

Chapter 5

Household, Class Process and Working Women's Stress

Most humans cannot choose whether they want to work for money or for love, but women in great numbers are confronted with both demands. There is a need for an additional strengthening so that they do not yield to the temptation to stay in one area at the cost of the other. (Haug 57-58)

We are trying to pull all the threads together to understand woman's position within the triangle of patriarchy, capitalism and psychology. Capitalo-centricism and androcentrism are two processes constantly at work where woman's labour is concerned. When we are analysing stress as an outcome of money wage work (taking place in the capitalist workplace) then along with labour in other varieties of non-capitalist enterprises that we referred to in the last chapter one other missing link within this process is the role of household labour. It has particular relevance in working women's stress since it is the women who are the chief contributors of labour there. Not only that. Unlike the so-called gender-neutral space of capitalism, within household, labour is intimately imbricated within family-tradition complex constituted in turn by gendered meanings and patriarchal structure from an androcentric worldview. The latter in turn, in their overdetermination, provides an explanation of why a distinct kind of sexual division of labour in conjunction with the process of performance, appropriation, distribution and receipt of surplus labour appears. Women's stress cannot be reduced to stress of a gender neuter individual in capitalist workplace, but rather the dual or

triple burden of ‘work-family-tradition’ may function like an albatross to give shape to a set of stressors and in the process create the potential for stress. This leads to a conclusion. While stressors are constituted as a composite result of capitalism and patriarchy that in turn is legitimised and sustained by mainstream psychology, we need to also examine household labour to unpack the ‘labour of love’ and then only can we start seeing the full extent and nature of women’s working stress.

Situating Household Labour beyond the Reproductive-Productive Binary

Before we proceed to the class focussed theory of household, there is a need to make a few clarifications that would enable one to see the unique point of our intervention here. To begin with, Radical, Socialist and Marxist Feminists have popularised the terms ‘paid’ and ‘unpaid’ labour. We may need to properly reinterpret them in our developed class focussed framework so as not to generate further confusion on our usage of the terms. By ‘paid’, feminists at times seem to suggest money wage form of labour and by ‘unpaid’ no receipt of money wage. Therefore, the differences between the two terms are with reference to capitalism; the former integral to capitalism and the latter not so. In this sense, their categorical usage remains determined by capitalo-centrism. In contrast, our usage of paid/remunerated and unpaid/unremunerated in class focussed theory carries different meanings that imply different interpretation of labour and its relation to income and wealth. This might lead to implied suggestion, wrong in our opinion, that money wage is the only form of labour remuneration or even perhaps the dominant form (which would be a normative position). In class focussed theory, as we elaborated in chapter 3, in any labour process, whether capitalist or non-capitalist, there is a division between necessary labour and surplus labour. Only the necessary

labour component is paid, and surplus labour remains unpaid which consequently becomes the object of process of appropriation and distribution. The paid equivalent of necessary labour could be in kind (goods and services) if the produced use value is directly consumed as in case of household enterprises or in money form (or wage) if the produced use value is sold as a commodity in the market as in the case of capitalist enterprises.

A few things are to be noted from the above. One, part of the fruits created by labour is remunerated (whether in wage or kind) and the other half, the surplus created by surplus labour, remains unremunerated. The conclusion: there is no labour that is as such totally unpaid. Even household labour, say, given by housewives, has a paid component that is needed to reproduce her life form as we shall elaborate in more detail soon. Secondly, the household labour is not in money wage form and the surplus labour that is appropriated there is also not in surplus value form. Remuneration is in kind (basket of goods and services) but, and here we have to be careful, not totally unpaid. One cannot reduce household labour to unpaid labour *per se*.

Moreover, if in addition to household production we add other kinds of home based production systems occurring under the roof of the household, then even the division between non-wage/non-commodity and wage/commodity form of paid components occurring respectively in private and public spaces gets murkier. For example, it is common in many Indian households to find family members engaging in commodity generating activities inside the household (for example, producing and catering food (the beginning point of the entire Dabbawala phenomenon in Mumbai but also common elsewhere), sourcing various kinds of information and technology goods and services from home for individual sale or for other agencies, producing commodities as sites of outsourcing and subcontracting, that is, of a value

chain (such as the massive *Bidi* production occurring in hundreds and thousands of households in the West Bengal district of Murshidabad as part of contract to supply Bidi to (global) capitalist enterprises such as Pataka Group, etc.). Against these goods and services, the household members could receive money wages or a distributed portion of surplus value (if they have other non-labour position such as ownership position). Therefore, along with the classic non-wage system procreating, we also have the wage system running in tandem inside the household. The household is therefore also a commodity space where use values (labour power and produce) are transformed to exchange value. What we want to infer from this discussion is that the classical division between private and public space as personifying non-wage/non-commodity and wage/commodity respectively is problematical from our perspective.

Feminist analysis of labour always had diverse angles within different feminist schools. The problem is that Radical, Socialist and Marxist feminist approaches, at least the dominant variety, that discussed labour, seem to be stuck in the classical division (more on this soon). In contrast, liberal feminism recognises only the public space labour hitherto dominated by the male; therefore only the paid labour in terms of money wage is recognised as labour. For liberal feminists, women's entry into the labour force (money wage paid labour) and gaining economic independence by way of the right to make choices are the primary ways of achieving emancipation. The complication in the public space that drew the ire of the liberal feminists is that of structurally imposed discriminations that prevent women access or equal treatment as also the issue of unequal wage of women for the same work done by the male. They did not politicise the 'personal', that is, labour that exists within the realm of the private, the household. Rather, in this version of feminism, family based households

with traditional forms of duties and responsibilities stands as a barrier and something to be surpassed. Consequently, with the demotion of labour inside household, the need for an analysis of household labour is also occulted.

With the critique of liberal feminist ideas the ‘private’ was brought to surface by analysing sexuality and labour within the private domain. With the “Personal is political” (Tong, Bryson) slogan, the private came under feminist analysis. However, the more famous and explicit formulation was the ‘domestic labour’ debate that transpired in the 1970s and 1980s (Seccombe 1974, 1980; Humphries 1977; Himmelweit and Mohun 1977; Hartmann 1981; Delphy 1984). Delphy argued that ‘marriage is a labour of contract’ in which the men become the ‘economic master’ and women’s labour is exploited in that system (Bryson). This debate was based within a shared understanding that there is a connection of the capitalist system that produces commodities in the public space *with* the reproduction system of labour power that transpires inside the household. Therefore, the private and public space is connected. The question is, of what kind. This household labour is performed by the housewife. By outsourcing the reproduction of labour power to the household sector for which capitalist enterprises pay the (male) workers a wage equivalent of basket of goods and services, the actual production process of labour power (its physical and mental capacity to work) takes place inside the household through the ‘labour of love’ performed by the female members. Therefore, a system evolves in which the essential task of the women is to bear and rear the children and tend to the male members so as to create and replenish their labour power with the resources (household means of production bought by the male members from wage they got by working in the capitalist enterprises) available to them. Household labour is maintaining the ‘everyday’ of capitalist process by producing use values (food, cleaned

clothes, etc.) essential for the ‘man’ to be productive within the capitalist system. Two things occur. Femininity and masculinity is personified by the reproductive labour of the female and productive work of the male. This is the patriarchal system that now functions in relation to capitalism to sustain the socio-economic binary of public and private. Moreover, through this perpetuation of a sexual division of labour maintained by patriarchy, the household sector emerges as a necessary appendage of capitalist enterprises and is hence an integral component of the system of capitalism.

While there is much to appreciate in this debate, especially because it brought the issue of domestic labour into the forefront, this neat division between private and public as also between unpaid and paid labour *per se* is deeply problematical as we have noted. Furthermore, reduction of household labour to reproduction takes away the class question from household analysis and is a simplified and reductionist view of household labour seen clearly here through the lens of capitalism. This theory that is tantamount to a functionalist explanation of the existence of the household labour and sector as aiding the need of capitalism smacks of capitalo-centrism. Not only does it discursively exclude the possibility of other non-capitalist class processes in the public domain, it does not even consider the household as a site where class process can appear. The idea of labour deployed in domestic labour debate tend to have no relation to class process of performance, appropriation, distribution and receipt of surplus labour and works with the understanding of class as a noun (group of people) and also ultimately predicated upon capitalist and proletarian class where the task of the housewife is to reproduce the labour power of the proletarian class in the public space. The only way surplus is accounted in this frame is through surplus value (which is presumed to occur under capitalist condition) indicating an absence of an understanding of

distinguishing labour power from labour, surplus labour from surplus value; this inability meant that they failed to theorize class as process of surplus labour. The consequences of this lacuna is palpable and ironical since the domestic labour debate which wanted to critique capitalism and patriarchy ended up reiterating both and with that left the private-public divide undisturbed. The problem with Delphy and others is that they had no conception of class process of surplus labour and therefore no way of theorising the household sector in terms of performance, appropriation, distribution and receipt of surplus labour. Hence, they fail to fathom the possibility of household enterprises as class enterprises of various kinds that procreate alongside capitalist and non-capitalist class enterprises in other domains. In the end, their epistemology ended up being deterministic since they reduced household labour and household economy to capitalism.

