Indian elite. The authors highlight three premises with their origins in pre-independence Kolkata, which continue to shape its culture of servitude today: First, servants are essential to a well-run and well-kept household; second, servants are 'part of the family' and bound to it by ties of affection, loyalty, and dependence; and third, servants comprise a category with distinctive lifestyles, desires, and habits. Yet, this culture of servitude is no longer hegemonic. The first premise sits uncomfortably with contemporary notions of privacy and the ideologies of the nuclear family, especially in the more confined space of the apartment. The second is complicated by the entrance of capitalist and corporate discourses about employers and employees. The third is challenged daily in a political culture where democratizing discourses circulate in both state and civil society.
The institution of domestic service is sociologically more explicitly theorized in Kathleen Adams and Sara Dickey’s edited collection, 'Home and Hegemony: Domestic Service and Identity Politics in South and South East Asia’ (2000). This fine set of ethnographic essays seeks to interpret a range of case studies of domestic service in the two Asian regions within an overall giramscian framework, emphasizing the uneasy relationship between domination, consent and resistance that is everywhere characteristic of domestic service lives (Hansen, 2000). More specifically, what the editors have in mind is the idea that the employer-domestic worker relationship is constantly being negotiated at very close quarters in everyday encounters; that the process is inevitably two-way, involving both employers and employees; and that the identity politics of this negotiation cannot be seen in isolation from wider issues of social structure and political economy. Domestic service is a type of work that tends to reiterate in the domestic sphere, caste, class, gender, regional, national, and racial hierarchies, often drawing on pre-existing forms of servitude and bondage. In particular, as Sara Dickey points out, domestic service provides the circumstances 'in which class is reproduced and challenged on a daily and intimate basis', enabling 'the most, intense, sustained contact with members of other classes that most of its participants encounter. As ‘public’ paid work that is conducted in 'private space', domestic service challenges the liberal dichotomization of the private and public spheres, inner and outer,
home and the world. The servant is ambiguously both the ‘marginal insider’ and 'intimate outsider' in the lives of the employers. Both situationally vulnerable, yet also on occasions a potential power player in domestic politics (Gamburd, 2000).

Several of the essays of *Home and Hegemony illustrate* and also remark upon the in-built tensions and ‘ambiguities’ that are embedded in the institution of domestic service-between liberation and vulnerability, between economic opportunity and exploitation, between the chimera of upward social mobility and the nearly inevitable reproduction of lower class identities. Gruelling, humiliating and unregulated as it may be, domestic service may still offer the only viable route to schooling, urban residence, marital security, social mobility, and freedom from familial constraints and abusive marriages. It may also result in the transfer of features of modern lifestyles from the metropolis to the periphery, from the middle-class home to the working-class hutment, from the bungalow to the 'outhouse' and from the city to the countryside. Such a transfer is often regarded as self-evidently beneficial and an agency of modernity (Karlekar, 1982; Gardener and Fillippo, 200-1), though, in fact, employers often resent, mock, and actively subvert their servants' incomplete and improvisational efforts at imitation of middle-class lifestyles and there is always the hope, most usually belied, that the patronage of influential employers may sooner or later lead to better opportunities and formal sector employment (Tolen, 2000; Shah, 2000). In this context, underlining the ambivalence of domestic service scarcely lends itself to clear-cut policy recommendations or remedial interventionist strategies, which is perhaps the reason why *Home and Hegemony* consistent with its overall ‘cultural’ Standpoint, makes no special claims in that direction (Uberoi, 2004).
Another article by Sara Dickey (2000) points out that servants’ movements into and out of middle and upper class homes in the south Indian city of Madurai create a mixing of outside and inside spaces. Employers feel that this mixing threatens the security of their homes and class standing. Yet, because the presence of servants is a necessary marker of class, employers attempt to contain the threat by buttressing the symbolic boundaries of the household, controlling domestic workers’ movements through space and manipulating their closeness to and distance from the employers. These employers' accounts and actions reveal central concepts of anxieties about class in contemporary urban India.

