

W O R K B O O K

NARRATIVE FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS



Foreword

The last few decades have witnessed rapid and inequitable economic growth, environmental degradation, destruction of rural economies, steady erosion of labour rights and the unravelling of public services and social protection floors. This has prompted many women to take up low wage paid work within and across national borders. The growing presence of women workers in export oriented garment factories and in domestic work are just two examples among many. Class, caste and gender based discriminations collude to keep women at the bottom of the global values chain.

Yet, despite obvious barriers, women workers are also resisting and organising. Organising among domestic workers and garment sector workers is steadily getting stronger. Trade unions and other workers rights organisations have been working closely with women workers to strengthen their leadership capacities.

While trying to map the range of trainings available for women in low wage and informal work we observed an important gap. We noted that although many trainings were available to explicate relevant legislation and carry out collaborative advocacy, there was a dearth of trainings focussing on political education and critical literacy. The link between precarity and development paradigms appeared to be an unexplored area in training modules for women workers with nominal or no formal education.

We think that political education and critical literacy of low wage women workers is crucial at this point of time. Consultation with many colleagues in the labour and migration space has resulted in a consensus that politicization/ education would enhance the bargaining power of women workers in the labour market, as they move from unpaid care work within the home to paid work in the workplace. It would also enable the women workers to link their struggles with larger global inequities and with traditional social norms that reinforce gender inequality, particularly issues of bodily integrity, of consent and contract.

Our initial plan, conceptualized and planned with Asia Floor Wage Alliance and International Domestic Workers Federation, was to develop an inter-sectoral political education curriculum. Unfortunately, COVID-19 disrupted the plan that was to take off in late February 2020. We are very happy that JALA-PRT in Indonesia and SEWA in India took up the task to develop country and sector specific political education curricula for domestic workers in Indonesia and India.

This handbook has been developed with input from domestic workers. It will continue to be revised and refined by them as SEWA carries out training sessions in future. Therefore, this handbook marks the beginning of a journey of SEWA with the domestic workers in India. We wish them the very best in this endeavour.

Bandana Pattanaik
International Coordinator
Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women
November, 2020

Introduction to the Handbook

This handbook has been prepared for domestic workers in general and their leaders in particular. It has been developed in the time of the pandemic when alternative ways of capacity building had to be found. It has been an opportunity to put things down in writing so that this material can also be used as a reference guide for organizers who assist domestic workers grow in their understanding. Hence it has been written as simply as possible, trying not to lose essential facts. The handbook is written in a conversational style and there are boxes alongside which explain in greater detail certain words, concepts and histories. It goes chapter by chapter gradually building up an understanding of the context in which we live today, how we reached here and why ‘paid domestic work’ needs to receive its due recognition and rewards. It also highlights personal issues of women workers, and towards the end goes into strategies to build up the workers’ organization. Hence, organizers or leaders can read and discuss a chapter each meeting while workers digest and raise their own questions and develop insights.

GAATW desired to produce a tool that can be used for all workers in the South and South-East Asian region. But national contexts, regulations and organizing strategies vary from country to country. Hence it was decided to make separate country specific handbook.

We do hope domestic workers will find this handbook useful and be able to grow in their own understanding so that they can participate more actively in the discourses on paid work and get the rights and justice rightfully deserved.

Nalini Nayak Sonia George

SEWA

Characters in the Conversation



Fish



Jeena



Sheela



Maya



Ashima



Tina



Leena



Kalina



D/o M



Nisha



Renu



Suma

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Another World is Possible


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CHAPTER 1


Hello




S: Hello Jill
how are you?



J: Sheela, you are finally
calling. Why have you been
so silent all these days?



S: I could not charge my phone. This
lock-down is terrible! No work, no
money. How are we going to survive? Is
this COVID so serious? My employer is
calling me to work, but how do I go, if
there is no transport?



J: Oh is your employer
calling you? Mine tells me not to
come as I will infect them. I am
not sick so how will I infect them?
She did not say whether she will
pay me or not for these days.

S: Actually, people are saying that this disease is moving around the world as the business people and the tourists travel. It is a virus that passes from one to another when we speak and especially when we cough. Not everybody knows whether they have the virus or not, because it does not make everybody sick. That is why we are told to keep some distance from people, to wear masks. And to constantly wash our hands because we can get the virus also from surfaces that we touch and then when we put our hand into our mouth or nose, we get the virus too. Now they even say, it is in the air.



J: So from where did it start and how? Is it new? Do doctors not know how to cure it?



S: Yes it is new. Apparently it started in China. It is a virus that lives in bats. But now it has passed on to humans and the doctors still do not know how to treat it or prevent its spread. Apparently it will take 2 years to develop a vaccine to prevent it.



J: Oh my God, so will we not be able to work for 2 years?



S: I am praying that things will improve. But I heard it is very serious. Dolly was telling me that things will have to change as it is because of our life styles that this has happened.



J: Life styles?
Our Life styles?



S: Not ours alone - but in the world - our food habits - eating all the animals on the one hand and industrially produced food on the other, we use so much fuel to drive cars, and travel around causing so much pollution, look at the forests that we destroy so the wild animals loose their homes and the climate gets hotter and hotter, didn't we also move into domestic work because our parents lost the land when that big cement company came into our area?



J: Yes yes, I remember. But why do we have to suffer now? Its not our fault.





S: Its not our fault,
but that is how the
system works?

J: What system?



S: Haven't you heard Fish
always talking about the system?
I do not know how to explain
it. Shall we ask Fish? Maybe she
too is at home like us so she may
have some time to explain.

CHAPTER 2

The System

J&S: Hello Fish. Do you have some time? We have some questions to ask.



F: Hello, yes. Come in. I hope you are well? Are you going to work or not? What question do you have?



J&S: Fish, we are at home, no work. So when we were talking about this COVID, we thought we should ask you some questions. You always tell us that we are poor and have no rights because of the system. Dolly said this COVID has happened because of our life styles and the system. So can you please explain what is this system.

Fish: Oh OK. It is a long story. But I will try to explain it simply.

The system means, the way the society is organised. There are rules made by those in power and then all others have to follow them. We all adapt to these rules and they become a part of our behaviour. We do not question them because we think that is the way it has always been. Also because we are taught these rules/ways to behave, in school. We are also told the same things by our religious leaders and we then think that God made these rules. Therefore we also think that God made some of us rich and some poor and we accept the situation. But God loves us all alike and will not do this to us. So we are all in a trap by the way the system works.



J&S : But Fish, give us some examples of these rules - you said behaviour



Fish: For instance, as a woman, don't you accept that your husband is the head of the household? Don't you give him privileges and deny yourself things? Don't you accept that men are strong and women are weak? Don't you accept the wages that your employer decides to give you? Do you ask how this is calculated? Don't you accept that the property of the rich has to be respected, aren't we taught not to envy them? Yes or no?



J&S: But isn't all this right Fish?



Fish: Yes you accept all this because this is the way you have been taught by your parents, your school and your religion. It is right according to the system today but it has not always been so, and it is to the advantage of those in power and rich. This is what keeps the system going. More over there are other values that we also teach our children like - study hard and come first - the first is the best, we can buy things we like even if we do not have the cash - we can always get credit and pay later, it is more decent to offer friends a coco cola than a home made lemon juice. Hmm Hmm. We feel that if we do things differently, we will be out castes in our community. We are always bothered about what "they will say"



J: Yes , Yes this is the way it is.



S: It is really wrong to tell our children not to be competitive?



J: Should we not believe what the imam and priest say? Don't they speak in God's name?



S: You said this is the system now, so was it different before?



Fish: OK if you are really interested, we can have some more discussions, where shall we start?



J: You decide Fish. We have time these days.



S: Fish we will inform some of our other sisters who are at home these days so they can listen too. After all we should all learn these things. It is only in the union we learn so much about our work and our rights and now about our society. So shall we meet day after tomorrow?



Fish: OK on Tuesday at 2 pm.

Fish: OK, We'll start from the very beginning

How the social system changed -the very early period

Fish: Oh hello hello hello - so many of you? Sheela and Jeena have done good organising. Welcome to all.



Maya: Yes, Fish. We all want to make use of this time to learn. Now is our chance. But Fish, some of us cannot write. So you have to go slow.



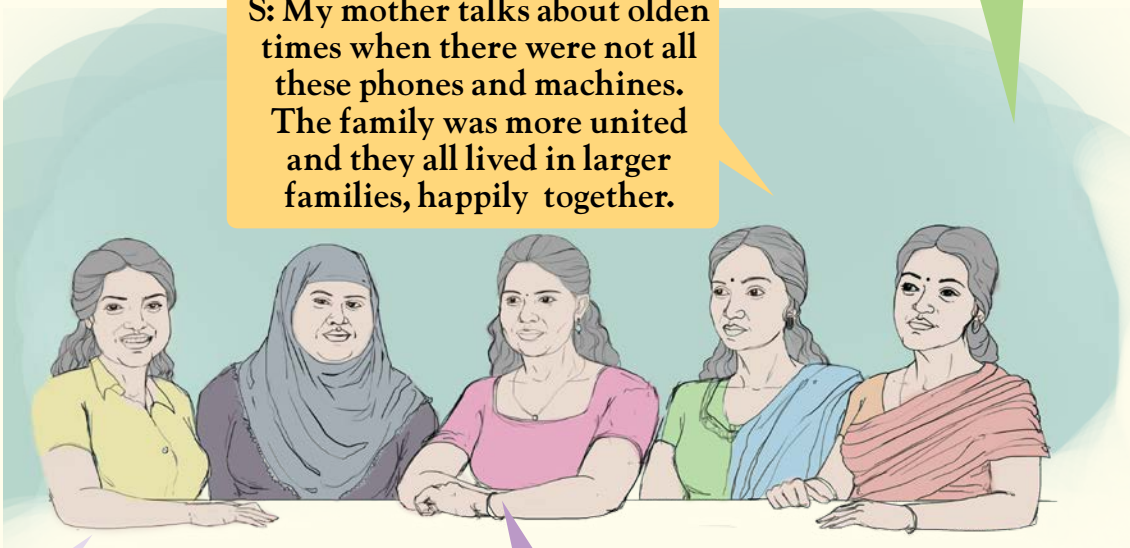
Fish: Yes, I will go slow and you can stop me any time. Don't worry if you cannot write. I have made some notes that I can send you by whatsapp. You can read slowly and try to understand.

F: But first of all are all of you well? Remember to do the preventive measures of using a mask, washing hands and remaining at a distance from others when you talk, particularly if you go to the market or any other crowded places. Also remember to drink hot water with some crushed ginger and turmeric. These are ways to boost immunity which helps the body to fight the virus.

OK, last time we had talked about the system as it is today, and you asked, was it not always so? Just think, did your mothers and grandmothers tell you anything about their younger days, was it the same as now?

J: No my mother always says they grew so much food in the village earlier, now we have to buy everything, it all comes from outside. There is only rubber now and we cannot eat it. Therefore so many are leaving the village to find work in the city and other countries.

S: My mother talks about olden times when there were not all these phones and machines. The family was more united and they all lived in larger families, happily together.



T: My father says the climate has changed he does not know when to sow the seed now and when the rain will come

M: My grandmother speaks about the freedom struggle, freedom from the British because her father was in the army.

A: My mother says they gave birth at home but that they also lost some babies. They used so many herbs as medicine and they kept healthy. Nowadays we run to doctors for everything. Medicine is expensive and they also say they have side effects.



Fish: Yes, exactly. The way society works has changed. Imagine our society being thousands of years old. Now we say, we are in the 21st century - 2,000 years new era. So even in these times things have changed, but the society existed even earlier. I will give you details about the phases as they changed starting in the very early time.

OK? You keep your minds open and listen. What you have to keep in mind is that things change but everything is connected. That is why we speak about the system. OK?

All: yes we are listening



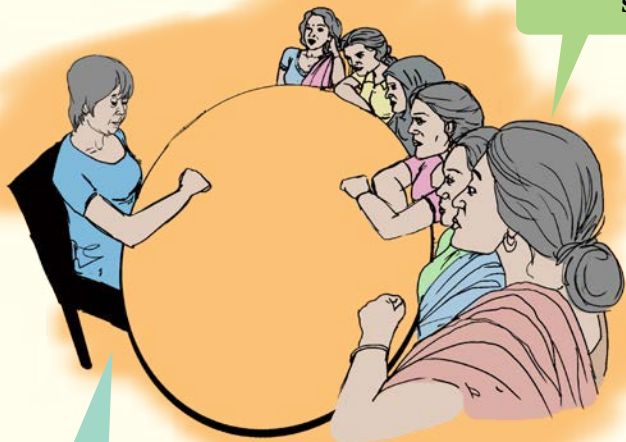
Fish: In the very early times - men, women and children lived together. There was no concept of family, husband and wife. But women were bearing the children so they had a special place, they were even considered to have special power. In those days, people were exposed and depended on nature and so they learned a lot about nature and also venerated nature. Since they gathered all their food, they had enough and took only what they needed. So while the women gathered leaves, and berries and fruit, the men hunted small animals for food which meant they went far and women stayed close to their lodging area as they also had the children whom they looked after. So there was an accepted division of labour between women.



It is also said that women, because they stayed at home, they observed nature much more and realised that plants grew from the seeds they threw on the ground, and watching the spiders weave their webs, they also learned that they could do the same with grass and reeds and they began to produce baskets and other things. So while the women looked after the children they also were the first to learn how to grow plants and food, how to nurture animals and the skills to make articles for use.



So, to make a long story short, it was the women who were seen to be precious and men wanted to have them, control them. All this happened over a long period of time, differently in different areas. In some places women were so revered that they began to be considered gods - all the first ancient gods were women. In some areas they took over the control of the tribe, they became the chiefs and were called matriarchs, and in some areas, they were subjugated by the men with their hunting tools and became subservient to them, their property. From then on, the women gradually began to be subjugated. But as these groups grew, they moved in search of new areas for food.



S&J: Oh my God, Fish this is fantastic to know. Tell us more about this process of women's subjugation.

Others: Yes, yes, we need to know. Oh the first gods were women? Where are they now?

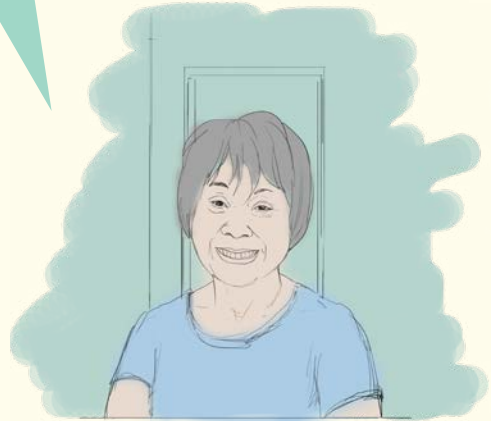
Fish: We must go step by step. We must digest what we hear. You can also have more discussions with your grandmothers to find out more about the past. They will have so many stories to tell and it is important for us to know that things were different earlier. So shall we meet after 15 days?