Having clarified our understanding of labour and the manner in which we want to theorise household labour, let us now turn our focus to it. Let us abstract away from all other kinds of labour inside the household that may fetch money wage in a commodity production system and focus instead on household labour in the production of diverse use values meant for consumption in the household. Then we want to see its connection to patriarchy and gendering, and through that delve into an analysis of possible stressors that may appear on their own and especially in connection with the possibility where the women seek to venture out in shouldering the dual or triple burden of labour. That is, we want to examine the combined effect of ‘labour of gain’ with ‘labour of love’ in shaping working women’s stress. If we bring in all of the other kinds of (wage, commodity) labour in to the picture, the outcome we will suggest here will only become stronger since in that case the complexity of women’s working world will turn out to be more pronounced and hence the type and number

of stressors greater and more intense. Therefore, it is enough on our part to take just the household labour in non-wage, non-commodity setting to show the limitation of the conventional discourse of stress and also critique its somewhat deep seated lacuna in explaining the true nature of working women's stress.

In chapter 3 we have already explored the idea of labour of gain (labour under capitalist condition). In the next section we will unpack the labour of love and thereafter see its overdetermined relation with labour of gain. As suggested in earlier chapters, just as psychology was an appendage of capitalism, here too we will see patriarchy as an appendage of exploitative household labour. In their combined effect which sustains the triad of 'work-family-tradition', the gendered meaning of working women is produced and the limits of the discourse of stress highlighted. This jells with what Heidi Hartmann averred in her article "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union." (1981). Even when criticising Marxists for subordinating gender, she points to the necessity of producing an integrated understanding of both feminism and Marxism by accounting women's oppression and exploitation within both private and public space. Ferguson (1989), similar to Hartmann argued that only understanding of the economic system separate from societal bonding will not help to understand the exploitation of women. Our idea of overdetermination, with its property of mutual constitutiveness, has meant the impossibility of reductionism (such as reducing gender to class or vice versa) and therefore is ideal for producing just the type of understanding that Hartmann sought. In this endeavour, we seek to use and expand the basic framework of household labour as developed by Fraad, Resnick and Wolff and Cassano.

The Household Economy, Labour and Tradition

Like all sites of society, household is an overdetermined process of mutually constituting processes. Such processes, internal and external to the perimeter of the household, constitute one another and in the process give it certain form. Each household can then be defined by the combined effects of these mutually constituting processes; they produce relationship, activities and practices inside the household. Given the complex nature of its constitution, it is hardly surprising that the term ‘household’ have meant different things to different people.

Historically, the term “household” has carried many different meanings.

Sometimes it has referred to the living space occupied by members of a family and sometimes also to the family’s working space. Households have often included persons not considered family members, while family has often included persons not sharing a particular household. Indeed, “family” has been as variously defined as “household.” (Fraad, Resnick and Wolff, *Knight in Shining Armour* 24)

Adding to the description of household by Fraad, Resnick and Wolff (2009), household is a sector “... constituted by many dimensions, among which one is performance, appropriation, distribution and receipt of surplus labour” (Chakrabarti and Cullenberg, 185). Recall that this is the entry point of class focussed discourse. It is relevant for our analysis because it allows for an analytical space which (i) connects class to household labour, that is, enables us to see use value producing household labour as class process of performance, appropriation, distribution and receipt of surplus labour (ii) via overdetermination, relates household class process to non-class processes, including gender, sexuality and power (Spivak). In terms of our class focussed analysis, no household class process can exist alone

in any social setting but only appear and function in conjunction with particular sets of non-class processes.

One may ask: is there class inside household. Take a simple case of a wife and husband making up the household and further suppose that the wife works inside the household while the man works outside. The housewife produces the essential use values (i.e. food, clean rooms, stitched and clean clothes, washed dishes, etc.) using different means of productions (ovens, utensils, washing machines, etc.) in various kinds of labour processes (since she combines means of production with her labour power to produce those elements). Take any one item, say, some cooked meat. Is there a surplus labour in the labour process? If it is the case that the cooked meat produced by the housewife is partly for her consumption (that is, the necessary labour equivalent) and the rest is for her husband, then clearly the surplus meat is the product equivalent of her exerted surplus labour time. Hence, surplus labour is performed, appropriated, distributed and received inside that household and hence class process exists in a household. To the question why is it that in this household, it is the woman who performs surplus labour and the man does not, why is it that the man appropriates the surplus and why is it that the distribution of the surplus takes place according to some norm that, say, gives more to man and less to woman, etc., are questions which can only be answered by looking at the concrete constitutive relation of this class process with other non-class processes (gender, sexuality, power, etc.). For example, taking a look at the relation between class and gender, Fraad Resnick and Wolff contend that:

Just as one's life is shaped by the particular class processes in a society, it is also shaped by the gender processes in that society. Indeed, how people produce, appropriate, and distribute surplus labour depends on—and helps to

determine—how they produce, distribute, and receive definitions of what it means to be male and female. (Fraad, Resnick and Wolff 21)

Household is part of the social frame which reflects how gender and class are constantly influencing one another. In its constitutive relation between class and non-class processes, household class is thus class focussed but not class specific. If we expand our example then we come across, possibly and actually, a huge number of distinctly constituted household class enterprises that reveal the diversity of the household sector.

One can glean the diversity of household enterprises by unravelling the class forms that we have theorised in chapter 3. These household enterprises cannot be capitalist since labour power here is not a commodity (no money wage is being paid as remuneration for producing use value) and the produced use value is not a commodity either (since it is directly consumed), both properties necessary to define capitalist class form. However, these household class enterprises can take any of the other non-capitalist forms. It can be a feudal, slave, communist, communistic and independent (see chapter 3 for their definitions). That will depend upon the specific configuration of class and non-class processes that materialise inside the household. That is, not only can the household economy be reduced to capitalism (to see their overdetermined relation, though it is a legitimate pursuit), but it cannot be reduced to even one particular type, say, feudal. That is, the household enterprise may not be necessarily exploitative. It may be, for example, a communist household where all the members share in the process of performance and appropriation of surplus labour, thus ruling out exclusion of some members from appropriation; here sharing is foregrounding and the ‘labour’ in the ‘labour of love’ is collectively done. Many households in India and elsewhere are undergoing this transformation. One can imagine other variations and types.

One such type that has gathered force in the USA and elsewhere in recent times is the independent class form. Let us take the case of USA to exemplify our point. The explosion of independent class form in the USA has its root in the change that is occurring due to the transformation within the family structure. There is a transition in the USA household sector from ‘multi-person households’ to ‘single occupied households’ (Gabriel 197-217). It is notable that the multi-person households are as commonly known as the ‘nuclear families’ which was a common form of household in the United States up until 1960s. This leap in the United States is questioning the overall structure of the family and recognising the possibility of a new form of living pattern by both men and women. In the single occupied households, the single adults are predominantly living independently from their families (parents) and utilising most of their earning for self-consumption.

The “modern” single adult is more like the model economic man of neoclassical economics (*homo economicus*) than his predecessors, engaging in activity that at least appears to be “utility maximizing” (particularly if they have had courses in economics). (Gabriel)

However, the point is that such ‘single occupied households’ are independent class enterprises where surplus labour is individually performed and also individually appropriated. Technically, there is no exploitation but no sharing of these two processes either; rather, the mode of appropriation is self-appropriative.

This shift from nuclear to single occupied household is not yet a significant occurrence within Indian social structure as much as in the United States. In Indian culture, even today, whether there is a shift from ‘joint’ family to the ‘nuclear’ household structure or not is a debatable issue (Pani and Singh). This shift is debatable because the types of household are

not fixed to a certain structure. For example, in a nuclear family, parents of either husband or the wife might start living in the household if required or due to death of one parent, the father or the mother might start living with the couple. In Indian tradition, it is highly criticised if parents are left alone or sent to an old-age home. So, the typical definition of nuclear family is not applicable within the Indian traditional family structure. Even for single women, before marriage, however established and economically independent the women might be, they live with their parents (if the women work in the same city as their parents live). This is part of the weight of tradition that we had discussed in chapter 1.

The structure of different types of households consists of various layers. In India, as mentioned earlier, the joint family structure, which is also a form of multi-person household, exists (even) today. This kind of joint families are mainly forms that consist of several generations living in the same house, a type of extended family where parents, their children (daughters before their marriage, or widowed) and the sons with their wives and offspring and sometimes distant blood-relatives share a common roof. The family is headed by the (oldest) male figure who takes all the decisions related to economic and social issues for the family. The wife of the oldest male (the patriarch) generally has control over the kitchen.

A nuclear household consists of a pair of adults and their children. This does not have any similarities with single-occupied households as well as the larger joint family form of household. Nuclear families are, as typically defined, centred on a married couple who may have any number of children (Pani and Singh). In India, in some cases, in the nuclear household, the father or mother in-law or both live with the couple and their children. The structure varies with the concept of nuclear family from the West where it only consists of the couple and their children.