Several sociologists have conducted studies on the issue of migration. Migration is intrinsically correlated with the issue of women domestic workers migrating to places outside their homes in order to make a living. The study on 'Women and Seasonal Labour Migration in Rural India', conducted by Sardamoni, Rensji, and Menon (1990), reflects the sexual and economic exploitation, lack of childcare and education, and increase in workload as part of the enormous economic and socio-psychological costs of migration.

Malavika Karlekar (1987) feels that there are almost no indications that migration contributes to the emancipation or autonomy of the women. She warns that in the Indian context, the concept of 'autonomous' migration needs to be looked at critically. Autonomy involves some independent
action and choice-making and that is impossible for Women belonging to the poorest classes and castes who are living at subsistence level. Besides, it can be asked if the notion of autonomy is a relevant concept in a patriarchal society like in India.

Sardamoni’s study on single labour migration of unmarried girls and women from coastal villages in Kerala indicated that these women migrate because of the crisis being faced due to the collapse in the fishing business in Kerala. Rapid modernization was imposed and new growth-oriented technology, such as trawlers, was introduced, resulting in the alarming depiction of sea resources. It is in this context that the seasonal annual migration has to be considered as about 40,000, mostly young unmarried girls and women who migrated to other states to work in the fishing industry. What is noteworthy about these women was that the girls belonged to Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities, though the majority were from the Christian community. Other remarkable features were that the girls were not from traditional fishing communities, but had middle school education. All of them felt bad about leaving their home, but they stressed on the need to migrate because of responsibilities at home and financial difficulties. Contractors made use of networks of well-known women in the village, who went from house to house to recruit the girls.

Menon (1990) studied the impact of migration on the tribal women’s work and status in Orissa. Her study revealed that the Saoras were
undergoing severe economic stress due to the destruction of lbreasts. The change has been brought about through outside intervention. The Saora economy was a women's economy since the activities, which could be depended upon for sustained and regular supply of food, fell within the purview of women's economic responsibilities. Migration has added a different dimension to this situation.

Focusing on the need for gender specific studies, Louis Schenk Sandbergen (1989) is of the view that workers in the informal sector, like those employed in domestic work, have some characteristics specifically related to gender. He explains that the, women have distinct economic roles, a difference indicated by the explicit preference for women in specific jobs and occupations, and the causes for female migration are very different from male migration. The Indian patriarchal setting imposes serious constraints on women's freedom of movement and in particular on young, unmarried women. Traditionally, it was not considered good for girls/women to work outside the house for wages. Sex-specific cultural constraints on female mobility, as in the practice of purdah (seclusion) and such economic constraints as wage discrimination imply differences in outlook and expectations for women migrants. There is a difference in single and married migrants. Married women migrate with their households for bare survival. Single women desperately try to help their parents save for dowries and contribute towards the education of their younger siblings. The
consequences for women migrants are different from those for male migrants. There is a deep concern in India regarding the erosion of moral values of female migrants through exposure to the modern, or the outside world. Does this lead to emancipation of women or to a subjugated position for them?

In his study, Sandbergen found that until recently, women were virtually invisible in the migration processes because of the assumption that most women were merely passive movers who followed the head of the household. The striking increase in the proportion of young, single women in certain migrant streams (such as in domestic work) have been slowly detected as a growing phenomenon, and even now, the dimensions and implications of the status of these forced 'new nomads' is poorly understood.

Dasgupta’s study (1981) shows that there is scattered evidence of young, rural women migrating in groups or individually in the profession of domestic work or as small-time labourers. In Western societies, girls are known to take decisions on their own in relation to migration and the betterment of their lives. In the Indian situation, however, such decisions are often taken by the family or kin and the initial motive is survival. The concept of individual or group culture is induced in this aspect. It is possible that over time, the girls may gain a sense of independence, and earn enough to support their families. In a very few cases, there is autonomy in decision-
making and the primary motivation is not related to the search for a spouse or enhancing status.