Others: No that is too long. We should learn as much as possible now as we are at home. Once we start to work, we will not have this time.

S: Now you told us about the early times - how many phases have there been?



Fish: There have been several but the main ones were feudalism¹ when agriculture was still important, then when people began to discover the machines - there was the industrial revolution and things changed drastically, then there was colonialism², which many of you may have heard about from your parents. In fact there are some notes on these which you can read. Then we will speak more in detail about today and the capitalist system - OK?



1. Feudalism

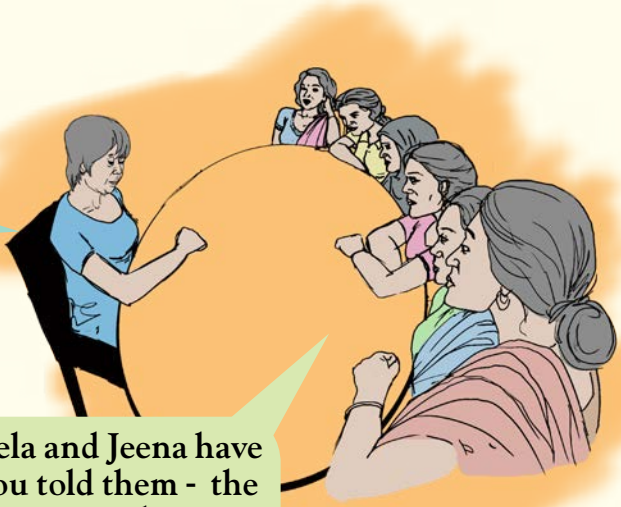
This was a social system that all societies lived through between the 9th to the 15th centuries and some even later. In this system, the ownership of land was very important and once there was a king he was considered to be the owner of all the land. It was with his generosity that he gifted land to others who served him - the army, the nobles, the tax collectors etc. But all of them also had to pay back both by serving him and paying taxes. In return, he was supposed to protect the people. In this system, all those who owned the land then made slaves of the peasants who worked on the land, as they tried to give the peasants as little in return as possible and kept them subdued. For centuries, the poor accepted their fate as even their religious leaders told them to be patient, to honour their king, so that they would get rewards in heaven. It was in this phase of society that one group of people not only got their wealth, but they also then dominated all the spaces of learning, art, culture etc. while the poor worked hard and paid taxes.

2. Colonialism

In the 15th Century when the feudal kings in Europe wanted more power and money, they sent their armies around the world to conquer and subdue other people. Some daring seafarers had already been discovering new lands and entered into trade. Gradually, the kings used these traders to also enter other lands with their armies in Latin America, Africa and Asia. They were not well received everywhere. In some places, the natives fought them tooth and nail, but in others the natives, though afraid of the white skins, also received them. While the invaders first looted the riches of these lands, they very soon also subdued them and gradually established themselves as rulers. Subsequently, they tried to make the native people serve their own expansionist needs and so they educated them in their system of learning, even converted them to Christianity and gradually set up systems like the railways and posts, to meet their own needs. When the industrial revolution took place in the 18th Century - the introduction of machines in production, then the western world needed more raw materials and so there was a further plunder of resources, forests, minerals etc. which also helped Europe to industrialize. They also needed new markets to sell their produce and they made the people in the colonies buy from them instead of their own local produce. This is how the European countries got rich and the colonies became dependent on them

CHAPTER 4

The subjugation of women

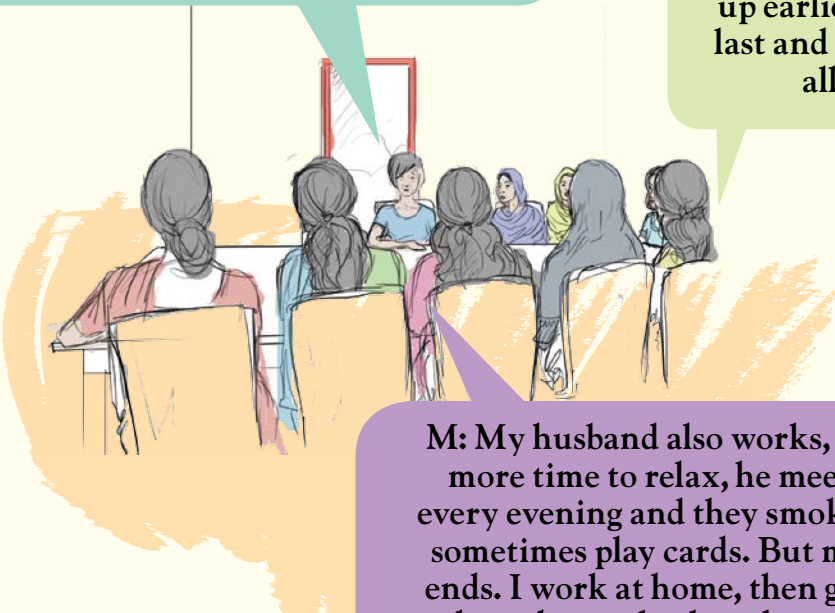


Fish: Hello everybody - Oh you are so many today, more than the last time. But when some of you join half way, you may not be able to follow when I start now.

Others: Yes we will. Sheela and Jeena have told us all about what you told them - the system and how it was in very early times. We are ready for the next session.

Fish: OK. The last time when I said that we all accept that men are strong and women are weak and you said isn't that true - do you really think it is true? Tell me who actually works more - just look at yourselves and what you do from the time you wake up till the time you sleep at night and compare it with what your husband does - who works more?

All: We surely - we wake up earlier and go to bed last and we are working all the time.



M: My husband also works, but he also has more time to relax, he meets his friends every evening and they smoke and chat and sometimes play cards. But my work never ends. I work at home, then go for domestic work, and come back and work again. He does not even bother about the children's studies.

Fish: OK, so let's try and understand how and why this happened.

I told you that the first big development in society was when people began to settle in one place and grow their own food. So by settling down they established right over land but still belonging to the whole group. Shall we call them tribes - living in particular areas. This was the phase when they settled down and in doing so, they themselves developed certain norms/rules to live together... who would do what - between men and women, old and young.

This was called the "division of labour", the sexual division of labour³. It was the elders who had the prime place and they made the rules, initially the women played the major role. The women were producing the children, that was the most important work, they also gradually cooked the food when they discovered the fire. But it is they who knew about the seeds, so they also did the planting and the men did the rest getting the land ready and then the hunting. The men produced the tools to do this work. Initially the tribe produced enough for them but gradually there was more than they needed, so they had to exchange the surplus with another tribe⁴. There are still many tribes that live like this.

The next phase was when men began to take greater hold, they had the tools/weapons, they carried the surplus to exchange, they negotiated with others as the women stayed at home, they began to call the shots. They also took charge/possessed a certain number of women creating their clans.

And as the clans and tribes grew in number, collective strength also grew, descent grew, arguments and fights developed. Some were victorious and others lost. The victorious became more powerful, the weapons became more brutal and by this time men were in control and the subordination of women was established although the worship of nature and the goddesses still remained.

To cut a long story short, ever since then, there was no return, the men developed all kinds of stories, to further dominate women.

So you see, you think he is the head of the household, he relaxes, has time, meets friends, he can take part in social activities, he can take part in politics, he is the one who makes the decisions in society too while you work and work and work to keep him happy and keep the family going.



3. Sexual division of labour

1. To understand women's oppression, we have to know about the 'sexual division of labour'. The history of division of labour goes back to the history of human relationships in society. This evolved over time according to the needs, capacities and skills which contributed to the development of the society. A division of labour that started in the household, moved into communities. So while women cared and nurtured the family, men worked outside and became the representatives of the group. This division of labour changed as the society developed but this was maintained by the way mothers trained their children regarding what was expected by them as a boy and a girl.

4. BARTER SYSTEM

'Barter' means 'to exchange.'

Before the invention of money, people exchanged things.

When people had more than they needed of what they grew or collected, they took them to others who would have other things to exchange. These were the first market places where people gathered and exchanged. As people began to produce tools and also some products like baskets or even things like cloth, these were also taken to the market to exchange. In these exchanges, people also negotiated how much they would exchange for what and gradually standards began to be accepted.

Gradually people also began to exchange services - like if some clan needed to get the fields ready for agriculture, or build new homes, people from other clans would also go to work and help. For this they would get food grains or something else in exchange. Basically it was a system of 'paying in kind'.

So while the barter system commenced with exchanging things - like food and products, it then began to move to exchanging labour for goods.

Even now, in agriculture, when some people who farm do not have land, they take someone else's land and work on it. There is an accepted relationship, half the produce will go to the landlord. This is called 'sharecropping' - the landlord gets a share.

These are all systems of exchange/barter when money is not in the picture.

Others: Are you stopping there?
Tell us more?

Sheela: Fish, when I went to a training in Sri Lanka once, Yamini was speaking about gender and patriarchy when she was telling us about women's oppression. I was too shy to ask questions at that time because these were all new words and very difficult, but I did write them down. So please explain more.

Fish: Sheela, wonderful that you kept note of these words. These are important words - actually concepts⁵ - this means they refer to some ideas which explain a situation. I will explain them later.

But from today's session what do you have to remember?

L: they established right over land
K: the elders made the rules

S: that society has evolved over a long period of time
J: people settled down

T: they grew food

M: when they grew more than they needed they began to exchange with others

5. Concepts

The term 'concept' is used when a few related ideas are grouped together and expressed in one word. Like if the word gender is used, it expresses a male or female who has a specific pattern of behaviour.

S: before that, the women did the sowing as they knew about the seeds

J: Yes the men prepared the land and developed the tools

Fish: Yes that was called a division of labour - this is important to remember



M: Gradually the men became powerful and began to assert right over the women

Fish: Yes gradually it was only the men who began to make the rules.

OK Good, remember to read the notes before we get back in two days time.

CHAPTER 5

Gender and Patriarchy



Fish: Hello everybody. All of you are there! Good. Did you all read the notes?

All: Yes, Yes.

S: Even today we have some barter in our area.

L: Now I understand what the sexual division of labour means. It is all so true, but why are we women so stupid to accept it all?

Fish: We will talk about that today. Yes, why do we believe and accept all this?

S: That is what we are taught at home.

L: The boy child always gets preference.

T: My mother made me do all the house work while my brother played, went out on his cycle.



J: Also in Sunday school/ madrasa, we are taught what is right and wrong, how we have to accept what god gives us and get our rewards in heaven.

S: The teachers told us the same in school.



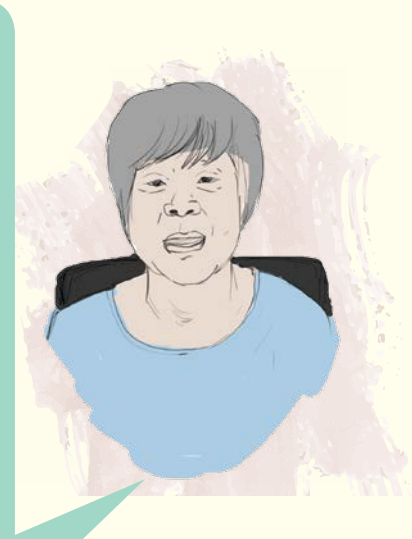
J: Actually, it was when I began to menstruate, that everything changed for me. Until then I was quite free.

Fish: Yes, it is because we are taught all this by our parents, teachers and religious leaders/nurtured this way that we accept. This is what the concept of gender explains: - how we are educated/nurtured - for a female to become a woman and a male to become a man . That is why we do not even accept that there is a third gender⁶.

Male and female are our biological sex differences. Woman and Man are how society/the system makes us play specific roles so that the male sex gets the advantage over the female sex⁷.

The fact that we accept these differences that give one sex advantage over another is called patriarchy. This thinking is ingrained in us and has been developed over time, which gives powerful men the right to control everything in today's world. Remember, men always had the tools, they developed the weapons, they hunted but did not observe nature so well, which the women did. Men grew to be violent and justified it as a right. So domination, control, violence and disregard for nature are the key features of patriarchy.

Does this make sense to you? Do you begin to understand?⁸



6. Third Gender

Most people believe that all humans are divided into male and female and hence there are only two genders. But there are people who are either physically neither fully male or female or they feel that their true gender is not aligned with their body. They therefore do not want to be categorised as male or female but as the third gender. Unfortunately, such individuals do not find easy social acceptance and suffer discrimination because they do not conform to the gender identities assigned to them by mainstream society. Some countries like India have now accepted the rights of transgender persons. There is also strong organising among transgender people in many parts of the world.

7. More on sexual division of labour

The sexual division of labour that developed in particular communities decided the hierarchy where concepts like masters/slaves, landlords/serfs, bourgeoisie/proletariat, breadwinner/housewife etc explained these relationships. Women in particular lost their power as the new economic relations based on exchange were in the hands of men.

The shift from pre-industrialized society to industrialized society changed the practices of labour too. The shifts in the production systems and production relations maintained certain forms of hierarchy between men and women and even between various groups of men and groups of women too. In the evolution of societies, the direct producers lost decision-making powers over their lives when the means of production also changed - meaning the machines got introduced and specialised skills became necessary. When fewer workers were required it was decided that women would stay at home and that the worker would receive what is called a family wage. So women were relegated to the home (private sphere) while the man became the bread winner. Men are the producers and head of the household and women became responsible for the reproductive activities like child rearing and household chores. This sexual division of labour became the basis of the organization of society. Monogamous marriage relations and men's control of women in the marriage relationship established this division giving man the control of women's labour, her sexuality and fertility inside the household and men's outside home. Such control also established the hierarchy of man over woman, the more powerful over the weaker, the rich over the poor.

8. Gender/patriarchy

The concept of patriarchy has to be understood in continuation with sexual division of labour. The sexual division of labour led to hierarchies in communities. A new kind of power relation emerged as society evolved. This made women an exploitable labour force and they were alienated from all social spaces. This process of domination developed not only as individual control but the control of powerful/ruling men over the rest of the society. This structural relation is termed as patriarchy. The sexual division of labour has become central in the organization of production and also control of men over women. These are the ways we are nurtured/socialised from childhood. Thus, universally a male dominant system and female subjugation were achieved through the socialization process which is referred to as the patriarchal social system. Most social institutions are shaped with these hierarchies and male practices and preferences in mind. These hierarchies and controls are reflected in the control over economy, through social and cultural relations (class, caste and race) and religious institutions. This system is also kept in place through the use of violence which again starts at home and into the society through the market. The women's body becomes an object that can either be brutalised, or needs to be beautified.