This tells us then that one cannot discern the presence, role and impact of ‘tradition’ by merely looking at occupation structure of households as there is no one set pattern. This raises a question. Notwithstanding their family structure, how do we conceptualise a ‘traditional’ family from a class focussed perspective? Fraad, Resnick and Wolff argue that it resembles what has been defined as ‘feudal’.

Our analysis focuses initially on households that display certain basic characteristics. They contain an adult male who leaves the household to participate in capitalist class processes (at the social site of the enterprise) to earn cash income. They also contain an adult female, the wife of the male, who remains inside the household. They may also contain children, elderly parents, and others, but that is of secondary importance at this initial phase of the analysis. The adult female works inside the household in the task of shopping, cleaning, cooking, repairing clothes and furniture, gardening, and so on. . . In any case, our analysis of this type will then make possible a comparative analysis of other types characterizing contemporary households. . . A consideration of the various non-capitalist forms of fundamental class process discussed in the Marxist literature readily suggests which form best fits our household. It is the feudal form. . . The feudal form is appropriate because it requires no intermediary role for markets, prices, profits or wages in the relation between the producer and appropriator of surplus labour. The producer of surplus on the medieval European manor often delivered his/her surplus labour (or its product) directly to the lord of the manor, much as the wife

delivers her surplus to her husband (Fraad, Resnick, and Wolff, *Bringing it All Back Home* 5–7).

Other than the feudal form, one can also imagine CA community class type (see chapter 3) as taking a ‘traditional’ form since here while surplus labour may be collectively performed by the family members, one performing member, the ‘head’ of the family, has the right to appropriate the produced surplus. This exploitative system is usually based on the gender-patriarchal processes that secure the conception of the elderly male as the ‘head’ of the family thereby conferring the right to appropriation of any produce, ownership of property, and final say on decision on him. These exploitative scenarios may lead to insights that would not be available in other feminist discourses. For example, one can have a scenario where the feudal lord or head at home is both the exploiter and exploited.

In the household, he appropriates “his” woman’s feudal surplus labour; at the workplace, he performs surplus labour for his capitalist employer. On the job, he is exploited; at home, he exploits. The woman in this simplified example occupies only one class position, that of feudal serf. (Fraad, Resnick and Wolff, *Knight in a Shining Armour* 44)

The ‘traditional’ qua feudal or CA communistic households may have numerous variations depending upon class and non-class relations that emerge. This includes, as we argued earlier, the process of gendering as also the process of power. As class is an economic process, gender is also considered a process which is cultural and ideological (Butler, Hennessey and Ingraham). Gender is a process of giving social meaning to the specific differences between people, that is, male and female. It produces the construct of what is femininity and masculinity through various kinds of performativity, as Butler puts it, that

normalises certain processes within and outside the household as natural; among these performativity is the labour process and more specifically the class process of who performs what labour, who appropriates and distributed the surplus, and why and who receives what magnitude of the distributed surplus and the legitimisation of it. In turn, the very unfolding of the class process of performance and appropriation of surplus labour in household, that is, that the housewife/women *does* perform it and the husband/male elder *does* appropriate it, therefore constitutes the very gendered meaning of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, gender and class process constitute one another. As gender facilitates the class process, patriarchy too plays an important part in it. Patriarchy constitutes the structure of power – the Law of the Father – that secures the process of men appropriating the surplus produce by women within the household through management, supervision and disciplining of the members into doing and not doing certain things. What we see therefore as materialising inside traditional household is the overdetermination of class process, gender process and patriarchal process. For convenience sake we may say that as ‘exploitation’ is a direct result of class process within the household, ‘oppression’ is a complex of political and social/cultural process by which one (man) dominates and controls the other’s (woman) behaviour and labour directly, and where the male and female subjugates themselves to the norms and conventions as the natural set of relationships, activities and practices. The idea of ‘tradition’ that emerges is thus a result of the overdetermined effects of class, gender and patriarchy.

It must be understood though that feudal or CA communistic household is not the only form of household; it cannot be in the class focussed interpretation of household sector composed of a variant of diverse kind of exploitative, non-exploitative and self-appropriating

class processes. One cannot reduce household economy to ‘traditional’ such as feudal form. This means that there is always a scope for transformative practices whereby attempts are made to enact household class transformation, say, from a feudal household to communist household. Or, the family may break up in a manner where the members decide to split and set up independent households with self-appropriating class process as is the case happening in the USA in large numbers.

Our analysis also implies that if ‘traditional’ households are to become dominant, then the exploitative complexity of feudal and CA communistic class forms along with the oppressive complexity of gender-patriarchy must be socialised as the norm and natural. This is how these three emerge as hegemonic construct of households as also of the idea of masculine and feminine. The men and women are hegemonised by certain beliefs, practices and moralities, and this hegemonisation is socially secured and its effects and reach is also social. That is why the assumption of gender or asexual nature of capitalist space by psychology and management is such a deep problem. It does not deal with household labour and questions of rate of exploitation there. Nor does it deal with the sociality of gender-patriarchy. As a result, the set of stressors (such as exhaustion, anxiety, guilt, fear, etc.) that may appear especially when women are entering into the workplace are ignored. It is self-evident that one cannot identify or examine these socially derived stressors by keeping the analysis isolated exclusively in the domain of the individual and that too the individual in a capitalist labour process. It should also be evident from our analysis that the way working women in the public will be impacted and hence nature of stress would differ depending upon whether she is functioning within ‘traditionality’ or outside of it. In other words, which class

enterprise she is embedded in and her class positions will matter in how stress is produced, seen and accounted by these different individuals and groups of women.

Finally, while Indian households are undergoing transformation we may say that the traditional forms of households continue to be the hegemonic form. This explains why in India, for the working women striving to enter the public domain, it is not the dual burden of merely work and home, but perhaps the triple of work, home and tradition that is the proper context of theorising the creation and change of the discourse of stress.

New Women and Domestic Workers in India

Generally and especially within the dual earner household, the stress faced by new women lead to questions of organizing the work time and schedule inside the household. Many researches relating to domestic help show that working women try to assign their daily chores to the helper which make them less bothered about household chores (Mohan, Chauhan and Chauhan) that could have been another addition to the stressors that eventually generate psychological stress resulting in effects that we have already described.

The rise of middle class household and increase in domestic workers have been two parallel processes in the era of post-globalisation India's economic transition.

Growth and urbanisation are said to encourage the growth of the domestic service workforce, as they produce an affordable class of employers and a surplus of unskilled workers. The agrarian crisis in rural areas and the loss of livelihoods have resulted in the sourcing of a regular supply of cheap workers, for whom this is the only promising option. (Neetha 492)

As per the NSSO estimates in 2004-05, the quantum of workers employed in private households, largely domestic workers, are 4.75 million; 3.05 million are women workers in urban areas moving into urban middle class families, overwhelmingly part-time, which makes this sector one of the most prominent for female employment in urban areas. (Neetha)

In this backdrop of growing supply of domestic workers, hiring outside help for domestic services has become a better option for working women to deal with the pressure within the household in general. Since, hiring domestic help is easier in India due to abundance of low wage informal sector workers most of the families appoint domestic helper for different types of domestic chores, for example, cooking, cleaning, washing as well as taking care of the children and elderly. In the transition phase, family structure is rapidly becoming nuclear and family support is not readily available as it used to be under the previous joint family system. This puts pressure on average duties of household reproduction. Resultantly, for most of the dual earning middle class families, it becomes easier and necessary to seek outside help in the form of domestic workers to manage the household.

There is however an additional element in the growing entry of domestic workers. It refers to the issue of caste. In India the category of Scheduled Castes (SCs) was found to constitute a very large part of domestic workers, that is, 33.4 per cent in 2004-05 (Neetha). A report by Jagori³⁹ in 2010 show that in Delhi 61% of the Domestic worker population is of SC category. In Bangalore, 75% of the domestic worker belongs to SC category (Chigateri et.al). It was also found that there are some families who do not allow lower caste women to enter the kitchen implying that the task of cooking is performed by the female members of the family and the rest of the household chores done by the hired help. Not only is the household space underlined by caste processes, but it can also be viewed as a possible site of another

³⁹ http://www.jagori.org/wp-content/uploads/2006/01/Final_DW_English_report_10-8-2011.pdf

process of exploitation in which today's new women is the exploiter and the predominantly lower caste domestic worker the exploited.

Despite this strategy of solving the problem of stress, the question remains whether this really relieves the women from being anxious about household work and thinking about the children. Studies show that working women do not always feel less anxious even after hiring help for domestic work (Andrade, Postma and Abraham) but it has been also seen that working and non-working women both have almost the same level of anxiety even when they have hired help for household chores (Mukhopadhyay, Dewanji and Majumder). That shows that household chores per se act as a significant stressor for working women, an aspect further compounded by work pressure in the workplace. When a woman worker is leaving her house in the hand of the helper it is not always easy for her to let go of her anxieties, especially when social norms would hold her responsible rather than the man if something goes on. Hiring domestic help might ease the physical labour and tasks related demands within the household but the psychological predicament is present mostly because of the unequal distribution of labour tasks between male and female within the household.