A seminar was held in Ranchi by an NGO called Patra on October 11, 2002 (Hindustan Times, 2002). The highlights of the discussions at the seminar are that more and more tribal girls are migrating to metros outside the state to seek employment; about 90 per cent of the families that are below the poverty line send their daughters to the metros. Capture of tribal lands has deprived many of their only source of sustenance; about 70,000 tribal girls from Jharkhand are working as domestic help in Delhi. There are about fifty organizations in that city to help them get jobs; apart from those working as domestic help, there are about 40,000 tribal migrant girls in Delhi. Only 20,000 of them are registered for jobs. The whereabouts of the rest are unknown. The unregistered, it is believed, are sent to France, Saudi Arabia, and America for unknown reasons. In the Ranchi, Rourkela, Sahebganj, and other railway stations, thousands of tribal girls wait for job brokers every day. Prabhakar ‘Firkey, a member of Patra, said large-scale migration of tribal girls was taking place from Gumla, Simdega, Lohardaga, Chaibasa, Khunti, East Singhbhum, and the Santhal Parganas to the metros. Most of these girls were unmarried and sought work as domestic servants. He held the view that those who are already working in the metros are mentally prepared by the brokers to convince other tribal girls at home to migrate for lucrative jobs. But half of what they earn as domestics go to the
brokers involved in this business Tirkey revealed that fifteen girls who are working as domestic maids in Delhi have come back to Sahebganj broken by torture. Vasvi (ibid.), a social activist and journalist, held the “wrong policies of the government responsible for migration. The government’s emphasis on industrialization, tourism, and privatization has sidelined the basic problems of the tribals. “She is of the opinion that the government has failed to rehabilitate 75 to 85 lakh displaced tribals.

Objectives

New macro-economic processes function differently upon different categories of women, depending upon their class. Poor marginalized women are compelled to join the informal sector. Middle-class and upper-middle-class women (depending upon their educational qualifications, technical skills, religious background, marital status, and family background) are pushed out of the confines of their homes and drawn into the labour market. For the poor woman, joining the labour market is a survival strategy to supplement her family’s failing income. For the middle-class woman, finding employment in the formal sector (as per her academic qualifications and technical skills) becomes a must to maintain a minimum 'middle-class' standard of living. The upper-middle-class woman, too, is drawn into the labour market by an inner urge to do something creative and prove her worth. In some ways, it represents her quest for self-evaluation and identity.
However, she has one advantage over her sisters in that she can make a 'rational choice' between 'paid work and 'leisure time' utilization.

One thing is common to all the classes of women described above. It puts a double workload on all these women. Women (irrespective of class) belonging to patriarchal set-ups are expected to conform to gender-specific roles (unpaid work within the family) first, and then opt for ‘paid work’ outside the home.

As more and more women are joining the labour force, the demand for substitutes for domestic work in the form of paid workers seems to be on the rise. In this situation, the present study aims at finding out the extent of the demand for paid domestic help in Agra city.

The present study aims at finding out the method of recruitment of domestic workers, the nature and types of work performed by the domestic workers, the duration of the work, working conditions, wage structures, and modes of payment.

Another objective of the study is to understand and explain the socioeconomic conditions of domestic workers, their participation in political activities, membership of an organization, exposure to the mass media, and awareness of governmental or non-governmental agencies and programmes meant for them.
The study also aims at finding out the employer-employee relationship prevailing between women domestic workers and their employers. It attempts to gain an insight into the emerging newer forms of exploitation. Finally, the prime objective that the study aims at gaining is an understanding of the macro-processes (global) which are responsible for bringing about changes in the micro-processes (local), such as those based on the interactions between employers and women domestic workers.

**The Setting:**

Agra is the city of the inimitable Taj Mahal. The story of Agra beings much earlier than the Taj. However it finds mention in the epic Mahabharata when it was called Agrabana was a Paradise. Ptolemy, the famous second century A.D. geographer, marked it on his map of the world as Agra. Tradition and legend ascribe the present city of Raja Badal Singh (around 1475 A.D.) whose Fort, Badalgarh, Stood on or near the site of the present Fort. However, the 12th century A.D. Persian poet Salman, too, speaks of a desperate assault on the fortress of Agra, then held by one King Jaipal, by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. It was Mughals who finally nurtured Agra with the finest monuments architects could design: The Taj Mahal of Shah Than, Agra Fort of Akbar, Itmad-Ud-Daulah and neighbouring Sikandra are but few of the many that spangle the city, each of which stands in mute testimony to the city's grandeur over the ages.