To understand this dominant structural relationship, gender is used as a tool which explains the roles, behaviors and characteristics of men and women. While sex is a biologically given trait referring to sexual identities, gender develops through the socialization process. It makes people behave according to certain norms developed through patriarchal relations. Hence it is said that gender is a socially constructed category beyond sex. It is something we become, the outcome of social structures, becoming feminine and masculine. Socialization is the process in which we are conditioned to become the human beings that society needs. We are groomed into this through the various institutions such as family, school, work, religious institutions and other social interactive processes that shape our behavior.

S: When you explain it like this I understand - but will I be able to explain it to others, I am not sure.

Fish: So begin today, explain to your children and it will easily come to you.

L: Yes, that is true.

So next time we will talk about the system today.

L: Make it soon Fish. We should not forget what you have told us till now.

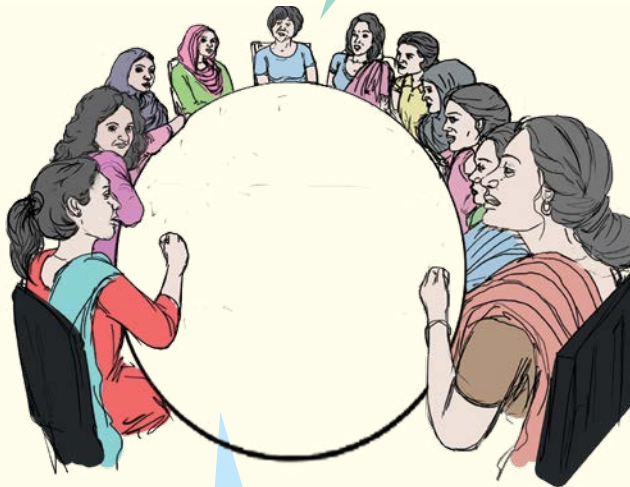
Fish: You will not forget if you understand. So the best thing to do is to tell each other what you have understood. You can correct each other and where you have doubts, remember to ask me the next time. So we will meet next week, on Saturday as I am also very busy in the coming days.

M: Oh, so long, but we understand you are busy. Take care, Fish.

CHAPTER 6

Women debased - Impurity

Fish: Hello, everybody!
I see more faces, even
faces I do not know.



L: Fish, I brought my neighbour Nisha. I was telling her about all that we learnt. I was doing it as my exercise to explain and to see if I had understood. She was so interested that she asked me if she could join. She is not in our union but she stitches clothes at home.

M: I asked my daughter to read the notes you sent, as I am not so good at reading. Then she also got interested as I explained to her what we had learnt. So she too has joined.

Fish: Ok, OK, no problem. I am glad you are trying to explain to others. So, are you all able to explain with some ease? If yes, then you have understood.

Today I actually want to start from something I heard Jeena had said in the last session - she said, “everything changed for me, when I began to menstruate⁹. Before that I was rather free.” Did you others hear this? And do any of you have similar experiences?



Yes, Yes. Yes

Fish: Well, I am not going to talk about menstruation here. There is a note for those who are interested. Do you remember I told you that in earlier times a woman was venerated because she gave birth? Well, there was a time when her menstrual blood was also seen as energy, and in some communities is also needed for puja/worship. So this menstrual blood, which is a sign that we are ready to bear children, and which is a sign of positive energy, overtime began to be considered as the thing that makes us women impure - because we bleed. All your communities will have stories and reasons for saying this and again you can ask your grandmothers about this. So gradually, because women menstruated, they were said to be impure. Therefore they were not allowed to do many things in different communities like ploughing the fields, getting into the sea to fish, cooking the food on those days, getting into the temple, etc.etc. Once that began to be established in society, then women became the real underdog. Being impure meant she deserved no respect. She could be treated as a slave.

You also believe this and as mothers you also bring up your children differently - the boys and girls. Yes or No?

9. Menstruation

Menstruation is the biological cycle that occurs in the female reproductive system. This cycle starts when a girl reaches her puberty (usually between 9-14 years). The cycle continues until women reach menopause (between 45-55 years). Stimulated by hormonal secretions, the female's ovary produces an egg and also prepares the inner wall of the uterus to receive and nurture the egg.

If the egg is not fertilized by the male sperm, it is released from the body together with the inner wall of the uterus through the vagina. Hence, the release of blood. This lasts for 4-7 days and is called the menstrual period. This cycle occurs every 28 days. This is a natural and healthy process for girls and women of reproductive age.

Others: But we did not know all this earlier. We have to obey the social norms - Isn't it?

Fish: Yes, it is the social pressure that prevents us from thinking and questioning. We also begin to feel that our bodies are impure and we do not care well for our bodies nor do we try to understand how our bodies and menstrual cycles work. We do not even speak to our children about this. We just feel that our bodies are meant to be used by men. Hence we also do not react to sexual abuse even from our husbands. Well, if you understand now how the system works, and see how things are related, and if you want to change the system and get your rights as workers, then we have to spread this awareness and begin to change things even in our own homes and local communities. This is why, you also belong to a union. We feel strong together and we can stand up for what is right and defend each other. Women are not impure because we bleed. This is the gift of giving birth that men do not have. Women are not inferior, we have been made to believe that we are.

So will you remember this?



All: Yes, Yes and we will also read the notes. So when shall we come back?

Fish: Day after.

CHAPTER 7

Production


Fish: Hello everybody! You all seem really interested and you are on time too.

Today's session maybe a bit long so I hope you all had a good lunch.

So, now you have understood how work is undertaken by the women at home, for which she gets no recognition and return.

Today, we will look outside the home, and see how work is organised outside. We will talk about something that you all know - about production.

When I use this word production - what comes to your mind immediately?



M: Food production-
rice, milk, eggs, meat.

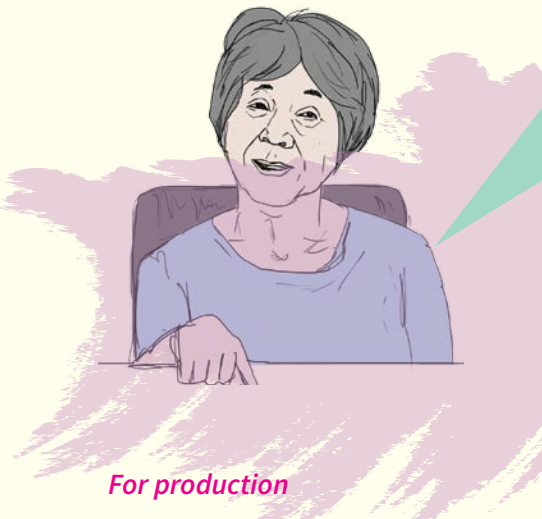
L: Industries for
production

J: Production of
clothes/shoes.

Fish: Yes, all this is
production - which means making
something.

But do we make things from the air? What
do we need to make anything?

S: Ideas, strength, skill,
money, land, maybe
some machines, other
materials.



For production

Land - materials
Labour - strength- hands- workers
Capital - money



Fish: Yes, we need all these things. In short, we say we need

Land - materials,

Labour - strength- hands- workers, and

Capital - money

Ideas and skill to put these together and make something, some product, a commodity¹⁰.

So in today's system, people who are in power or have money or have access to money from banks - which is actually the small savings of thousands of ordinary people, they can hire people with brains to give them ideas about making something.

But how does this work?

There are also rules.

The person who has the money is called the employer. He either uses his own money or borrows from the bank. Most clever people actually borrow most of the money from the bank. Then they hire workers of different kinds - and they agree to pay them wages - also of different kinds.

So, there are the white collar workers who maybe technically qualified and do the planning and supervisory jobs and there are the workers who do the routine jobs, who are called blue collar workers . The way they relate and function is also according to set norms, they have rules by which the work is organised - who does what, and how. These are called the relations of production¹¹ . It is always a hierarchy from top to bottom - those at the top deciding and those from below doing what they are told - often not even knowing what part of the product they are actually making. You have all seen this in your areas, isn't it? Women in the garment industry just stitching specific parts of a garment - themselves like machines, and they are paid by piece, what they complete in a day. Those at the top get the monthly salaries.

10. Commodity

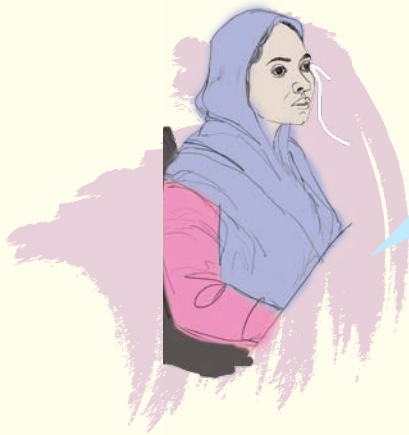
This is something that can be bought and sold. Generally these are inanimate things, that are produced. But increasingly living things, surely everything from the animal kingdom but even people or parts of the human body are treated like commodities that can be bought and sold.

11. Relations of production

We have explained that production involves people who control the investment - the employers, those who own the means of production, and those who work - the workers. The way these relate and the rules that govern the relationships between these components are called the relations of production. Since the employer/capitalist desires to make as much profit as possible they will try to pay the workers as little as possible. The workers on their part would like to increase their earnings. Hence, the relations between the capitalist and the worker are antagonistic/

opposite and therefore a struggle. The capitalist decides how the production will be undertaken. The production of one commodity will be divided into several parts and each part will be produced by a specific group of workers. The workers, therefore does not get the satisfaction of producing a product, but just a piece of the product which is a very monotonous process. Sometimes these pieces may be produced in different countries as well.

But there are also machines/ technology involved in production. These are called the means of production. These means of production keep changing as societies developed. For instance, formerly the farmer used the plough - either with his own energy, later with the help of an animal and now with a machine. Similarly, in the industry today there are large machines that dominate the production process and the workers have to adjust accordingly - often working on a production chain. The large industries increasingly are managed by robots and human labour is drastically reduced.



L: Yes, Yes, my sister works in one of those companies. She only stitches the pockets, she told me, and she herself works like a machine. Her supervisor bosses over her. They are not allowed even go to the toilet.



Fish: Yes, there are many such examples.

But let's look into this more deeply. There are other components as well to facilitate production.



There is the land on which to build, the water that may be needed for production. All this is bought very cheap, sometimes given free by the government. Then there are the machines that also are part of the production. The more the machinery, the fewer the workers.

When something is produced, the employers decide on the price and then it has to go to the market to be sold.

Whether those things are good or bad for our health, or actually needed by us or not, they begin advertising those things making us feel how important they are for life, some people sitting in front of the TV which is advertising a skin cream how they improve quality of life, and then you and I want to buy them. A lot of these products we really do not need and even if we do not have the cash in hand,



we decide to buy them in instalments because they make offers. We think buying in installments is easy but while you and I make a debt, they happily sell and make their profit.



All: Yes this is exactly true - we see these adds all the time on our phones and sometimes we also do buy like this.

Fish: So, this is what happens in society and how things are produced and how the market works by making the consumers want more and more. While we spend our meagre earnings on buying what we do not really need, the employer makes the profit and grows richer. I am not speaking here about the other impacts of the industry - how it pollutes the atmosphere and damages the environment. We will talk about that later.



M: Oh Fish, let's stop now. This is really a lot to digest. Are there notes on this too? I need to share it with my children.

L: I have recorded it all, so I can listen to it at home.

Fish: OK fine, we close for now.

T: Shall we meet day after again?

Fish: OK, bye for now.



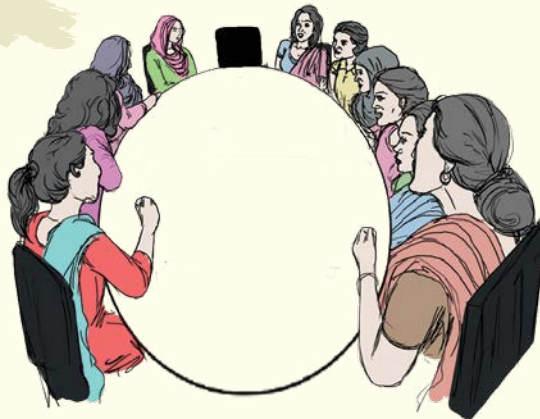
CHAPTER 8

Reproduction

Fish: Hello everybody.
Sorry I am a bit late.



T: It is OK Fish. We have been revising what we learnt about production in the last session.



Fish: Oh, great.
So, if you now know about production - what is reproduction?
Have you heard this word reproduction before?

M: No

L: Having babies is reproduction?

Fish: What about all the others?

S: I think Leela is right - reproduction is to have babies.

Fish: Actually - Leela and Sheela are right - in today's world, reproduction means not only to have babies, but to care for them and to bring them up.



M: But why is it called reproduction? Don't we women produce the babies?



Fish: Sure, women produce the babies and it is production because it takes labour, energy, and time to produce a baby. But you see, this is the whole thing about the politics of language¹². If you just use the word 'reproduce', it means it is nothing new, it is like a photocopying machine which just copies, creating nothing new. It is automatic. So, all that women do to carry the baby in the womb for 9 months, the pain to give birth and then the energy and time it takes to feed and bring it up, is taken for granted.

12. Politics of Language

The language we use indicates what we think. Everything need not be explained but the words we use reveal what we think even if we do not express it. Every language has these nuances - for instance if we refer to people who live by fishing as 'fishermen', then we do not include the women who also assist in carrying the fish to the market and they get left out of all data and assistance. Also while addressing somebody we can either use the respectful pronoun or as an equal or as below us. Generally, domestic workers are referred to as somebody below us while the employer is always referred to respectfully even if much younger than the worker. So, when all the work that women do at home, including bearing children is referred to as 'reproduction', then it is taken for granted that it does not have the value of 'production' and so it is quite natural and requires no support. This is referred to as the politics of language.



Hence it has no costs, this is a part of the job of marriage and it comes naturally to women. So while in production the person who invests the money can make the profit, in reproduction which is said to have no cost, the women has to do it for free and the child is the free gift of women to society - produced for free. This production of the baby and the maintaining of the home, also has its rules - the man is the boss, he decides, he controls the woman and her body and her labour and she does it all for free. The man gets to be the head of the household.

So now do you see how all the work the women do at home, whether it is for the baby, the other children, the service to her husband - sexual and otherwise, the care for the old parents etc. etc. is all part of reproduction and is said to have no cost and therefore needs no returns, no acknowledgement because it is all natural.



L: Oh, my God! Yes, we produce the people in society and we do it free, and nobody recognises our hard labour for this.



S: But Fish, do you mean, we have to be paid for this work?

Fish: I am not saying we have to be paid. I am saying that to bring up the child or care for the elderly, should not be the job only of the women. Also, women's labour should also be

recognised. Why should the man be considered the head of the household, when he does nothing to keep it going? The woman should also receive her rightful recognition.

As we are reproducing the society by producing the next generation, the State should calculate this cost of our service and give us an allowance for all this service we provide¹³. You know, when somebody produces even a loaf of bread and sells it in the market, this cost is calculated and enters in the earning of the country¹⁴. But we women, who do all the work to keep the society going, producing children and nurturing them, this cost enters nowhere. So all this work we do is invisible.