Working women and some facts on the relation between Household and Capitalism

The interdependency of 'traditional' household and capitalism change when the situation within the household is different in the sense that we take the woman now as working outside home. The class structure (complex of all class enterprises) of households might transform under this change within the household.

Complex class structures, contradictions, and struggles exist within contemporary households and in their relations with capitalist enterprises.

They shape—alongside all the other non-class aspects of households—how this institution evolves and how it impacts all of us. Class matters inside the household just as it does inside the enterprise, at home as much as on the job, albeit in different ways. (Resnick and Wolff, *Connecting Sex to Class* 100)

When women work outside, selling labour power, she is not only working outside home, she is also taking care of the household. She is under exploitation of capitalist mode as well as the feudal one. She might not tolerate the exploitation/oppression within household anymore. It has been studied that in USA, the participation of women in the wage labour segment has increased their total work time by 14 to 25 hours a week. “The average non-employed wife spends 57 hours per week on housework, while the average employed wife spends 28 hours per week on housework, in addition to 40 hours in paid employment plus travel time to and from paid employment.” (Fraad, Resnick and Wolff, Knight in Shining Armour 50) Most of the time, the total working hours show that, husbands are not participating in the housework as much is required for them to help their wives to take rest or have some time for themselves. Stafford (2008) reports that married women do an average of seven hours a week more housework than their husbands.

In India, the household labour time produced by women is greater because men do not participate in any form of household work as it is not masculine or manly to do ‘women’s job’. In a survey it was found that (urban Indian) men participate on an average of 42 hours in SNA (“activities consist of primary production activities, like crop farming, animal husbandry, fishing, forestry, processing and storage, mining and quarrying; secondary activities like construction, manufacturing and activities like trade, business and services” [Pandey 5]) whereas women take part in it for 19 hours (on an average). However, situation

totally varies when Extended SNA (“activities include household maintenance, care for children, sick and elderly” [Pandey 5]) activities are in consideration. Men spent only about 3.6 hours as compared to 34.6 hours by women in these activities.⁴⁰ So, if we look at the total labour time spent by both men and women, the SNA and Extended SNA put together, women and men perform labour for 53.6 hours and 45.6 hours respectively. When women are working, they are giving 8 hours of more labour than men. But when the household labour (extended SNA) is concerned, women perform labour ten times more than men in India.

Woman’s location in exploitation-oppression within the capitalist system can be paraphrased as highlighting a double alienation, within household and capitalism (Ferguson); she is exploited and oppressed in both segments through a discourse that socially produces these as normal and natural. The divide of wage work, that is public, and the non-wage housework, that is private, is creating this double alienation. Stretched by the contradictory, and pushes of the dual alienation, women are denied of their full personhood, citizenship and human rights (Okin, Ferguson).

Having explored the complexity of women’s labour and their social position, let us now highlight one aspect of work in the capitalist space which has drawn lots of attention. Within the capitalist space, women who are wage earners are directly under the exploitation of the capitalist system. Job segregation is a significant example of this exploitative process.

⁴⁰ “Gender issues in the measurement of paid and unpaid work”: this paper was prepared by R. N. Pandey of the central Statistical Organization, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, New Delhi, Country Paper for the Expert Group Meeting on Time Use Survey to be held at New York, 23 -27 OCTOBER, 2000 Ahmedabad http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/meetings/egm/TUse_1000/india.pdf

Never Done and Poorly Paid⁴¹

Generations of economics students still begin with the definition of economic activity as ‘paid labour’ with an agreed understanding that women are only supplementary earners... (Krishnaraj 1428)

Hartmann argues that “job segregation by sex ... is the primary mechanism in capitalist society that maintains the superiority of men over women ...” (Hartmann 139). When women started working, poor and unequal payment was a major issue. Along with that another major issue for women was that going outside and giving more labour-time was difficult because they had to take care of the family, and child care was a major involvement. Initially capitalism threatened the existence of patriarchal institutions by giving women the scope to be the labourer in the “free” market (Hartmann, *Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation*). “Sex discrimination in hiring and work assignments tends to keep women in lower-paid jobs” (Fraad, Resnick and Wolff, *Knight in Shining Armour* 34). But later through job segregation the control over women was sustained even if she was earning for herself. Due to job segregation, the women earn less than men; which maintains the hierarchical position between men and women by making women unable to become independent, which in turn forced them to settle within the institution of marriage and family.

Low wage keep women dependent on men because they encourage women to marry. Married women must perform domestic chores for their husbands. Men benefit, then, from both higher wages and the domestic division of labour. This domestic division of labour, in turn, acts to weaken women’s position in the labour market. Thus, the hierarchical domestic division of labour is

⁴¹ This is a title of a book written by Jayati Ghosh about Women’s Work in Globalising India.

perpetuated by the labour market, and vice versa. (Hartmann Capitalism, *Patriarchy and Job Segregation* 139)

These are the non-legal regulations and conventions which weakened women's options of independence and which resultantly forced them into the feudal position in households. If a woman joins the corporate world, it is very difficult for her to adjust to the demands of the job profiles (e.g. overtime, travelling, weekend meetings etc) if she has family obligations to fulfil. Career advancement in these fields becomes problematical for the woman.

Lower payment of work for women employees was a very common problem that arose along with the rise of number of women in the workforce. This problem of under-payment existed among male workers also under capitalist exploitation, but women were more deprived than men. The segregation by sex was a major issue among the working women class. Although primarily, job segregation related to gender division between paid and unpaid work, that is, men and women were mostly divided into these two categories of work. Housework was and still is considered only suitable for women, which is always unpaid; and outside home all the paid work was for men. Women's earning, till date in many families are considered supplementary, not for contributing to the household expenses and women were supposedly earning the money to satisfy their own material desires.

...the wages of the worker represent not only the value of his services to his employer, and through him to the community, but also the value of his wife's services to him and their children, and through them to the community, and in addition, the value to the State of the children themselves. His wage, in short, are the channel by which the community indirectly and only half-consciously,

pays for the continuance of its own existence and the rearing of fresh generations. (Rathbone 62)

It has been the traditional belief that men are paid with the amount which is not just to meet is necessary living costs, it is also to maintain the family (where wife works as a serf) and to raise further generations of labourers, that is their sons and daughters for adding to the ‘everyday’ for the capitalist system. It has been always difficult to perceive that women may also have similar responsibilities that need to be equally addressed and paid for accordingly.

The wages of women workers are not based on the assumption that “they have families to keep.” And in so far as these wages are determined by the standard of life of the workers it is a standard based on the cost of individual subsistence, and not on the cost of family subsistence. ...The number of women whose family responsibilities are really equivalent to the normal responsibilities of the average-sized household of man, woman, and three children is after all, very small. (Rathbone 62)

But in the 21st century, there are many women who have to take care of their families. They are not willing to give in to the feudal mode of production which is subtly working its way within the household. Many divorced women live by themselves; there is even an ongoing trend that many women are choosing a single/unmarried life.

Divorced women often break with feudal traditions and establish single adult households without lords or serfs. ... Some women establish still another kind of nonfeudal household in which the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labour is accomplished collectively—the communist class structure mentioned earlier. In these circumstances, falling real wages in

the capitalist sector contribute to the transition of some households out of feudal class structures altogether. (Fraad, Resnick and Wolff, *Knight in Shining Armour* 46)

Even when women are not entering the mainstream households, job segregation remains, even if not in a similar fashion. Present day work segregation has taken a new toll for the women entering the workforce. Women, particularly in the work space we are looking at, work for salaries and not for hourly wages. Though, till date the wage inequality exists in the informal sector of work. What is the difference between the oppression and exploitation that exists now from what was there previously?

Entry of capitalism made women's position apparently better in the beginning, but later the settlement between patriarchy and capitalism (although not a visible process) made the position of women more difficult, the burden of family as well as work began to affect their wellbeing.

Different economists analysed the causes of segregation in a different manner. Some argue that lower pay for similar work is a result of factors such as:

...(1) women are less efficient than men in a given job; (2) they have lower skills, which may be related to lower investment in human capital (less formal education and/or less on-the-job training); (3) they have higher turnover rates; and (4) they are relatively immobile. Finally, some people argue that women may have less attachment to the labour force than men. (Reagan and Blaxall 1-2)

The above mentioned causes of job segregation show a general misogynistic/androcentric attitude from the male co-worker as well as the authority (who are mostly men). Women were not given the opportunity to be trained in particular fields and later lack of expertise in such areas was considered to be women's downfall, denial of opportunity was not taken into account. Women were excluded purposely, which was depicted as an error of omission. It was as if women were accidentally omitted from the system (education, work, political rights etc) which (the allegation of exclusion by liberal feminists and through different women's movements) was later modified by including them within this system. However, this inclusion did not change the stereotypical depiction of women as weaker (sex) than men. Their potentialities were never utilised; rather they were assigned work that was marked as 'woman's jobs'. Thus, the segregation was occupationally covering two areas, one, types of work and the second, salary structure. First area, that is, what type of work is for women was determined by the primary understanding of women as the weaker sex, that women lack rationality and decisiveness which make them less capable for certain types of work, i.e., surgeons, professors, police officers, army personnel and many more. Most suitable jobs for women were (are) considered to be related to their ability to care, as it is the primary quality the women supposedly possess; jobs like, teaching, care of children and the old, nursing, etc. They might need to go outside for work, but the best job for women is still housework/homemaking.