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The Agra district is situated in western U.P., between 27.11' degree Latitude North and 78.0' degree to 78.2’ degree Longitude East. Its Altitude is 169 meters above sea level on the North it is bounded by Mathura District, On the South it is bounded by Dhaulpur District, On the East it is bounded by Firozabad District and On the West it is bounded by Bharatpur. Agra is situated on the bank of Yamuna River.

In Agra Maximum Temperature in summer is 450.C. and minimum temperature is about 21.9D.C. and in Winter maximum temperature in 31.7D.C. and minimum temp. in about 4.2D.C. Best season for tourist in from October to March. According to Census 2001, the area of Agra district is 4027.00 sqr. km., Were Rural area is 3838.60 sqr. km. and Urban area is 188.40 sqr. km. Its Total Population is 36,21,700 out of which Males are 19,61,940 and Females are 16,59,760. &the Total Population, 20,53,990 constitute the Rural Population and 15,67,410/are makes the Urban Population.

The Agra district is divided into Six Tehsils and 15 Blocks. Total number of Nayay Panchayats in the district are 114 while Gram Sabhas stands at 636. The total populated villages are 904. The total number of police stations in the district are 41 out of which 16 are in Urban area and 25 are in Rural area. The total number of Railway Stations (including Halts) are 29 and Bus Stands/Bus Stops are 144. Total number of Broad Guage lines is 231 K.M.
Primarily the Economy of the Agra district is agriculture based while the economy base of Agra city is Small Scale Industries, Commerce and Trade. Major crops are Wheat, Paddy, Bajra, Mustard, Potato etc. About 40% of the total economy of Agra depend on industry (Directly or Indirectly). Over 7200 Small Scale Industrial Units are spared all over the district. Agra city is famous for the Leather Goods, Handicrafts, Zari Zardozi, Marvel and Stone carving & inlay work. Agra is also well-known for eats sweets (PETHA) and Snacks (DALMOTH AND GAJAK).

There are several prestigious educational institutions as well as medical and Engineering institution, namely, S.N. Medical College, Dayalbagh Engineering College, St. John's College, Agra College. RBS College, B.D. Jain Girls College, B.D.K. College. There are other educational institutions like those related to management studies And the IT Sector Agra is also known as a better schooling zone.

It has two parliamentary constituencies and nine legislative segments. The municipal corporation is also functioning at present. There is a well knit communication system in every respect, that is road, rail and airways.

Agra has a pluralistic society. A number of festivals are celebrated here and, in these celebration, people are observed to mix with each other, irrespective to caste, religion, region and culture. It has many famous temples related to Lord Shiva, Gurudwaras, Maszids and Churches.
The people residing in Agra city or incumbent in Agra are influenced by the changes created by the process of modernization, globalization and especially by the communication revolution. At present the people stand at the continuum of tradition and modernity. In this respect, the study area is quite relevant for the study of women domestic workers.

**Methodology:**

Most of the people who have migrated here are from the neighbouring villages, blocks and districts. They come to the town with the hope of finding better prospects of livelihood, which may not always be the case. However, it can be said that the socio-cultural scene of the town seems to be transforming.

For operational purposes, four major areas are selected; Agra Fast, Agra West, Agra Cant and Dayalbagh, with in Agra city based on their location in four geographical settings. Besides being located in four specific cardinal directions, it is necessary to find out if there are any differences/similarities between the domestic workers of these areas as regards socio-economic background, wages, nature of work, hours and working conditions, organization of the workers and finally the attitude of the employers towards them.

This study is confined to Agra city and further; for the operational point of view, different types of study designs are used in different
situations. Here, multiple methodologies have been used for the studying the domestic workers holistically.

Since the universe is scattered, the sampling method is used for the selection of cases. The study is based on fieldwork conducted on two hundred cases of domestic workers residing and working in Agra city. Besides two hundred domestics, fifty employers who sought the help of domestics are also studied, so that their perspective of the situation can be explained. The information has been gathered from both the documentary and field sources through various techniques, such as observation, interview schedules, case study, etc. Data have been collected, edited, and classified under various heads with regard to the various issues related to the day-to-day lives of women domestic workers. Throughout the study, a keen eye has been maintained to capture the intricacies of the workers' relationship with their employers. Based on the analysis of data, inferences have been drawn and put into conceptual language.

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