For now, you must understand that in today's world, producing things/goods is very important and the rich make money from it, but producing life - which is a huge burden on women - is not important, not visible and women get no recognition or returns for it.

So, from what you have heard now, are you able to understand the relations of production of life? Who will answer?



13. Unpaid Work

All work that is undertaken to maintain the well-being and care of the household members, such as cooking, cleaning, child-, elderly- or sick- care is unpaid work. It also includes the subsistence activities women are involved in for the survival of the family. Much of this unpaid work undertaken by women is unrecognized, and referred to as 'reproductive' work. This is the result of patriarchy and the sexual division of labour. Unpaid work is indispensable and contributes to the overall existence of the family and the labour supply to society and is crucial for the economy, but is not calculated as part of the country's productive output. The burden of unpaid work is the main barrier for women to join paid work and also earn equally. Patriarchal structures are stabilized by unpaid work and the domestication of women. This house- wifeization is the exploitation of women's labour. It assumes that the wage of the husband or father, also pays for the labour done by the mother or wife.

Care Work

Care work involves both paid and unpaid work. It consists of direct, indirect and relational care activities which involves service to others. It is normally regarded as work undertaken out of affection or responsibility to other people, especially family members. This implies that women voluntarily involve in care work. In the industrial era, when the production activities shifted to public spaces, men became the workers and women remained at home to nurture and care for the children. In the familial hierarchy they were considered 'housewives'. The productive or economic activity

became completely separated from the household and the duties performed by women were counted as natural.

When the care activities like childcare, elderly care, sick care, household chores like cleaning, cooking, washing etc are performed for payment, it is paid care work. When women started doing this work outside their homes, it was considered as an extension of their household duties and thus paid less, compared to men's work. These jobs have become a double burden to women, as they continue to perform their own household duties too. Domestic workers, who provide both direct and indirect care in households, are also part of the care workforce. Most of the care workers are women from socially disadvantaged groups, and fall into the informal economy.

Care services are essential in society. In many countries, there are public care policies and services to the citizens. Private sector institutions also offer paid care work, which turns out to be very expensive. Care services available through informal labour markets are comparatively cheaper. Migrant women workers form a significant force in this informal chain of care work. Paid care work will remain an important future source of employment, especially for women.

14. Gross Domestic Product - GDP

Gross domestic product (GDP) is the total monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period. Simply speaking, it is everything that is produced and sold. So, all that is produced and not sold does not enter this calculation. Hence, all the work that women do for the household does not get calculated.

S: Oh, my God!
That is difficult.

M: In this case the man
is the boss, the woman
belongs to him, he controls
her and she does what is
acceptable to him.



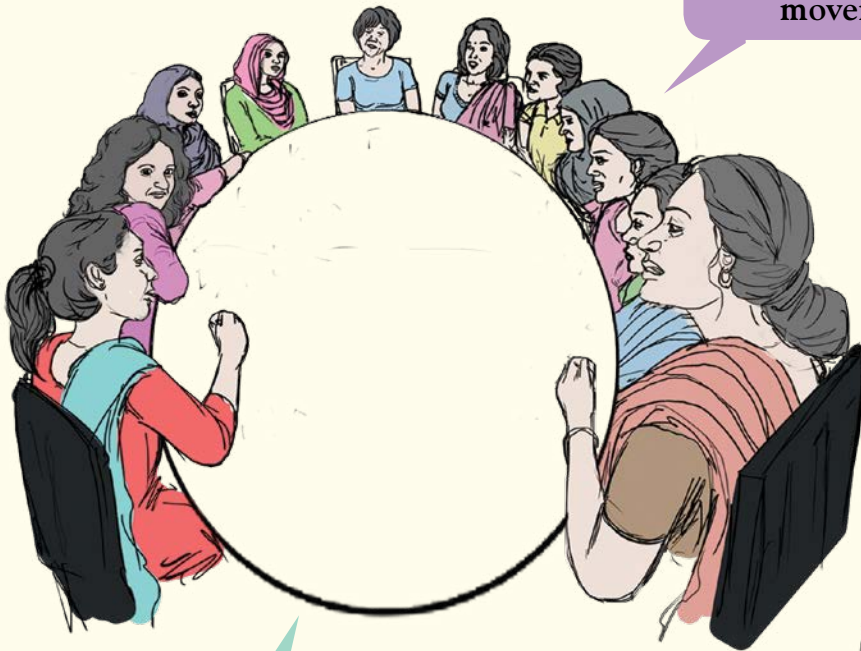
Fish: Very good, Maya. Yes, the man
controls the woman's sexuality, her
fertility and her labour. What she is
supposed to get in return, is protection
by the man. He is supposed to protect
her. This relationship of power and
control is called patriarchy.

S: So, there is
patriarchy in the
family and patriarchy
outside as well?

Fish: Yes, Sheela. It is the system
where everything is connected.
I have mentioned this earlier.
Now do you understand?

S: I understand.
But why have we kept
quiet for so long?

Fish: Women have been struggling for
a long time to change things, but it
is not so easy. Now, there seems to be
some progress as women have begun
talking about it. It is called 'care work'
and there are discussions to make this
visible and recognised by the State.



M: Oh, is this the Me Too movement?

Fish: No No No. 'Me Too' is a different movement. We can talk about that later. But just as the Me Too has begun to make the sexual harassment of women by powerful men visible, many aspects of this invisibility begin to surface now. And unpaid care work is one of these subjects.

The Women's movements and the Feminist movement which are much older have focused on the demands of women-the right of women to vote, equal pay for equal work etc.

S: Yes, that is how we also celebrate Women's Day on March 8th. But we do not know much about its history.



Fish: It is because of the struggles of the women's movements that there are several benefits that women get today - like maternity benefit¹⁵, child care in the workplace¹⁶, equal pay for equal work¹⁷ - are all successes of the women's movement.

L: But we do not get all these benefits.

Fish: Hmm... We will come to that later. See, you women are always so busy, you have no time to come for meetings, and so you do not get a chance to hear all these things. Moreover, when you do have some time, you prefer to watch some serials on your phones instead of listening to news. So the business goes on as usual and you people are the consumers - you don't ask questions. If more of us started asking questions, we will also become visible, we will learn more and understand how to demand rights and support from government.



T: Fish, from childhood, we have been told to listen and do as we are told. Asking questions was considered cheeky. So we do not ask and so we also do not think.

Fish: Exactly. This is why you must join the union. The union gives us courage and voice because we can learn, discuss and speak out together.

Now we must close for today, because I have another meeting.

We will meet again only on Wednesday

S: Oh, three days away? OK

15. Maternity benefit

This is a benefit that women workers receive from their employers, when they have their babies. It is generally a period of three months leave with pay but varies from country to country. While it is mandatory for workers in the formal sector, most workers in the informal sector do not receive this benefit. Maternity benefit is regulated by an Act in most countries. It also protects the women's employment in the job. The first such Act was passed in India in 1961.

16. Child care

The right to child care is another right that women have achieved through their struggles. In Many countries, this is a day care service provided by the government in the form of creches,

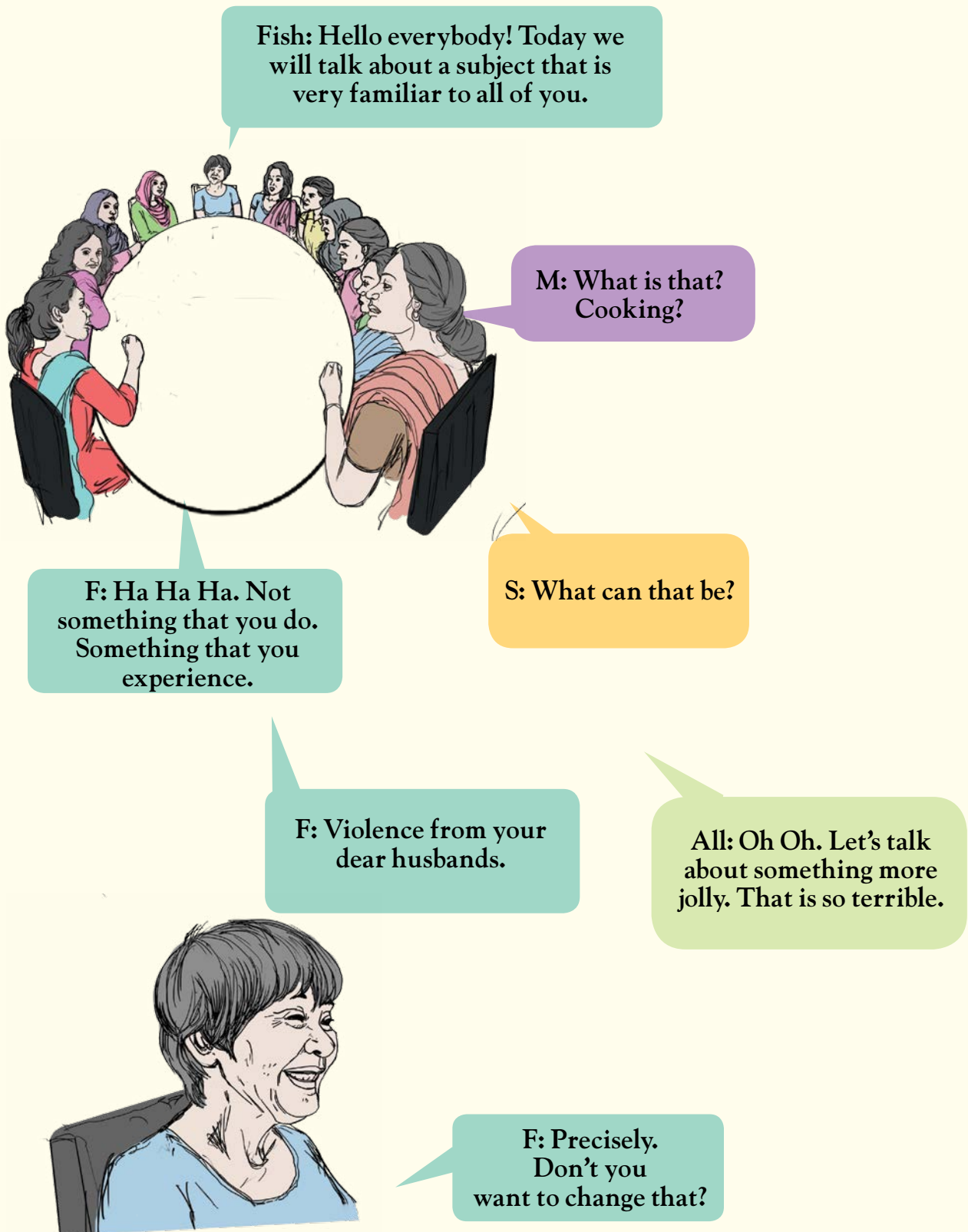
anganwadis etc. It is meant to assist working women who have to return to work after three months of maternity leave. Providing child care for children between 3 months to 5 years of age, is mandatory in all establishments in the organised sector.

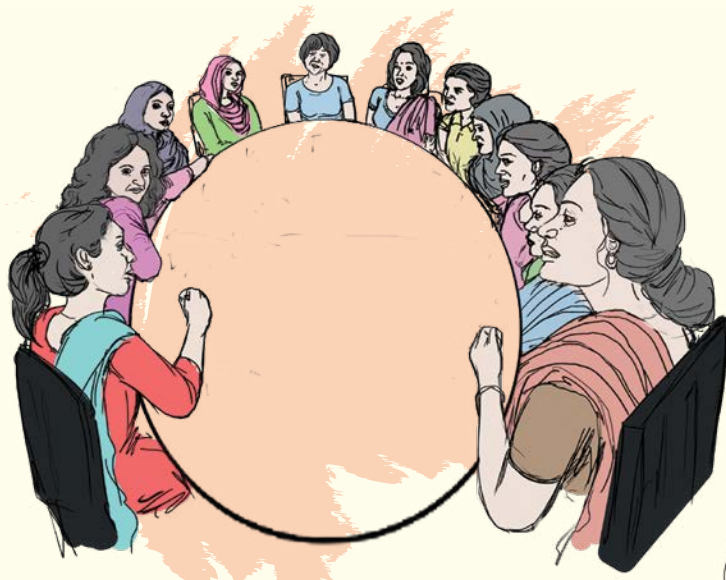
17. Equal pay for equal work

The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) of the ILO states the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. There should be no wage difference between men and women and TGs for doing the work of equal value. But this is not always the case, as in many countries even a male domestic worker is paid more than a female domestic worker.

CHAPTER 9

Domestic violence





S: Oh! If we can do that, then we must speak about it. Please start Fish.

F: Well that is what I have been trying to explain in all these last sessions - the reason why men make you work so hard, then treat you cruelly and get away with it.

All: Yes Yes. But how do we change it?

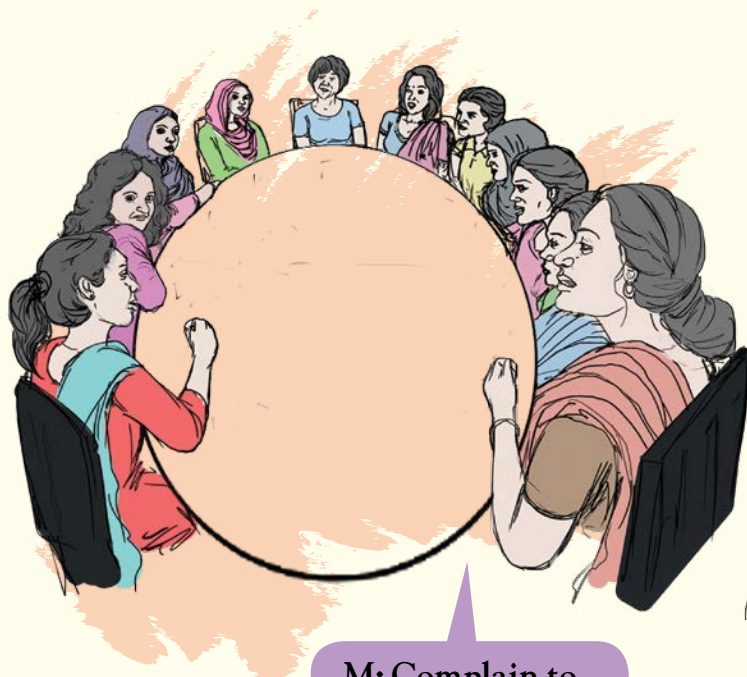
F: First of all you have to understand why it happens and then how it happens. Once you believe in your own dignity and rights, then you will find ways to change it.

So, I have explained why it happens - because right from childhood we are taught that the man is strong, superior and protects the woman. On the other hand the woman is supposed to be weak, gentle, obedient and should be submissive. Yes or no?