In both their theoretical and empirical work, neoclassical economists have concentrated their attention primarily on the male-female pay differential and only secondarily on sex-segregation per se. Their examination of segregation has largely been a by-product of investigations of wage-related issues. ...

However, the coexistence in the labour market of both pay differentiation by sex and sex segregation along occupation and other dimensions strongly suggests (although it certainly does not prove) a link between the two. (Blau and Jusenius 182-183)

Keeping these causes in mind, we can see that women workers also have been considered the job stealer from men. During the World War II, women became the emergency workforce as men had to join the army. At that period of time, bringing food on the table was more important for the women than to see how much they are earning or whether they were getting equal pay for equal work or not. After the war was over, men came back and rightfully (sic!) took their jobs back. During this period, women were assumed to be happy to be back at their own place, i.e. the household and taking care of the family she belonged to. Working was not an option to them anymore, because the public sphere, was once again, taken over by the men and women were more comfortable (apparently) within the private. But later, Friedan in a study showed that women who were educated and still kept themselves within the household with the illusory belief that they are happy, began to feel several kinds of problems. They themselves were not aware of the cause, but even after having all that ‘every woman desires’, a happy home, a good husband and beautiful disciplined children, they were not happy. Which Friedan named ‘Problem with no name’ (Friedan, *Feminine Mystique*).

This led them to get back to the economic system and become a part of the labour force, which made men insecure about their jobs and the competition, but there is also a major issue of less participation of women in the household work. This made the job segregation stronger within the workforce and led to the lessening of job opportunities for women.

Bergmann (1971) formalised the overcrowding hypotheses in her analyses of occupational segregation. Bergmann argued that women are restricted by demand factors to a limited set of occupations. This restriction results first in women receiving higher wages, and second in the nonrestricted group (men) receiving higher wages than if the constraints to mobility between the male and female sectors did not exist. In other words, Bergmann contrasts two equilibrium positions. In both these positions workers earn the value of their marginal products. Women, however, because they are forced into relatively small number of occupations and the capital-labour ratio associated with these occupation are thus relatively low, have a lower productivity than men (Blau and Jusenius 184)

Another set of analysis given for lower valuation of the women's work focuses on the economic concept of monopsony of labour markets, which allows employers to choose worker based on their preference. They might have distaste for hiring women, they also might have misogynistic approach that will not tolerate a woman worker to be the supervisor (Reagan and Blaxall). This affects job availability and wage standards of women.

A crucial element of the monopsony model as developed by Madden in this relationship between elasticity of supply and wages. To explain, the less elastic the supply curve of labour, the lower will be the wage, assuming (1) a profit-maximizing firm and (2) an upward-sloping supply curve of labour to the firm. Thus, it is argued that women's wages are lower than those of men because the supply curve of women to the firm is less wage-elastic than that of men. In

other words, a firm has greater monopsony power over women. (Blau and Jusenius 189)

Another important factor rises with this analysis is that in the human capital approach, women have always been the victim of the weaker sex concept. Men are always considered better in performance than most of the women, even when the reality may be otherwise. Women, because of their family obligations and also their exclusion from education and training for wage labour found it more difficult to be employed within the work field. In the human capital, the ‘human’ is always the man. Based on his performance the standard is set for work.

The major point of the human capital approach is that men and women are not perfectly substitutable for one another. Although they may be similarly distributed across OQ categories and levels of education, women accumulate less human capital through work experience because they spend proportionately few years in the labour force than men. Thus, productivity differentials between men and women will appear. In other words, the quality of labour supplied by the two groups varies because of their different patterns of labour force participation, of which the presumably higher turnover rates among women are short-run manifestation. Pay differentials merely reflect the quality differentials between men and women. (Blau and Jusenius 185)

Acker points out the question of gender neutrality of the workplace. All workplaces are portrayed as gender neutral organizations, most of the time the neutrality is based on the concept that workers are all ‘human’ and equal where as the ‘human’ concept itself is

understood in the light of the ‘male’ identity. Worker, this term itself is equated with the term male, for describing the ‘other’ sex, we need to mention the term ‘woman worker’.

Another impediment to feminist theorising is that the available discourses conceptualise organizations as gender neutral. Both traditional and critical approaches to organizations originate in the male, abstract intellectual domain (Smith 1988) and take as reality the world as seen from that standpoint. As a relational phenomenon, gender is difficult to see when only the masculine is present. Since men in organizations take their behavior and perspectives to represent the human, organizational structures and processes are theorised as gender neutral. When it is acknowledged that women and men are affected differently by organizations, it is argued that gendered attitudes and behavior are brought into (and contaminate) essentially gender-neutral structures. This view of organizations separates structures from the people in them. (Acker 142)

Equally qualified women in a men dominated workplace will always be seen as a ‘sex object’ rather than be viewed according to her ability to do the work efficiently. In most of the cases of women who reach higher positions, there is always a hidden (unexpressed) insinuation that a particular woman is dishing out sexual favours to the superior to achieve her success. Though when we are discussing the ‘worker’ as a category she, the woman worker, should be detached from her femininity or the feminine self, rather she has to be more like a man. The category ‘worker’ does not have a gender. Yet our social perception is always blind to the belief that women could have the potential and the expertise as equal to men or rather

higher than men. A man, when he is getting promoted will (almost) never be subject to such imputations. For men, it is always their efficiency.

Also in many cases, men feel threatened to work under a woman boss/supervisor. They are not ready to take orders or instruction from the “woman” boss. If the ‘woman’ boss is strict and not very soft spoken, she will be considered as emotionless and not ‘lady like’. Sometimes even she is considered and compared to men in a negative sense. Or, that she is trying to wear pants (metaphorically, though she might actually wear pants in the office space) and trying to be more like a man. When women behave like men, it also labels them as ‘ball breakers’ (Purohit 7).

On the other hand, if the woman boss is polite and not assertive, she will be considered an inefficient and ineffective boss. Not apt for the job. So, playing the perfect role for the job is too demanding and to some extent generate confusion relating to the appropriate role⁴² at workplace. Being asexual at workplace is required from women, because sometimes women are blamed to be the cause for distraction for male co-workers. They should not dress provocatively and they should not even look good. Women who dress up for work are considered to be women who try to allure a man for advancement or to get advantage from male co-workers.

They love to play damsel in distress, always looking for a knight in shining armour to ride to their rescue. They believe that smouldering looks and deep cleavage are the strongest assets they have, and try to use feminine wiles to get what they want. (Purohit 8)

⁴² As discussed in the second chapter, role confusion increases stress in the workplace (Pestonjee)

This stereotypical portrayal of (working) woman is not something from the past. Even today, when guidelines for how to ‘behave’ in the workplace are printed in various books, women are still portrayed as if they are using their femininity as a tool to get advantage within the workplace. People try to put a tag on this kind of behaviour in all working women, whereas most working women today do not behave in such a manner. Did they ever?

Current theories of organization also ignore sexuality. Certainly, a gender-neutral structure is also asexual. If sexuality is a core component of the production of gender identity, gender images, and gender inequality, organizational theory that is blind to sexuality does not immediately offer avenues into the comprehension of gender domination (Hearn and Parkin 1983, 1987). Catharine MacKinnon's (1982) compelling argument that sexual domination of women is embedded within legal organizations has not to date become part of mainstream discussions. Rather behaviors such as sexual harassment are viewed as deviations of gendered actors, not, as MacKinnon (1979) might argue, as components of organizational structure. (Acker 142)

Discussing gender within the workplace is like contaminating the workplace. Even, raising the problem of sexual harassments is often considered irrelevant. Yet, sexual harassment is a major problem that the women face in the workplace which leads to a limitation of job options. Sometimes, it is even impossible to work under such harassments without any help from the authority. (Friedman) Sexual harassment is another form of sexual domination over women within the workplace. Such conditions keep women and children dependent on the higher wage and salary incomes of men. That dependence translates into feudal household surplus labour production.

The whole point of segregation and sexual domination, at the end, brings out the possibility of keeping the class struggle alive within the private as well as the public. Gender discrimination is a continuous factor deciding the fate of the women everywhere. Whatever the situation is, in most of the cases the wife is supposed to give up her job when she marries to become a full-time housewife. She is meant to be taking care of the home. That is her “‘true’ vocation” (Marshall and Cooper 107-109). Whatever she might do as a housewife, whatever way she spends her time should not interfere with the time she must spend for husband and the family.