All: Yes, Yes. We even tell our children that.

F: Exactly. And mind you, violence is not only when you are beaten. When your husband abuses you, threatens you, forces you for sex, torments you, makes sexy comments and you then feel psychologically harassed - this is all considered domestic violence.





All: Oh really?

S: Yes, I heard that there are laws about this and we can also complain.

M: Complain to whom?

F: Yes, Sheela is right. Women’s movements have been struggling to get legal protections for women since a long time. In 1979 at the United Nations there was a Convention on the Elimination of all kinds of Discrimination against Women¹⁸. This is the Bill of Rights for Women . But since it did not tackle violence against women¹⁹ per se, in 1993 there came the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women . In this declaration all the kinds of violence are highlighted. Subsequently, many countries created their own laws on prevention of domestic violence and prevention of sexual harassment of women in the work place²⁰. So domestic violence is a crime and women have the right to complain and get their husbands punished. But actually very few women make use of these provisions as again women are shy to report violence or diffident to take action feeling that a good woman takes it all in her stride.

18. CEDAW

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is described as an international Bill of Rights for women, and has been ratified by 189 states.[1] These rights include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn a fair and equal wage. As the now-famous saying goes, “women’s rights are human rights.” That is to say, women are entitled to all of these rights. All countries are obliged to put required legislation in place to safeguard these rights of women.

19. Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women

This was proclaimed by UN General Assembly Resolution 48/104 of 20th December 1993.

Alarmed that opportunities for women to achieve legal, social, political and economic equality in society are limited, because of violence, it was felt that there is a need for a clear and comprehensive definition of violence against women. It states that “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. This includes physical, sexual or psychological violence. The Declaration makes the State responsible to spread awareness on this, and put in place legislation to stop violence against women.

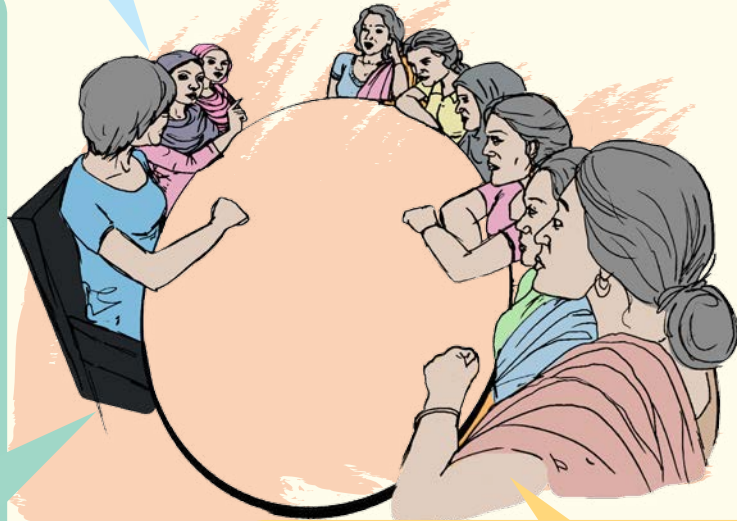
20. Summary in Appendix: Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 and Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013

L: But when my children grew up, they began to oppose their father for beating me and so it reduced.

T: Actually my husband beats me only when he drinks, otherwise he is good.

F: You see, how easily we excuse these men. Moreover when they abuse us sexually in bed, we also think this is their right. Do we have the right to say 'no' not only to sex when we are tired, but also say 'no' to bear another child?

What gives the man the right to beat you, or be sexually aggressive and give you no choice at all? And when you are beaten you have no right even to complain to the police? Actually, if you are diffident to complain, then as a union, you women should get together and begin to shame such men.



S: Yes we should organise against this violence and make the atmosphere in our homes more peaceful and equitable.

F: Yes, Sheela. We should start with us and things will surely change. There are also sexual and reproductive rights for women²¹. We should begin to understand these as well and you can find more in the notes. There are several examples where women have collectively taken action, or where union leaders have helped women to make the complaint to the police. We can do this only if all of us women stand together. Normally, when one woman speaks up, there are lots of women themselves who oppose her and condemn her. So there is a lot of work to be done first among ourselves so that we face the men and this discrimination together.

All: Yes Fish. We have to talk more about this if we want things to change. Thanks for today.

21. Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

This is a Charter of the International Planned Parenthood Federation declared in 1996. The right to sexual and reproductive health implies that people are able to enjoy a mutually satisfying and safe relationship, free from coercion or violence and without fear of infection or pregnancy, and that they are able to regulate their fertility without adverse or dangerous consequences. The 12 rights include

1. Right to life
2. Right to independence and security
3. Right to equality and freedom from all forms of discrimination
4. Rights to privacy

5. Right to health, including sexual and reproductive health
6. Right to freedom of thought
7. Right to access sexual and reproductive health education and family planning information
8. Right to choose whether or not to marry and form and plan a family
9. Right to health services and protection
10. Right to benefits from scientific progress
11. Right to freedom of association and participation in politics
12. Right to be free from abuse, not be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment

CHAPTER 10

Important social changes that came from the big leap in progress: pre-industrial to industrial society

F: Hello everybody. I guess you have been quite reflective this last week with all that you learnt about domestic violence and your own dignity.

M: Fish, even if my husband does not beat me, I understood that I experience violence because of so many other things, I just accept it all.



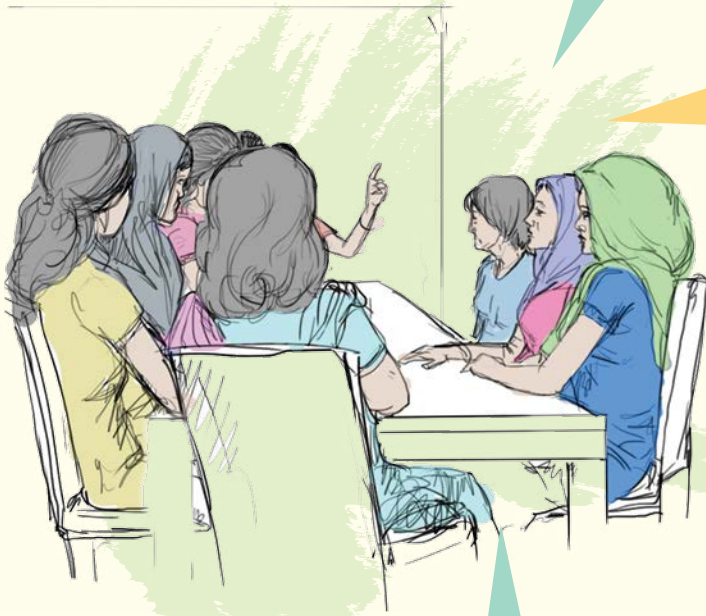
F: Good. We must become aware and try to bring up our children differently too so that our sons do not do the same to their wives.

All: Yes yes, we too have to change.

F: OK. Today, it is going to be a slightly different session - another little history lesson.

S: Oh, wonderful! I love to learn about the past.

F: Is it so, Sheela? Today when you see all these big factories, the big malls, and all these cars and buses in the city, is it different from the rural areas?



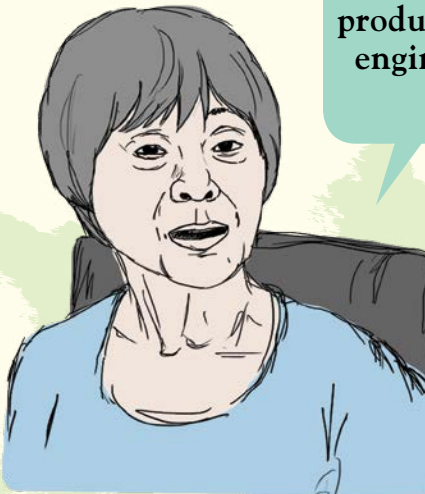
S: I think it is, because when our cousins from the village come to visit us, they feel so scared to go around on the road and even to cook in the kitchen because they use wood and we have gas stoves.

S: 21st century.

F: Yes, exactly. So, I want to explain to you today, how life and the social system radically changed with the coming of machines and engines. This is in the middle of the 18th century. By the way, what century are we in today?



F: Yes. So, in 1776 James Watt produced the improved steam engine and applied it to the machines.



L: Yes, I remember that. My son told me there was industrial revolution when the machines came.



F: Yes, exactly. It was called a revolution because not only was steam used to work the machines but all the life changed too. Before this there was the agricultural revolution when the agricultural practices changed.

First of all in Britain, they established a law called the Enclosure Act (1515)²² which enclosed lands and permitted the rich to grow crops and rear animals.

In these enclosures, they then began to plant more systematically one crop at a time and began to also care for the animals in enclosures. So lots of people were excluded from farming. With increased production of cotton and hemp, the machines to make cotton yarn and weave also advanced - with more spindles and wheels. Then the trading also grew through the period of colonialism, and Britain became very rich.



T: So, it was all a devious plan to help the rich get richer?



F: Sure. Because you should also understand that the Christian Church also supported it. The rich always want to get richer. But at that time agriculture was still the base and what could be produced was still limited.

Production was relatively simple and the number of specialized crafts was limited and hence there was not a very complex division of labour or of social classes. Communications were limited between communities and few had the opportunity to see or hear beyond their own village. Hence when James Watt improved the steam engine, there was money to invest and at the same time the British government passed property laws²³ (1716) that safeguarded individual businesses. When energy began to be used to power the machines, the production process totally changed and quantities of production increased phenomenally but less workers were required. So automatically it was the women who had to stay at home together with a lot of the older and weaker men.

22. Enclosure Acts

With the increase in food and wool prices in the 16th Century in Britain, the landlords searched for more productive farming methods. In order to intensify farming, they needed more land and therefore decided to appropriate the common lands on which small farmers farmed or grazed their cattle. Enclosure Acts began to be created from 1700–1801. Initially land was enclosed through the mutual agreement of landowners. During the 18th century, enclosures were regulated by Parliament; a separate Act of Enclosure was required for each village that wished to enclose its land. In 1801, Parliament passed a General Enclosure Act, which enabled any village, where three-quarters of the landowners agreed, to enclose its land.

As a result of the Enclosures, landowners intensified their production but large numbers of peasants were thrown off the land. Hence they became the cheap labour for the industrial revolution that took place in the 18th century.

23. Property Laws

The idea of individual property and property laws evolved over two hundred years. Initially some people had rights to use land. Gradually through enclosures, these rights became more distinct. Subsequently, as the rights of individuals became accepted and production increased, it was thought that people needed protection and security over things they created through their labour. Hence property rights were established from stage to stage since the mid 18th century.

L: So, that is how we all became housewives?

F: Exactly. Working in the factories, was not like working on the fields under a feudal lord. Under the feudal lord, they may have got housing and some grain. But in the factories they only got money and this was the beginning of getting a wage. In the early days, working the machines was also a very difficult job as the machines were also very crude and needed energy which came initially from coal so all these jobs were not only difficult to do but were also dangerous as big furnaces were required. The workers were also paid the minimum and there was great poverty, even famine and diseases like we have today.

S: Yes, I heard that there were terrible pandemics earlier as well and more people died and that is how the various vaccines were developed.

F: That's right. So on the one hand as workers got poorer, things were progressing for the rich. Scientific education was advancing, weapons were also getting modernised as wars and conquests were part of expanding the power of the powerful. So there were two big wars as we entered the 20th century, the First and the Second World Wars. With each war, new territories were demarcated and gradually the nations that we have in the world today emerged. So initially these nations were governed by the older Kings and Queens but this form of governance gradually gave way to the forms of governance that we have today. As production got more industrialised, societies grew with the help of faster means of communication, having more information at hand about the world, allowing knowledge transfer and cultural diffusion between them.

S: Oh, now I understand. But it is enough for today Fish.

F: Yes, I am stopping. One more detail, even after we became independent, most of what the British put in place in the colonial period, remained with us. Our local governments just took things forward, continuing to destroy the rural base

and focusing on the cities and modern industry. Hence independence did not mean freedom and development for all. I tell you all this because you too should understand how the society operates and why we are in such a situation today.

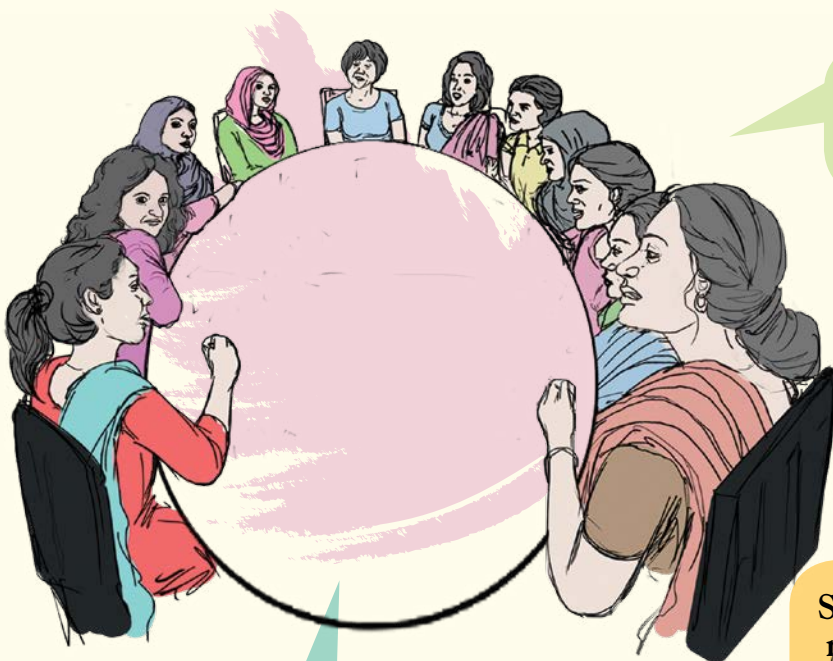
All: Yes, this is important to know. Thank you, Fish and goodbye.

CHAPTER 11

Post Independence and the State

Fish: Hello, everybody! I hope you all have some time today and have no other preoccupations as you listen because today's topic is a bit more difficult, or shall I say complex. Write down your doubts as we go along, or even stop me if required.

All: OK Fish, you begin



Fish: So we are continuing to talk about the System, but the System as it is today.

In the notes, you have read about feudalism and colonialism - how the society evolved from pre-industrial to industrial, the big wars between the kingdoms, then the empires and finally the making of the Nation States. Do you all remember what you read and we talked about?

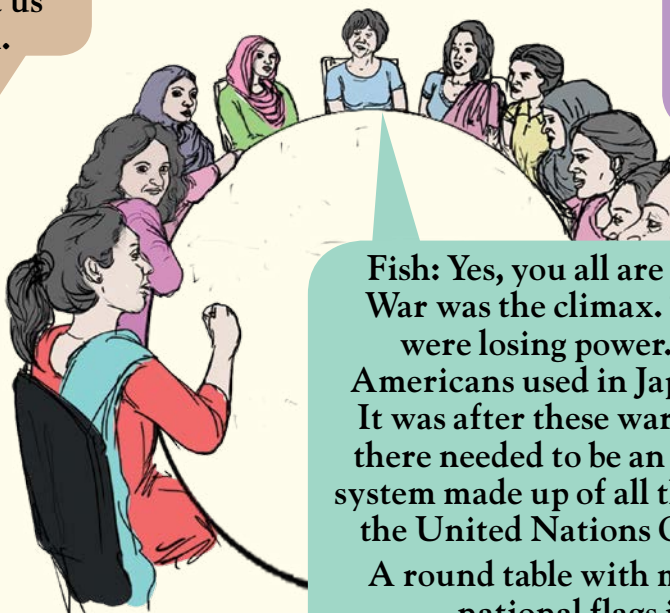
S: My daughter read me the notes and told me that this is what she studies too. But reading the notes made it so much easier for her.

M: We read it many times to understand fully.

T: That part on colonialism was terrible. My God! How those foreigners robbed and exploited us! This is why they are so rich today. They are the developed and we the underdeveloped.

R: But they also brought us education.

M: No. They brought us their education and their religion and we all followed.



Fish: Yes, you all are right. The Second World War was the climax. The British realised they were losing power. The big bomb that the Americans used in Japan was a terrible disaster. It was after these wars, that it was decided that there needed to be an international governance system made up of all the countries²⁴. This is how the United Nations Organisation was created. A round table with men discussing and many national flags in the background. It was when the people of the colonies realised they were being exploited, that they began to react and struggle for independence²⁵. All Asian countries have their struggles for Independence. Your children will tell you about this²⁶.

24. League of Nations

This was the first international organization established in 1919 “to develop cooperation among nations and to guarantee them peace and security”. It aimed to resolve international conflicts to avoid a repeat of the devastation caused by World War I. 32 states who signed the Treaty of Versailles became the initial members of the League of Nations. 13 additional states were invited to endorse it. Other states joined the League of Nations upon the fulfilment of certain requirements. The League created agencies and commissions that deal with international issues such as health, forced labour, women’s rights, drug trafficking, refugee crisis, among others. The International Court of Justice, World Health Organization, and International Labour Organization are institutions from the League that continued till 1946.

25. Which countries in Asia were colonised by whom and when they got independence. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka were all colonised

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka were all colonised by the British. But there were small pockets that were also colonised by other European countries. Below are the periods and locations in which foreign powers intervened in India.

The Portuguese from 1505-1961 and settled in Goa and Daman
East India Company from 1612-1757

French from 1673-1954 in Pondichery/Puduchery

Dutch from 1605-1825 Masaulipatam in Andhra and the Malabar coast

The Danish from 1616-1845 included the towns of Tranquebar (Tamil Nadu) Serampore (West Bengal) and the Nicobar Islands.

British Raj from 1858-1947

All these countries started off as traders but gradually settled down and established their governments. The East India Company was a British company of traders that survived with the patronage of the British crown until Britain established its rule in a large part

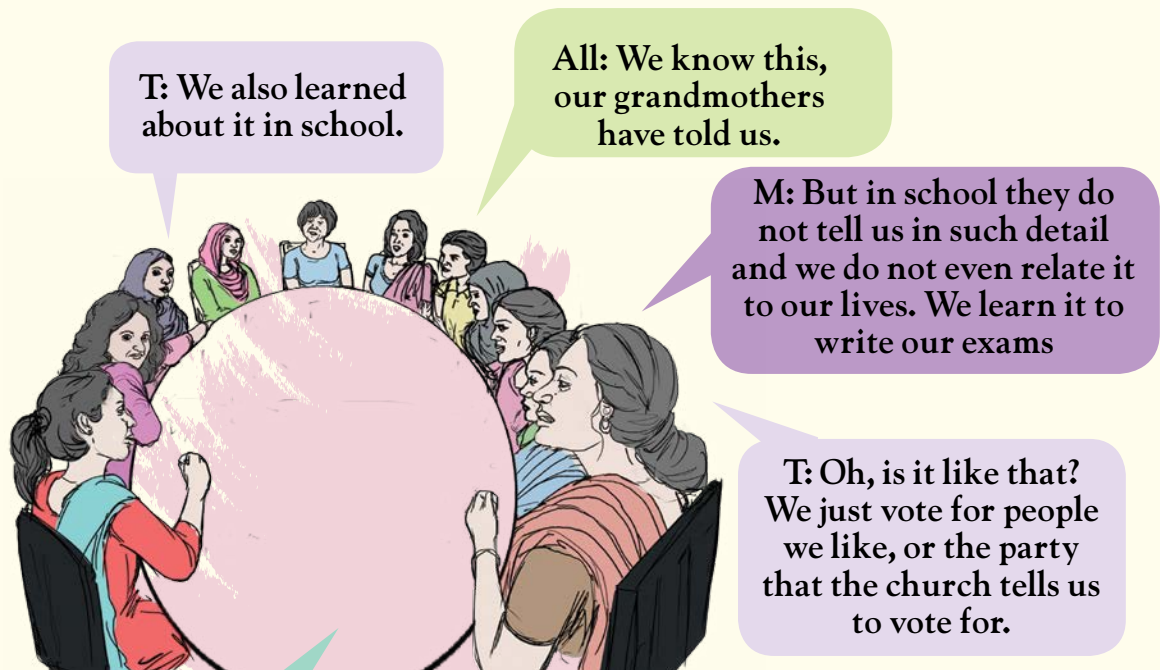
of India either directly or through the various Maharajas who paid them tribute. All these countries brought with them their religious practices and converted Indian’s through their missionaries who also started schools, hospitals, industry, printing presses etc.

26. Struggle for independence in India

There were many struggles in different parts of India in different communities against the oppressive practices of the British. Although we are very familiar with the names of Mahatma Gandhi and others of the Congress Party who led the struggle for Independence, there were many others who struggled to fight oppression and occupation of their lands.

In 1857 was the first major revolt against the British called the Great Rebellion or the Sepoy Mutiny which failed. There were several struggles in the tribal areas under leaders like Chief Bisoi of the Khond tribe in Orissa in 1850. The Santhal community fought against the British in Eastern India led by Sido and Kanho in 1855. Between 1857-1858 The Bhils revolted under the leadership of Bhagoji Naik and Kajar Singh. In 1879 The Naga tribal people revolted in North-Eastern India. In 1895 The famous revolt by the Munda tribal community under leadership of Birsa Munda. etc.

There were also kings and queens who fought the British like Puli Thevar, Pazhassi Raja, who fought the British in a series of continuous struggles for 13 years during the Cotiote War. Velu Nachiyar, was one of the earliest Indian queens to fight against the British colonial power in India. More familiar is the Rani of Jhansi. Although the Congress Party was the main political formation that challenged the British and sought independence, there was also Subhash Chandra Bose who created an army to oust the British. Indian independence was won not through war, but through non-violent protests against taxes, like the salt satyagraha and boycott of British products, mainly the textile products. The terms of independence were finally negotiated and India was declared independent on 15th August 1947.



Fish: Yes that is so sad about our school system²⁷. But it is never too late to learn more. So now we have to think about 2 important aspects. On the one hand, each country was becoming independent, local people took over. But remember what I told you at the end of the last session, they did not change the economic system that the British had put in place. They too focused on big industry and modern agriculture and forgot about the issues of the poor in the countryside. On the other hand they had to decide on what kind of social system India would have - democratic, religious, socialist, - basically how much freedom will the citizens have, what norms will they follow, how will they be governed. So this is written in the Constitution²⁸ of each country.

So while everybody accepts the Constitution, not everybody always agrees on how it will be implemented, and there may also be some who don't agree with the Constitution at all too. So the people from different parties, depending on what they think the norms should be and then through elections they fight for power to govern the nation. You and I vote for the party we want. The one that gets the majority governs and the others form the opposition.



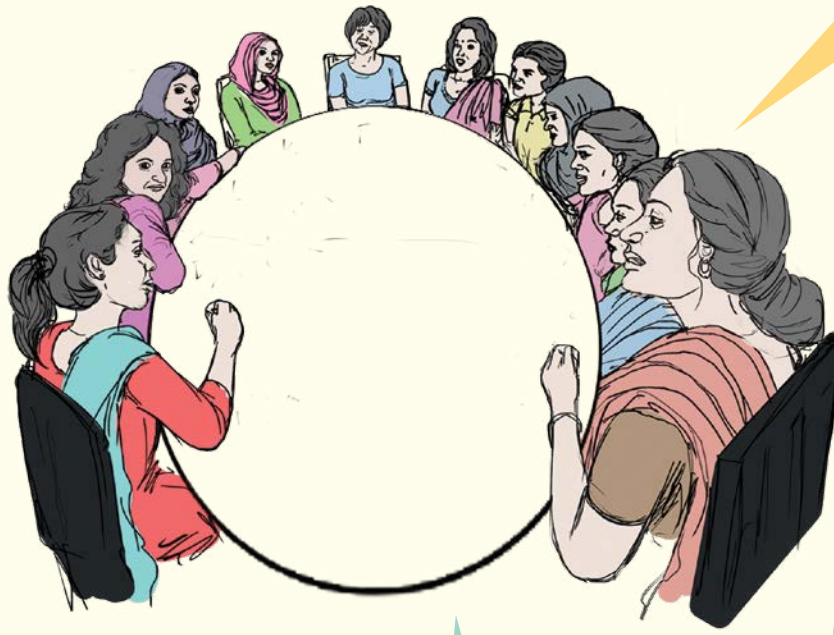
27. School system

When we talk about the school system it is to understand the focus and method of the system.

Is the focus to bring out the best in the child, to help the child develop knowledge and skill and express herself? or to make the child fit into a box? - feed the child with information and make her pass exams. If the former is the focus, then the teachers will behave like guides and treat every student as an individual, trying to develop confidence and self expression while also imbibing knowledge. In this system, children will grow according to their own talents and abilities. If the latter is the focus then

the teacher will have a fixed syllabus and force the children to learn. The teacher will compare one child to another and make all conform to the standards. There will be competition and a lot of bullying too, so much so that some children will dread going to school. In this system, all the children are expected to turn out the same.

The school system may either try to develop values of sharing, caring, honesty, equality between all genders, or of competition, selfishness and discrimination on the basis of class caste and gender.



M: I hate this business of politics. My children are always fighting between themselves because they support different parties.

S: My father was a local party member and he was always busy with others and so we never saw him at all. My poor mother cooked food which we sold, earned money and did everything for us.

All: Yes, yes.

Fish: Yes. So, on the one hand, there is the governance system, but on the other, there is the economic system. They are both very linked but we have to understand them separately. The economic system is the way production is organized, its objectives and rules. Do you remember we talked about this earlier?

28. The Constitution

Every country has a document which states its fundamental principles of how the country will be governed, the rights and duties of its citizens. Every citizen should know what is contained in the constitution so that they can defend their rights. Generally the Constitution can be amended - modified/changed only by a majority decision of the Parliament. The writer of the Indian

Constitution was Dr. Ambedkar and it was accepted on 26 November 1949, after almost 2 years, 11 months and 17 days. It was legally enforced on 26 January 1950, the day that we celebrate as Republic Day ever since. It is the longest constitution in the world.



Fish: So, now we are going to talk about the governance and economic system today²⁹

Here Fish points to a picture with the three pillars of governance and - the army and navy

In most of the countries today, there are elections where different parties stand for election once in 4 or 5 years. This is called democracy and we have democracies of different natures too³⁰.

The role of the government is to frame the policy and keep the law and order- through the justice system, through the bureaucracy.

So while the politicians make the decisions, the bureaucrats carry them out, the justice system decides when things are right and wrong - then of course there is the army and navy that defend the country from others.



Have you understood so far?

All: Yes, Yes.

F: So shall we discuss the economic system in the next session?

All: Yes, because there are many notes to read as well.

F: OK, till day after tomorrow. Goodbye for now.



29. Names of Political Parties in India

There are both national and regional political parties in India.

8 National parties recognised by the Election Commission as of 2020:

Bahujan Samaj Party. BSP

Bharatiya Janata Party. BJP

Communist Party of India. CPI.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) CPI (M)

Indian National Congress. INC

Nationalist Congress Party. NCP

National People's Party NPP

All India Trinamool Congress . TMC

There are around 49 other parties that are either state or regional parties

30. Democracy

Democracy is basically a social system where all are considered equal and have equal voice.

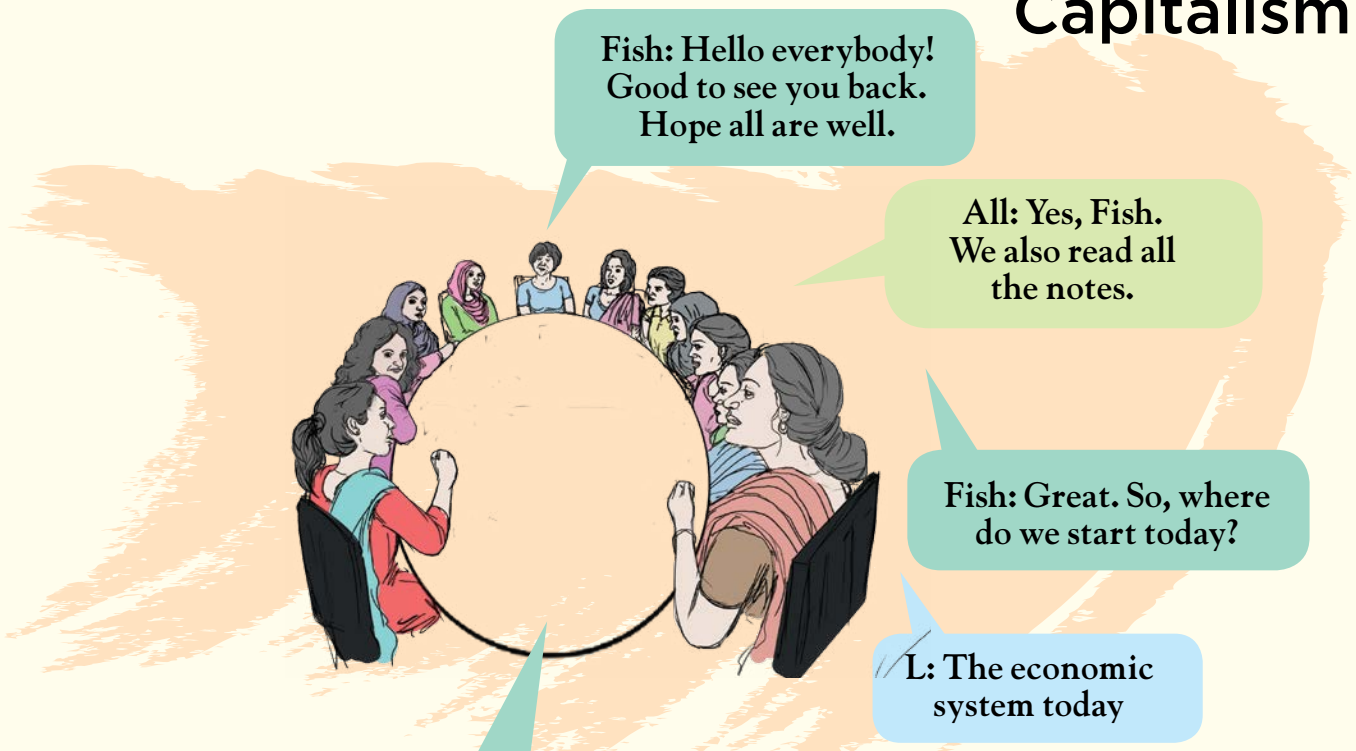
It is a form of government, where there are many parties that compete for power and all citizens above the age of 18 have a right to vote. The government can be made up of two or more parties that win in the elections. One group that gets the majority votes becomes the ruling party and the other group forms the opposition. People who do not belong to a political party, independent, can also be elected

In a democracy, there is also freedom to practice one's religion, freedom of speech and freedom of movement. There will be a free press that can publish and broadcast. Generally in a democracy, the human rights of individuals are respected, and if not, will have the right to access the courts. People also have the right to do business and to create organizations of all kinds and mainly to bargain collectively, forming trade unions.