In this type of marriage the couple continue in their complementary roles; his career success satisfy them both... and the organisation benefits by getting one and a half employees for the price of one. (Marshall and Cooper, 1979; 107-109)

Does this bring happiness? The maintaining of the class process with the help of gender discrimination is leading to a rise in the level of tension between men and women in the households. Married women are now considered to be most at risk for mental breakdown, while the second and third riskiest groups are single men and married men respectively. (Fraad, Resnick and Wolff, *Knight in Shining Armour*) Single women have the lowest risk of mental breakdown (Showalter 1985; Fraad, Resnick and Wolff, *Knight in Shining Armour*). The high risk of married women is over-determined by many interacting causes. These tensions and strains inside traditional households are forcing women to leave paid employment and live within feudal households.

The mental breakdown referred by Fraad, Resnick and Wolff (*Knight in Shining Armour*) is presented before us, within the workplace as the concept of stress (the meaning,

definition and history of which we elaborated earlier in chapter two). Now we would look at the direct relation of stress and working women and try to analyse the epidemic of stress, which Becker (*One Nation Under Stress*) depicts as ‘stressism’ within this sphere.

Working Woman and Stress: Understanding the ‘Epidemic’

Because working women are constantly balancing between work and home, when it comes to the topic of how women can manage stress, it is often suggested that they can ‘take care’ of themselves and their health, that they can also take care of others and thereby meet the obligations of both personal/family lives as well as work (Becker, *Women's Work*).

Women are advised to achieve ‘balance’ in their lives by taking care of their health and ‘working’ on themselves so that they can continue to uphold their obligations to others. By means of this work, women are told, they can prevent everything from weight gain to premature death. (Becker, *Women's Work* 37)

What is our mainstream understanding of ‘woman and stress’? Is stress gender neutral (or should we say neuter) or something different, something new? While gender specific discussion is something new in researches on stress (as the concept of ‘stress’ itself is new), many of the elements of what passes off as women’s stress today existed perhaps since the dawn of human race. The point is that the notion of stress among women became the focus of attention for the researchers when new women started working and the necessity of balancing work with family became a major concern (Becker, *Women's Work*). The concept of work-family role conflict started drawing attention of scholars (mostly psychologists) and organisations started investing on researches and began to develop several management techniques to deal with working women’s stress. If one throws in the weight of tradition in this juggle, then the scenario becomes more complex.

The point is that conflicts faced by a working woman are many layered. Most of the time the primary conflict is: whether to work at all or quit job for the family. There is a huge amount of guilt involved for many of the working woman which leads to mental and physical strain. Other than this guilt related to working, for a working woman there are other guilt inducing reasons. These conflicts are mainly related to the questions of job location, having a child, when to have a child, how many hours of job to take and many more. With additional complication of tradition, the primary question of whether at all to work or not is still a weighty question in Indian culture (in the west ‘not to work’ may no longer be an option for most of the woman). When a woman wants to work even after marriage, many a times the in-laws create problems and demand that the daughter-in-law stay at home and manage household work, a contradictory demand that may create a lot of stress for the women who are educated and want to be economically independent.

However, for the married working women with no objection as such from the in-laws or the husband, somewhat different types of conflict arise. When it comes to selecting a job, the location of job becomes an issue. With the current form of global capitalism based on flexible accumulation regime, it is most of the time impossible for the husband and wife to find suitable jobs in the same place. In such cases, it is seen that the work location of the husband is prioritised and wife’s career is considered secondary (Agrawal, Gaur and Jain). The question of timing and duration of work is added to that when the location is within the reach of the family (parameter of kilometre is set by the families). For example, a wife must not work late or work at night shift, especially, when she is married or is a mother. Type of

job and the amount of salary is also important when it is compared to the husband (Jick and Mitz).⁴³

‘Biological motherhood’ plays a big part in the Indian society because of its mandatory nature and particularly when “...patriarchal society teaches its members that the woman who bears a child is best suited to rear him or her” (Tong 81). Even in various cases the issue of biological motherhood includes the infertility question. The woman may not be having problems relating to fertility whereas in many cases the blame for infertility is becoming an issue among working women creating the potential for stress.

Women with hectic jobs are those most at risk [for infertility], and are often most in denial about the stress in their lives, say researchers. ...simple ‘talking therapies’ can reverse the effect of stress and boost a woman’s chances of becoming pregnant. The therapy was designed to give women a *better sense of perspective* and *improved self-worth* to help cut stress levels. (Wheldon 1)

Hectic jobs and job related stress here are the culprits for women to become infertile. Becker (*Women's Work*) criticises this connotation and writes:

Here, not only are women with ‘hectic jobs’ seen as more at risk; they are depicted as unaware of the insidious effects that job stress can have on their fertility. Stress is the culprit and, by extension, the woman herself. The answer? The acquisition of ‘a better sense of perspective and improved self-worth,’ a wholly individual solution that does nothing to move us toward an

⁴³ It is problematic in many cases if the wives earn more than their husbands and work in a better position than them.

improved understanding of how jobs can be so stressful as to cause infertility.

(Becker, *Women's Work* 41)

The liability of being infertile also falls on the shoulder of the women worker, who, herself, begin purposely to accept the alleged ‘fact’ that infertility is their own doing as they are working too hard, as women should not be doing ‘men’s job’ and should work within the household. She accepts that women ‘should’ only give birth – which is something ‘natural’. The remedy of this problem, as Becker (*Women's Work*) points out somewhat sarcastically, is displaced completely to individual decisions even when the root of the problem is social. The implied suggestion is that if individuals take care of their health properly, it seems (as if) that the problem of infertility will disappear. Taking a decision regarding having a child is another problem faced by working women (Agrawal 163). Many (working) women could and do become indecisive about having a child because they feel that it will hinder their working lives. This decision is based on a predetermined assumption that raising a child at the end of the day becomes the sole responsibility of the woman (the feminine duty) and she will be burdened with more domestic chores than usual. The same assumption may cause the decision to go the other way, that is, for the women to quit her job to bear and rear the child; the basis of this decision is her and other’s subjectification that privileges motherhood over job and foregrounds child rearing to be exclusively a feminine characteristic and hence primarily the women’s duty. Given that this view is socially produced and hence generalised which means that perhaps, especially in traditional nuclear or joint families, that men would not participate in child rearing, the women’s assumption may not be without basis; in that case, it is really difficult for the woman to manage both household (with a child or children) and the workplace. It is not surprising that women who enter the workforce despite these pressures are

working daily under stressful conditions whose cause cannot be reduced to either the individual or the organisation *per se*.

The same organisations could play a very important role in this regard. For working mothers the organisations are providing flexible hours, maternity leaves (even paternity leaves), crèches within the office premise etc. These are being introduced as a mitigating solution for child related problem and as if it is a ‘ray of hope’ (Agrawal 163). But questions remain. Will introduction of these services/policies reduce the pressure on a working mother to handle the dual role of a ‘worker’ as well as a mother, not to speak of the weight of tradition? Does the whole idea, even if good intentional, end up posing the problem as an individual one when it is clearly social? Therefore, does it then draw the attention away from the actual causes of stress and in the process circumvent rather than solve the problem? Even here there are doubts since very few organisations do provide these facilities raising the question of whether it is all on paper rather than practiced in real life. Specially, in India, one wonders how many organisations do adopt these measures and hence secure the above mentioned facilities related to caring of their women workers’ children. This doubt is not surprising because such measures involve cost for the organisation while the direct benefit to it is close to zero (since it could ask another person without a child to do the job); in a scenario of competitive capitalism which survives through cost-cutting, it is incomprehensible that such a solution will become general under a system which operates with the objective of profit generation. Women’s ‘soft needs’ stumbles and falters before the ‘hard reality’ of men’s world of cut-throat competition that capitalism embodies.

Another related issue is when to have a child? When the woman reaches a certain point of career where the significance of her job is of top priority, taking time off from work

and adjusting to a lot of new things might get difficult for the woman. This causes stress – whether to capitulate to the social norm and be a mother at the ‘right’ age or to keep on with the work flow which might give her pleasure and satisfaction. Societal pressures also turn into a major source of stress for the working woman when it comes to the age of child birth and sometimes to the question of how many children a woman should have.

In many cases, when the decision go the other way, women opt out of jobs to take care of the children as they feel guilty and/or think that is the ‘right’ thing to do. Becoming a mother and being a ‘good’ mother becomes a priority as per the social stereotypical norm.

With the acceptance of the role as a ‘mother’, the working woman accepts a lot of demands of the family as well as re-adjusts for the work types and duration of work. As always, women are considered to be the secondary/support earner or earning for fun; for themselves their job priority comes second.

Based on the previous problem, the problem of role conflict is also a major issue to be dealt with. In the roles that a woman is playing, they have their own sets of expectations. Work and family are the two major role domains in a woman’s life (Lai). As stated earlier (Pestonjee) role-conflict plays a major part in ‘stress’.