A democracy in principle, is meant to treat all its citizens alike, but this does not happen because of the class, caste and gender discrimination in the society. In India, this inequality is said to be remedied through a system of reservation, where those that have been discriminated can also have access to opportunities.

CHAPTER 12

Capitalism



Fish: Hello everybody!
Good to see you back.
Hope all are well.

All: Yes, Fish.
We also read all
the notes.

Fish: Great. So, where
do we start today?

L: The economic
system today

Fish: Exactly. The last time we said that the government decides the policy and how it will control the economy. In most countries you will see that certain parts of the production or services are done by the government and the rest is private. For instance, electricity may be produced by the government alone, or the mines may belong to the government, even water may be supplied by the government, but there may also be both government and private business. In a country like India, all these services were initially managed by the government. It was only in the 1990s that things began to get privatised. When things are run by the government it is called the public sector.

So why did this happen? Certain sectors are controlled by the government because the government feels responsible to reach all the citizens in a common way all over the country. The government can control the prices and the quality of the services. Also whatever is earned in terms of profit, doesn't go into the pocket of any one individual or group of individuals, but belongs to the common good. Nevertheless, even when some countries decide that the government will control certain sectors of production, there is always the same norm- that profit will be made. Certain governments control the way the profit will be made, by insisting that the workers get good wages and social security and how much tax the owners will pay to the government on the profits they make. But some countries just permit the private owners to do what they want, produce what they want and make as much profit as they want. The government may decide how much tax is paid finally by each individual.

For your homework, you discuss among yourselves - what is public and private sector in our country. You must bring back the list the next time.

All: OK



Fish: The way in which this economic system is organised today is called Capitalism. As I told you earlier, there is a group of people with power and wealth who own the resources, invest and get the profit. Then there are the workers who work and get wages and in between there are groups of others who service the industry - agents, retailers, suppliers, marketing people etc. Depending on how rich or poor people are, and the role they play in the economic system, they fall into a particular class³¹. You have read that in your notes. So generally how many classes are there?

31. Class

This is a hierarchical social division in society based on wealth and social position. Generally the broad divisions that we refer to are the working class - those who do the hands-on work, the middle class - the supervisors and professionals like teachers, nurses, small business people and the upper class - the rich.



L: The working class, the middle class and the upper class, the rich/capitalists



S: But is class the same as caste?



S: Actually it is a lot today. I did listen but I do not have it all so clear in my head.

Fish: That is a very important question Sheela. That is very specific to India. I will take that up in the next session. Let me continue with the issue of class right now and what Leela has said is correct. The main feature of capitalism is to make profit and for this it needs to make things cheap and sell as much as possible. So they produce on a big scale and the scale gets bigger and bigger. In order to produce cheap, the producers move to places where labour and raw material are also cheaply available. In order to make things cheap, they do not care much about the quality of the products. So the success of capitalism is large scale production, extensive markets and poorer and poorer quality products.

In this process, they wipe out all the small producers.

To sell all that they produce, they have to advertise and make offers, and we the consumers buy. Since the quality is poor, we also throw away things all the time and buy more. So in throwing away, we create more and more waste and we do not know what to do with this waste. Not only do the big industries create pollution because they have all kinds of dirty emissions³², there is also a huge amount of waste that has to be thrown away as we consume more and more. So this is the way capitalism works.

I have made a diagram in the notes and you can look at it and understand.³³

Any questions?



L: Fish, when we read the notes, we actually understand more. So we will do that.

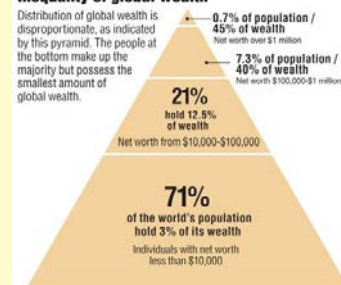
32. Emissions

Emission is something that is released, generally into the air, the water or the land. Emissions take place as a result of a production process and can be a result of a burning process or a chemical process - essentially it is the waste. It is now understood that industrial production and modern lifestyles of cars, air conditioners etc. release dangerous substances which ruin the air, water and the land and thus have a negative impact on all forms of life.

33. Wealth Pyramid

Inequality of global wealth

Distribution of global wealth is disproportionate, as indicated by this pyramid. The people at the bottom make up the majority but possess the smallest amount of global wealth.



Source: Credit Suisse, The Washington Post

Carli Krueger / The Bulletin

Others: Yes, we will read and then come back with questions next time.

Fish: Very good. But just to sum up, we talked about the government and the economic system. The economic system today is called capitalism, where the rich and the powerful have the money, they earn the profit. Then there are all the technical people like the engineers, the sales people, and others like teachers and doctors who get high salaries or earn well, the rest of us - and that is the large majority, are workers -some with better benefits than others. But on the whole, capitalism aims to produce things as cheaply as possible and sell as much as possible. We the consumers buy rubbish, create enormous waste and ruin the earth and our health in the process. The government helps to keep this system in place. OK?



M: Fish we are all so stupid. We are all in the trap!

J: Fish, some of us have started doing some work in the day, but we want to learn more. Can we meet in the late evenings?

Fish: So, do you still want more?



Fish: Sure, we can do that. But also, if you are too tired after work, then one of your friends can record the session and you can listen later.



L: Fish, I recorded the whole session today as my son asked me to do it so that he could listen too.

Fish: Very clever indeed. So we will meet on Sunday, at 7 pm?

All: Yes, and Thanks Fish. Goodbye.

CHAPTER 13

CASTE

Fish: Hello everybody. I hope you are not too tired at this late hour. Have you all had something to eat?

J: We are OK. Please go on.



Fish: Well, in the last session Sheela asked whether class is the same as caste. Did you all hear that and do any of you have anything to say?

M: I am not sure whether they are the same or not but surely there is also this hierarchy and exploitation on the basis of caste as well.

L: Yes, there are some employers who do not let us drink water in a regular glass because they are from a higher caste.

S: Why are you talking about the employer, isn't this the same among us as well. We also do not let the lower caste people into our houses, nor do we share our food with them, and look at all the trouble we make during marriage of our children, that they have to marry only within the caste. We also see how the caste panchayat treats those who don't.

J: But that is what we are taught, that God has ordained it this way. If we are good in this life, we will be born in a higher caste in the next.

F: Yes Jeena, this is another thing we are taught but which is not true. Caste again is something that human beings have created as a means for some to get advantage over others. We are all equal human beings at birth but because some have privileges, they advance in health, education and wellbeing. The others are treated as less worthy and therefore have to struggle and do all the dirty work in society. In order to maintain this system of privilege, all the other cultural practices are developed, that some are impure and thus segregated. So that is why employers do not let the domestic worker drink water from a glass in the house, and some of you will not share the food of other domestic workers sisters. Yes or No? And the caste panchayat controls the entire social system through marriage norms. Do you think this injustice is God made?

S: I am so glad we are talking about this as I know it is not God made and it is not just. But how do we change it?

F: Well we first have to be convinced that it is unjust and we have to desire to change it. This we can do among ourselves first. In the union we are all sisters and all equal human beings. We have to begin to treat everyone as an equal and we should at the same time begin to treat all work as equal too. It is not that there are some of us who will only cook food and leave the cleaning of the toilets to others. All work has dignity and we will do any work well and with pride. Once we begin to believe and behave like this, we will begin to change things. I know it is not easy and it will not happen in a short time because of the system again. But we have to begin to realise that this is unjust and stand together to change it.



S: So class and caste are not the same?

F: Well, you will notice in society that people who are in power or are rich will most often be from the upper castes and those who are poor and doing the manual jobs will be from the lower castes in India. But over the last few decades people from the lower castes have begun to organise themselves and also because of reservations have been able to study and find better jobs and even create their own political parties and come to power. So things are changing. But with every one step forward, there is a violent backlash and moving forward is indeed a struggle. If in organizations like ours we can talk about this injustice and then begin to treat each other with equal respect, and teach our children to do the same, then things will begin to change

T: Thankyou Fish for explaining this. I have suffered so much because of this. Sheela has always supported me, but I have had a lot of problems earlier and even today. I know my children also suffer because of this but I always try to tell them that we have to keep up our dignity and live with confidence.

F: Yes indeed, this is what the union should help us realise among ourselves too. So let us all keep this in mind and help our other sisters to understand this too. Shall we close now?

All: Thank you Fish, Good night.

Violence and Patriarchy

Fish: Hello everybody! How are all of you? Do any of you have doubts about anything you heard the last time or about the notes you read? Did any of you make the list of what is in the public and private sector in our country?



M: I made a list with my children. When we had doubts, my husband helped us. But we also understood that in some sectors like health and education, there is both public and private.

T: Also in transport and electricity.

Fish: So now you understood?

S: My children began to argue about the objectives of the political parties. Actually they did not know that all parties have different objectives.

L: My grandmother, told me how they suffered even in the struggle for independence, the police were very brutal - even if they were our own people.

T: My husband told me, how many of his friends lost jobs when Coco Cola bought up Thumbs UP. He told me that many foreign companies are coming in and buying up the local companies and we are losing jobs. He too read all the notes.

Fish: Good, good. that all of you are discussing and reading. Only if we know things, we can decide to change. For doing this we have to keep on gaining knowledge and expanding our organising. One day we will succeed to change. But we have a long way to go.

So, let's start today's session.

When we talked about production, we spoke about the land and materials that are required for producing something. Now, who did all this land and materials belong to originally?



S: Fish you told us that it was initially for all, then people began to possess it and gradually the rich and powerful got it all.

Fish: Yes, that is right. But it is not only land - on the land there are the forests, running through the land is the river, below the land are the minerals, the water and the oil. Isn't this all the material that is used for production? Fish shows the same picture as earlier.

M: Yes, yes, my grandmother told me how the Shell company cut down all the forests when they set up their company and thousands of people had to leave the area.

L: My father said, as they cut the forests, the river also dried up and so, there was no water.

T: And there was so much smoke that the air got polluted and the old people who stayed behind, got lung diseases.

Fish: Yes, this is a very destructive and violent process.

And who pays for it all? It is the people. They pay with their lives.

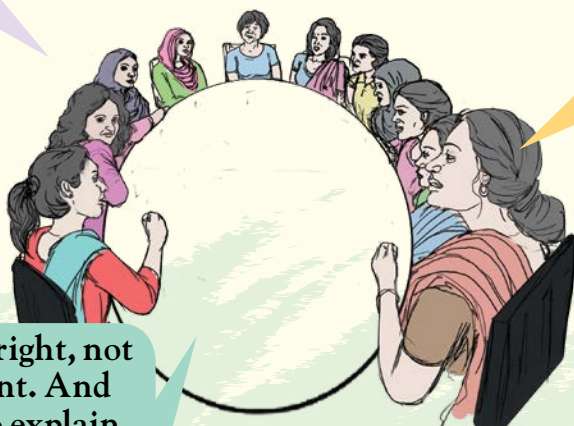
The industry gets it for almost free but they do not pay for the people who had to move, the loss of water for the others, the pollution of the air, and yet it is they who make the profit.

And who are all these people who make the profit? They are all the powerful men, who do not have to look after those who get sick, who do not have to fetch the water from far away when the river dries up near the village, who do not fetch the fire wood when the forest is gone. Then the poor men, our husbands, go to drink because there is no job for them, and then they also beat us up at home, they become violent.

So, do you see, how violence is justified and taken for granted. The big industrialists extract the natural resources without limits and in an aggressive manner, this gives certain groups of men more power and control. This is the system that makes your men drink, and get violent at home. And all this is taken for granted, as if it is natural. This is what patriarchy does, the way it grows.

Can you see how this is linked to your man also exploiting you, your body, your labour and taking it all for granted? So, in real life, all that is good, positive, life giving in nature - the land, the water, the air, and then in the family - the bearing of children and the nurturing of children and the family, sustaining the life, is all taken for granted, treated violently as if it does not matter. This is what patriarchy does. It gives the man the right and power to dominate, to control and excuses the violence, as if it has to be tolerated in order to let society grow and make profit.

T: But not all men are like this Fish. My husband never beats me and he also helps with the children.



S: Fish, this is very new. Earlier, I had also heard the word patriarchy when I went for a training in Sri Lanka, and they told us about gender and patriarchy - it was all in the family. I think they did tell us that patriarchy is a power relation of domination and can be violent too. But if I remember right, they did not tell us that it has to do with the development of the industry as well, the economic system.

Fish: Tina, you are right, not every man is violent. And Sheela, let me try to explain. Generally, there is very little time to explain all this in a training session which is only for a couple of days. But now since we have the time, we can learn it all in a more connected way. Does it make sense to you now, Sheela?