Terms such as ‘role conflict’ in educated working women denoted the stress associated with women stepping out of the ‘private’ role of domesticity and the competing demands of home and paid work. The implicit assumption was that the home/family, which was considered the site of women’s ‘natural’ role, was a stress-free sanctuary while the workplace and responding to dual demands of work and family were sources of stress per se. In particular, the addition of paid employment to their existing family roles, it was assumed, led to a

number of negative effects on women's and their families' well-being.
(Vindhya 342)

Women's job is here considered to be the source of family crises and is also not good for the wellbeing of the woman. This leads to the question: is it only the work that causes the entire problem? Also, does not this idea of home/family as a stress-free sanctuary for women and public workplace as a stress dominated space that women would better keep away from reassert the classical masculine-feminine division? Moreover, in terms of stress, we wonder whether the site of stress can be so neatly divided for women between public and private space when we have been showing that it is the masculine-feminine division underlying patriarchy combined with the unreal assumption of a gender neutral, asexual workplace in the public space set in place by psychology and capitalism that constitutes the stress of working women. Many researchers in the decade of the 1990s have shed light on the processes involved in work-family linkages in women's suffering and lack of wellbeing. These researches reveal that these two spheres are highly interdependent and both spheres mutually intersect, compensate and reinforce one another to create stress among women. Vindhya highlights various studies that have documented the importance some chief mediating variables such as, nature of work, spousal support, child-care arrangements, type of family structure, perception of family environment, attitudes towards wife's employment, extent of involvement in work or family and its impact on mental health of employed women (Vindhya 342). All the above mentioned researches highlight attitude, values and societal role relations when it comes to the women's problem relating to work rather than woman's view of work itself. This reiterates the problem of contradictory pulls and pushes faced by working women that we elaborated in the previous chapter, between the ideal idea of women (that in turn is

split between home and work) she is called upon to pursue and what she is and wants to be (something that may not fit the ideal). This compartmentalisation of work and home are artificial when it comes to situating the problem of stress faced by working women or women trying to decide whether to work (or keep on working) or not. The sociality of the cause of stress is foreclosed and in its place emerges the strong new women who is a juggler and supposed to bear the weight of work-family-tradition in making her decision.

When tensions between work and family are studied, as they were in the *National Survey of the Changing Workforce* (Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg, 1998), it is the psychological effects of stress or nervousness that are remarked on. These tensions are often referred to as ‘work-family conflict’. But family and work are not actually engaged in a battle. It is the stress discourse that centers the conflict in the person of the juggler/balancer rather than on the social context in which that conflict occurs. (Becker, *Women's Work* 42)

This problem does not change when, as is true in many families now, it is necessary to have two earners in the family. To live life in abundance and luxury as well as to live a standard non-luxurious life, many families contemplate work in public domain for both the partners. That is why many middle class [Indian] families (who previously were more conservative) try to marry their sons to a working woman or after marriage if the wife wants to work or continue to work, they usually do not object. But, for women, again, this dual role or perhaps the triple role, if we add the burden of tradition, creates a huge problem relating to household chores and other social activities in which she is supposed to represent the family. Since housework continues to be considered as, exclusively or predominantly, the sphere for women, yet again, the balancing between these two spheres remains on the shoulders of the

woman in the family. By giving up a ‘hectic job’, or quitting altogether which the woman is often compelled to do, it is she who is made to choose between family and work. Finding the solution to what is a social problem becomes a private responsibility. In most of the cases the priority is the family. “...It is up to women to reduce ‘work-family conflict’ by making choices that favour the family” (Becker, *Women's Work* 38). Men in these families may not be, as is often the case, ideally supportive; what is required for these working women then is to ‘do it all’ if they want to continue in work in the public space. Becoming the “Jill of all trades” (ref) is the extra load they carry within the family. At times it is too much.

Pamela Stone (2007) found that the ‘combination of husbands’ unavailability, inability, and/or unwillingness . . . to shoulder significant portions of caregiving and family responsibilities weighed heavily on women’s decisions to quit, because it often fell to them to pick up the pieces and the slack’ (p. 68).
(Beker, *Working Women*; 47)

According to Stone women always depict their husbands to be supportive and maintain that their decision to quit the job is her choice. Being supportive is interpreted as taking the responsibility to provide the monetary support that make it possible for the wives to quit their jobs, rather than helping their wives to deal with the family obligations and sharing the household work that might facilitate the continuation of their careers. “‘It’s your choice’ is actually the code word for ‘It’s your problem’”. (Stone 77–78) [Becker, *Women's Work* 47]

As figures from India mentioned in an earlier section show, the situation in India is analogous. In Indian culture, the weight of traditional norms more often makes it difficult to accept the employment of women with an open heart. When the women are working there is little spousal support and especially among Indian men doing household chores is demeaning

and considered a waste of time or simply unproductive. Moreover, the history of childhood training within such families are clearly marked by the difference between what should happen to women and to men; that is, the attributes and responsibilities so learned through the construction of childhood demarcates the human development clearly between girl child and boy child such that the idea(l) of masculinity and femininity (that is, gendering) become ingrained among all subjects. The continual reproduction of the androcentric worldview (re)creating and legitimising the idea of patriarchy socially that produces the gendered meaning of man and women begins in the family which in turn is what makes the weight of family tradition so important for women and especially working women.

While emotional support from spouse, child-care facilities and clarity regarding division of responsibilities are significant harmony-enhancing factors and temperamental differences between spouses are significant conflict-inducing factors for both husbands and wives, gender differences were found in one aspect only: lack of control to modify work schedules for family reasons and vice versa. It was women who emphasised this factor as a predictor of conflict (Sahoo and Bidyadhar, 1994). (Vindya 342)

Support from the family (in-laws) and husband to support women's work comes easily when there is economic trouble as in the case of present global recession that particularly hit the developed nations. (Becker, *Women's Work*) But, as mentioned earlier, it is the women's job to juggle which makes it harder for them to keep the ball in the air (Becker, *Women's Work*), which means making the fall, and hitting the ground result in high amounts of stress followed by exhaustion, anxiety and many physical complaints.

The term new women, the supermom, does not come free but with a string of costs that, given that she is having to decide and resolve individually what is a social problem, may not after all be so attractive if not impossible to achieve. After the initial exuberance of liberal emancipation, the ‘freedom’ may show itself as another form of incarceration and become a millstone. The (new) woman who is ‘stressed out’ from multitasking and prone to feeling guilty that she is not giving enough either at work or at home would be happier and healthier, so the story goes, if she focussed her energies only on her family, at least for a time. Stress once again figured as the villain in the battle to ‘balance’ career and family life, and the gender- and class-specific nature of this retrograde ‘revolution’ was ignored. (Becker, *Women's Work* 46)

[Bracket's mine]

One might question whether only married working women fall under so much stress that whether stress is exclusive to that group? Single working women also face stress, even though it might differ in the pattern from the married working woman; but the suffering may not be any less than the former. One cannot quantify history of each woman; they are context specific. Moreover, since the problem inferring that the expectation is derived from work-family-tradition is social, no women, not even the single women can escape the expectation of its social weight and the panoptic gaze of androcentrism.

In this context we might look at the concept and practice of power within the patriarchal system. As Foucault and following him many feminists explain, the ‘body’ is one of the major source over which the patriarchal system exercises control. Be it with sexual means (that is, sexual abuse, rape or even forced sexual relations within marriage) or

reproduction, women's 'body' is under control via which patriarchy practices power. It seems from the above discussion, some of the sources of working women stress can be traced to the burden of having to decide whether to give birth, from the prospect and charge of being infertile (in many cases women are blamed and the fact is denied that infertility can be of the men also) and, having to become a good mother which is supposedly in their hand. Such juggling generates guilt. But, the deeper question is: do they have a choice? Is it really in their hands: not giving birth or not being a dutiful mother? The control seems to be in the hands of the ideological apparatus of patriarchy. These apparatus are functional within the family, educational institutions, religious institution and many other forms of state control. They institute norms, conventions, customs and beliefs that tend to reify themselves through continual set of practices and within which the 'choosing' women is embedded. Even, psychology plays an important part in this process.

These are the specialists of psy: psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, psychiatric social workers, management consultants, market researchers, opinion-pollers, counsellors. ...They accompany us from the moment of our conception and birth through all the phases within which they have framed our conception and birth through all the phases within which they have framed our lives: childhood, adolescence, sexual desires, relationships, mid-life crises, illnesses, old age, mourning, even death. They have shaped the vocabularies and activities of all those other authorities who now seek to manage human conduct... (Rose, 1121-1122)

As the process of psychologisation is continuously functioning within the society, the relation between the body and the mind come within the purview of our analysis. The

necessity of this analysis is to look at the psychologisation process as a tool which engenders many sorts of thought processes, modifying belief systems as per the control exercised by patriarchal society as well as the capitalism system. The pseudo independence which women believe they have gained (to take decisions regarding having or not having a child) also might bring forward the emotions which they need to control to be 'fit for the job' within the capitalist work space. Issues related to child birth, for example, where the question may be based on her capability, desire or decision to give birth, bring out various emotions which women are supposed to discard to become like the man within the organizational structure. The mind body duality is labelled by the (patriarchal) society in the following way: the mind is the man and the body is the woman. Women are supposed to control these emotions with the mind (which is of a man's) and leave the body (though the body is owned by the 'men') to become like a man within the workplace. The so-called gender neutrality of the organization space runs against the process of socialised gendering, a contradiction that lands the women in an impossible situation that she cannot avoid. In the end, in all these conflicts faced by working women it is never a problem of society or of the organisations where she works. Rather, it becomes the responsibility of the individual, that is, the woman's problem, a burden and site of solution which, among others, psychology and management are fully complicit in reproducing.

To Conclude... With ellipsis the en-gendering begins

Newly come into the world of men, poorly seconded by them, woman is still too busily occupied to search for herself.

Simon de Beauvoir⁴⁴

In 1949, more than 60 years ago Simon de Beauvoir wrote the above sentence in her book, *The Second Sex*, which has made a significant contribution to feminist epistemology. Today, in the twenty-first century, can we write something new? Is this line still significant? Unfortunately, except for the phrase ‘Newly come into the world of men’, we do not have enough substantial phrases to substitute the other words. Women are still not at liberty even when they have formal economic independence, voting rights and many other rights provided to them by the socio-political system.

Women today are still wedged between the new role of a career woman and the traditional roles of good wife, good mother and a good ‘home maker’, trying to live up to the image of the ‘new woman’. This new role is even more time wasting and conflict generating for women (Becker, 2010). This is making them stressed, and the burden of handling one’s stress that has been portrayed as the individual’s own responsibility is a further cause for jeopardising their physical and mental health. From here the concept of stressism emerges, a term to signify the elitist nature of ‘life style maintenance’. In Becker’s coinage the term ‘stressism’ came to signify the commodification of the concept of stress. Stress has become

⁴⁴Simon de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books, 1989 [1949]. p702

limited to scented candles and yoga mats (Becker, Nation-stress 2013). As ‘life-style maintenance’ is a condition for the elite, stress and its management are, or have always been a capitalo-centric notion. Choosing a particular lifestyle to manage stress is not for every woman; the ability and the opportunity to “choose a ‘lifestyle’ makes healthism an elitist enterprise” (Becker, *Women’s work* 38). The notion of stress has developed around the capitalist system, in the capitalist workplace and has been made a universal category as if it holds for all kinds of work in all situations and for all categories of people. It is diffusive by the nature of its discursive formation.

It is the thoroughly abstract and diffuse nature of the stress concept that makes it such a useful container for societal tensions and individual fears. (18)

Fear, insecurity relating to jobs has made the middle class group fall prey to stress (Becker, *One Nation Under Stress*). Hyper-sensitivity about managing stress, which Becker termed ‘stressism’, is an effect of the belief that all of our life-style problems are manifest due to stress whose cause is we individual and only by our own managing of stress would we be released from the tensions we face every day. She also raises the issue that “tensions are linked to social forces and need to be resolved through social and political means” (Becker, *One Nation Under Stress* 235). She coined the term ‘stressism’ to bring forward the overall tendency of society to medicalise and psychologise each and every problem faced by individuals without trying to look into the social causes behind it. Dealing with the effect (of the stressors) becomes more important than analysing the cause (Agamben 2014).

Working women’s stress (within psychology), management, and all forms of psychological ‘help’ (by the ‘psy professionals’ [Becker, *One Nation Under Stress*; Rose, *Assembling the Modern Self*]), are trying to individualise the given problems associated with

stress. On one hand, when women are working ‘equally’ with men, the compulsion of becoming the rational productive agent (*homo economicus*) push them to become like a ‘man’. Becoming the ‘new woman’ which is the equivalent of the *homo economicus*, is creating enormous pressure causing stress. Within the capitalist framework, working women are entailed to be the rational productive agent, a machine crafted to exert surplus labour and generate profit. On the other hand, women are (especially in India) falling not only under the stress of the double burden of work and family, rather there is a triad – the work-family-tradition – causing more distress of for women, making them *ill*. This sickness is not the physical manifestation of symptoms associated with stress, in fact it is making them suffer from the loss of her ‘self’ in the social web of norms, stereotypes and obligations, and she is entangled and beleaguered within this web. In both the cases, there is the triad of work-family-tradition on one side and on the other she is overdetermined by capitalism, patriarchy and psychology that legitimises the triad and the women’s working role in it.

As the fiction of the ideal worker economy crumbles in the face of a dual-earner reality, it is the discourse of stress that helps cloak the socio-political context of many women’s daily struggles. The concept of stress has become an increasingly important obstacle to the public and private acknowledgement that the difficulties of working motherhood are not going to be resolved with to-do lists and bath oils. As long as women are increasingly helped to view stress – and their own emotional reactions to it – as the enemy to be vanquished, possibilities for widespread social critique and social action will be effaced. We will need to throw out the bath oil with the bathwater if we are to find

societal solutions to the work-family dilemma that favor women, men, and children. (Becker, *One Nation Under Stress* 147)

The mainstream discussions of stress speak merely of the individual experience from where we need to take a leap forward and consider those social stipulations that constitute the principal cause of stress, stipulations that condition the system of exploitation and oppression in the dual workplaces tend to reduce the woman into the ‘other’, the weaker sex and by emphasising its incapability to deal with stressed existence,. The systemic role of exploitation-oppression or of the triad of capitalism-patriarchy-psychology becomes invisible as it hides itself behind the idea of the ‘troubled’ worker/employee identity.

Our thesis emphasises the need to move away from individual centred ideas of stress and delve deeper into the construction of worker/employee self. This may open up new perspectives in the discourse of stress enabling us to analyse the condition of the breakdown of the individual by relating the experience of that phenomenon to the social reproduction of its causes. That is, instead of occulting, the aspect of gender should become the point of reference and departure in the conceptualisation of stress.

This will also perhaps mean rethinking the ‘androcentrism’ within psychological practices. On the one side, the individual comes to the clinic with pain, suffering and misery, unsure whether he or she alone is responsible for the plight. The overdetermined interaction of the social processes in conjunction with his or her physique and mind is one of the reasons why stress appears. A big question is whether to govern the effects or the cause, or rather both in their mutual constitutive. Taking the latter position requires a deeper appreciation of the complexity of stress. The pain and suffering of the subject cannot be ignored, but addressing it by merely focussing on the effect might mean being complicit with the system as an apologist

of the structure of exploitation-oppression. There is the other question of resolving stress for the individual as against critiquing stress so as to cure human existence from the dis-ease of work related stress, a question that acquires particular importance for women. Despite the liberating effect of freedom to choose work, is woman really free from the weight of work related stress that tends to pull and push into contradictory directions her efforts to balance home and public, modern and tradition. It could then put to question the existing idea of the ‘clinic’ – an idea that puts the subject woman in a predicament between home and the outside (this is the four walls of the clinic). The clinic could question the societal structure by critiquing rather than complementing reductionist management and medical models so as to unpack stress through a questioning of the structure/system, with the individual as an integral part and not a separate and discrete entity.

Scully and Bart (1981) examined gynaecology texts published from 1943 to 1973 in the United States and noted persistent paternalistic and often condescending attitudes of doctors of this speciality towards female patients. The modern woman is supposedly too “smart” and her “assumption of the male function of protection and maintenance” has led to a “weakening of the reproductive urge” and made them “sexless, frigid, self-sufficient.” (Clarke 65) This is still the prevalent attitude towards the women working in the workforce in the capitalist work arena outside the household, away from the jobs prescribed to women by the androcentric mindset. It can be imagined how loaded the dice is against the woman in her quest to become even the *homo economicus* belying the claims of providing a level playing field.

We have tried to arrive at a questioning stance about the present thought process in the gender studies regarding stress. There is a need to have a systematic theory of gender and

organizations which has been hugely ignored or we might say the ignorance is committed rather than being a result of an error. The necessity for the inclusion of the understanding of the cultural construction of gender, the knowledge of cultural production within the organisational framework is essential. With this agenda we must include more sensitive nonetheless firm epistemology of new understanding of woman, as well as men and masculinity. To address stress within the organisation, we must not limit the idea of stress to the individual process, rather we would look at the many folds of conditioning by the society, family and tradition rather than reducing stress to only its symptoms that indicate that stress is merely a subjective experience; it is also related to one's family, surrounding, community where she belongs, workplace and the dominant ideologies that are practiced within the socio-political system.

In this context one important issue that should be mentioned here is that gender oppression is not limited to woman, as the 'other'; the other which is the weaker sex (*The Second Sex*) Rather we need to include the *Other* (Irigaray, *The Question of the Other*), which is not limited to the two biological sexes that is male and female. This *Other* category of gender includes those who are also oppressed under the episteme of androcentrism within the organisation. However, in our thesis, the discussion is limited to the 'biological woman' though this is a beginning that opens up the space to unleash sets of questions related to the *Other* gender and their oppression and exploitation under the capitalo-centric and the androcentric system where Psychology plays a significant role in constructing the base for the two system to work. As Irigaray maintains, there are many '*Other*' categories which act "... as the necessary foundation for a new ontology, a new ethics, and a new politics,..." (Irigaray, *The Question of the Other* 19)