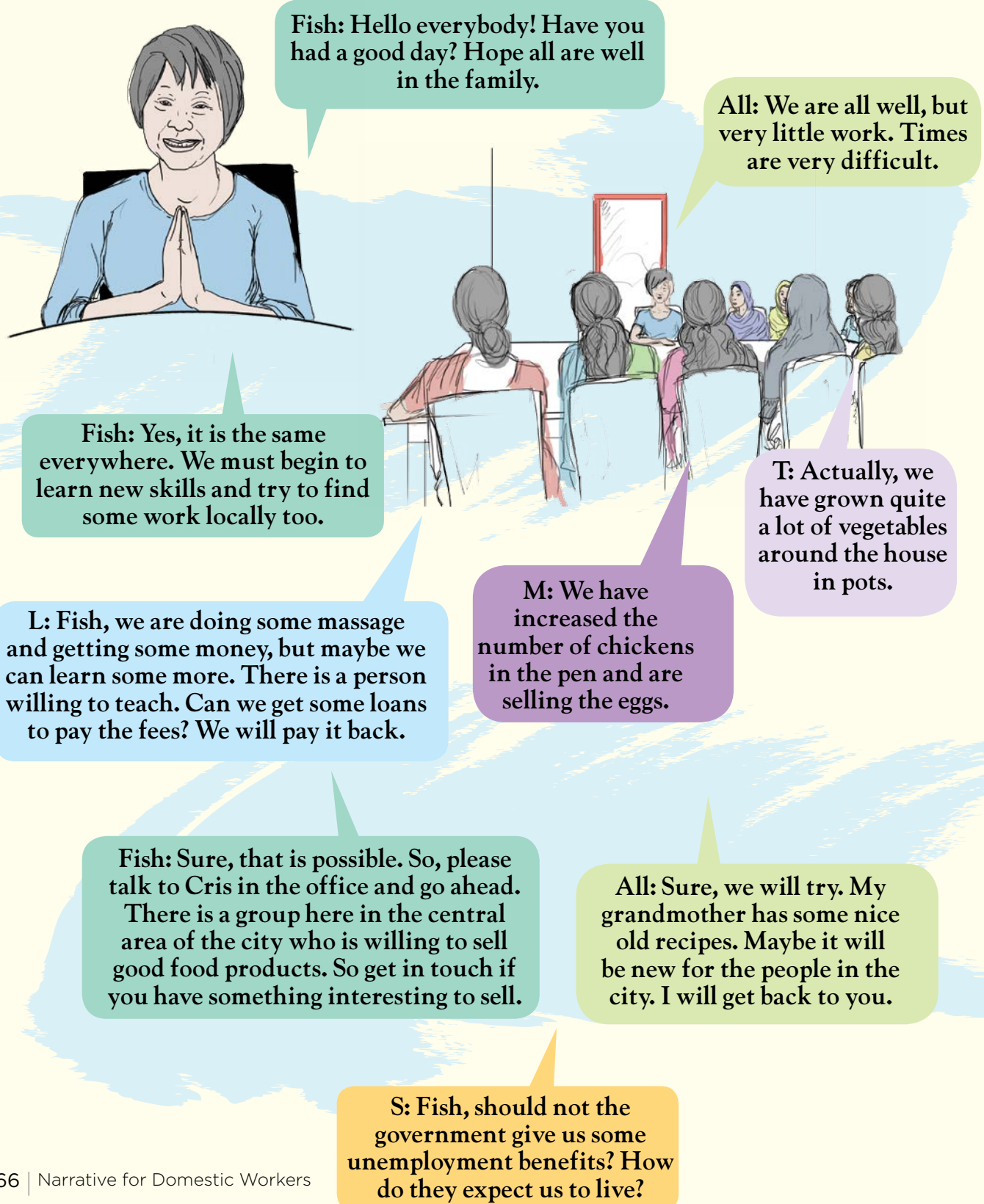
S: I will read the notes and think about what you have told us today. I will also try to explain it to my children, not to my husband now.

Fish: Good, all must try to do this, and come back if you have problems explaining. So shall we meet on Wednesday?

All: Yes, fine.

CHAPTER 15

Formal and Informal Workers - domestic workers



Fish: Sure, they should. If they don't, it is because they do not care for the workers. Let us talk about that today. How come some workers got their salaries during the lockdown and others like you did not?

Sheela: Because we do not have work contracts.



Fish: Good, Sheela. That is one reason. But why don't you have work contracts?

L: Because we work in one home with one employer and the employer will not give us a contract. But I heard that Maggie who works in Hong Kong has a contract - she too is a domestic worker.

Fish: Yes, you are both right. But before we come to the contract, we have to understand that even among the workers, there are different kinds of workers.

There are two basic categories: formal workers and informal workers

M: Yes, I know this. We are informal workers, we do not get a weekly off, we do not get maternity leave and all other kinds of benefits. Our working hours are also not regulated, we do not get any social security. But the formal workers, like those who work in the government or in the companies, they get them.

Fish: Yes, that is right Maya. So, who are more numerous? The formal or informal?

T: The informal, of course.

Fish: Yes, in some countries, only 3 of 100 workers are in the formal sector and in others maybe 20 out of 100 workers are formal. In most Asian, African and Latin American countries, the majority of workers are in the informal sector³⁴.

But among these there are different categories. Can you name them?

34. Breakup of formal and informal sector in India

In India only 3% of workers are in the formal sector and 97% are in the informal sector

T: Yes, we are domestic workers and we are paid wages per day of work and some of us get monthly wages. My mother sells food. Is she a worker?

S: Yes, she is a home based worker - while she is at home, she produces something for sale and earns money.

M: I told you, my sister stitches clothes at home. She is a tailor.


Fish: Does she stitch for customers directly, or does she stitch clothes with material given to her by a bigger tailors shop?

M: Yes, Fish, she stitches for the big tailors.

Fish: So, you see, she too works at home like Tina's mother. So, both these are called home based workers. But one sells for herself and earns money and the other works for a bigger tailor. So Tina's mother is called a self-employed or an own-account worker - she earns her own money, while as Maya's sister works for someone else and earns money for every piece she stitches and so she is called a piece-rate worker.

L: I know on my street there are three women who get material from an agent and they have to stitch different kinds of things - some make the button holes, some do embroidery on pockets, some do the piping, but we do not know where this agent comes from or for whom she works. Actually these three women are very good workers and the material is very expensive. They once told me this is for a foreign company. They are very skilled and learned to do this from their mothers.

Fish: Yes, these are also home based piece-rate workers but they are part of a bigger production chain. Do you know what a chain is?




S: Yes, it can be very long, and has many links.

Fish: You are right again Sheela. The chain is made up of many links, and it can be very long. That means if it starts in your community, these little parts go to bigger groups in bigger cities who produce the garment, and then the garment has to be washed and packed and this is done by another group, and finally it can be sold in our country or even in other countries. So it passes through many groups of workers and different agents and finally to the consumer - who could even be abroad. This is called a global chain. And these three women are part of a global supply chain. So when the garment is finally finished and gets the label of some famous company, a part of it may have been made in your little community. But you do not know. And you also do not know what the final product looks like, nor which label it gets.

So what about you domestic workers? What kind of workers are you? Are you a part of a chain?

T: No, no, no. We are not.



S: We are informal workers. We work in other people's homes.

Fish: Hmm... we will talk about DW being part of a chain later. Anything else?

L: You tell us Fish.

Fish: First of all I am glad that you know you are workers and informal workers at that. In many places, women who work like you either do not call themselves workers, or they are shy to say they do domestic work. Even many employers do not like to think of them as workers and they do not treat them with respect. Some even do not pay them cash but give them some food and clothes. Hence such women do not want to say they are domestic workers.



T: Yes, that is right. My mother worked like that for several years.



Fish: Yes. So, remember that domestic workers are informal workers but who have rights like all other workers. Do you know this?

M: Yes, because of Convention 189³⁵

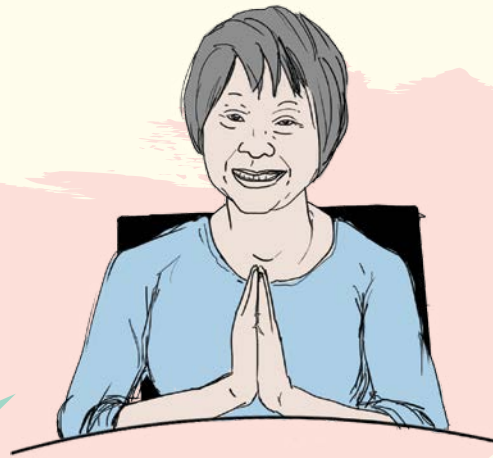


Fish: Yes, so for those of you who have not yet read C 189, there is a summary that I have made. So look at it for home work. Remember now the difference between formal and informal workers, the home based workers and the global supply chain. OK. Shall we stop today and meet again day after?

All: Yes. Thanks Fish.

35. Summary of C189 - in the appendix

The Welfare State and its collapse



Fish: Hello everybody!

A few sessions ago we talked about the Government and the different forms of government. When we refer to the governance of a country, we refer to it as ‘the state’.

Whereas the governance system may be democratic, autocratic etc. the focus of the state and the benefits/services it desires to give to its citizens - health, education, old age benefits etc. may also vary from country to country. So a country’s governance system may be democratic, but it may not want to give its citizens many benefits. Some other countries may be democratic and also give their citizens benefits as they realise that all are not equally well off. Such a state is called a Welfare State - where the state puts in government money to provide health facilities, education, other public services to people like transport, posts etc. After independence, some countries like India and Sri Lanka decided that they would be welfare states. Indonesia did not decide right away, but over the years grew to be one. Nevertheless, things changed in the 1990s when capitalism was expanding and the ruling classes became more greedy. There was also a push for more ‘development’ - big dams, speedy trains, highways, air travel and airports, more technology. For such modernization, the countries needed money and sought loans from the International Banks that were only too ready to lend but with certain conditions. The banks would give loans only if the country decided to be more competitive and stop all the ‘useless’ spending on welfare³⁶. This was the time (late 1980s) when the rich wanted the government to remove all restrictions and controls so that they could do business more easily³⁷. You will see, that in all our Asian countries,

36. Free Market

The free market is an economic system based on supply and demand with little or no government control. Hence, anybody can engage in production and prices can also be fixed according to the supply and demand.

37. Structural Adjustment

Structural Adjustment Programmes are economic policies which countries must follow in order to qualify for World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans, so as to help them make debt repayments on the older debts owed to commercial banks, governments and the World Bank. These force countries to make less investments in public social programmes like health care, education, water supply etc. and give more freedom to private investors and free trade.

there were big struggles at that time as living costs began to rise and people began losing work and livelihood. There were also struggles between the political parties that were becoming more aggressive and violent. In countries like India the political parties even began to pay people to vote for them. So the parties needed to make a lot of money and there was growing bribery and corruption and even great leaders could no longer be trusted.

L: Yes, yes. We all know this, but did not know why it is all happening.

S: Yes, the political parties are really corrupt, but we still have to vote for them.

F: So, while all this fighting and bribery goes on, the services that are run by the state are gradually reduced and the business interests take over and pretend that they can do better than the government.

I am stopping with this today.
Any questions?


L: Let us read the notes, and then we will ask.

F: OK. See you in two days. Keep well.


All: Thanks Fish.

CHAPTER 17

Globalization



Fish: Hello, Hello!
You all are still well. I am glad.



L: Fish, one person from our area, who was in the Gulf came back infected with COVID and so is in quarantine.

Fish: Oh, be careful. You must all do hot steam inhalation when you come back from outside. Warm air kills the virus if it is lodged in your nose.

All: Oh, OK.

Fish: So, if you read the notes you have now understood about Neoliberalism.

S: Yes, free market.

F: Correct. Today, we will talk about Globalization. I am sure you have heard this word before.

All: Yes, yes.

L: But we do not know what it really means. What we do know is that all the children now want to eat burgers, wear jeans, and be on their phones all the time. This is such a big change from when we grew up.

Fish: How old are you now, Leela?

L: Oh, I am now 58, but still strong.

Fish: OK. So, you probably know the difference between then and now. So, let me start. We have spoken about capitalism and neoliberalism, and I hope you remember.

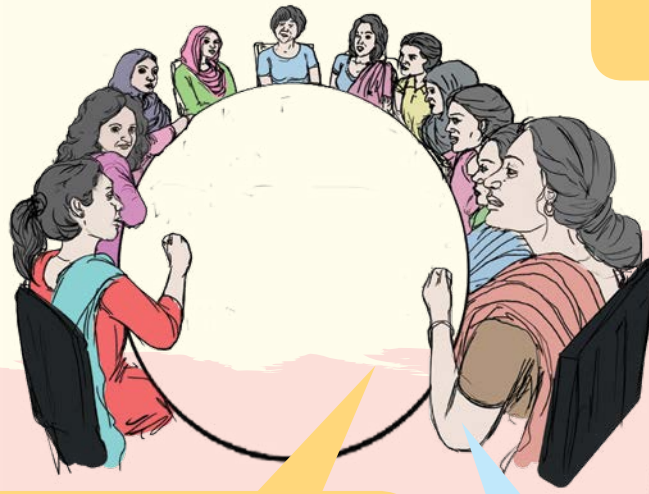
All: Yes, yes.

Fish: So, in 1994, when the logic of the free market was beginning to be accepted there was a big change in the rules of international trade. A new deal was signed by all the countries, pushed by the industrialists. This was called the GATT - General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs³⁸ and a new institution was created- called the WTO - World Trade Organization³⁹.

38/39 GATT and the WTO

There were three important international institutions created after the Second World War. The International Monetary Fund was to create economic stability in the world. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development was to help rebuild countries devastated by the war. The General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) was to create rules to govern international trade. All these institutions came under the governance of the United Nations which meant that all countries could participate in deciding how they functioned. But as capitalism advanced and as the big corporations began to grow, they needed to get larger and larger and to get

cheaper raw material and even access to more and more resources for production. So the big corporations sought to change the rules of GATT and finally in 1994 they forced the governments to sign the new agreement making GATT into a new institution called the World Trade Organization- WTO. With this new agreement a new set of rules were made but now, more than just trade of goods, other sectors were also included like telecommunications, banking and investments, transport, education, health and even the environment under its purview. So while all these sectors and investors could move around the world freely with no barriers at country borders, the movement of people/workers still require border controls.



S: Oh, I have heard about the WTO, my husband told me how the farmers opposed the rules of the WTO.

Fish: Yes, that is right. There have been a lot of struggles against the way the WTO functions.

S: Leela, didn't you understand till now that the countries are ruled by the rich and powerful and they listen to the industrialists who give them money for elections etc? What the leaders decide is not always good for all the people.

L: Why is that, if all the countries decided to do this?

Fish: Yes, that is how things work today, unfortunately.

So, when the rules changed all the borders of the countries had to open up to the demands of the industry. The big foreign industries could either invest money in our country, or they could build their factories in our country and make use of cheap labour - cheap because their money has more value than ours. So some of us benefited in this process when our children could get work in these industries and they earned a bit more money than the local industry could pay. So our local industry had to close down and then these foreign companies bought over the local small industries or the small guys had to just close up. So, while many lost work and business, a few others in our country began getting more money, they also began to want more, to travel more and so they began to buy more. But with this the costs of living increased and people also needed more money. This brought more women out of the house and into the labour market. This was good for the industry as they wanted workers for less wages. Moreover since the politicians were also involved in business or needed the money of the business men, they were willing to offer them all kinds of concessions to make business easy and forget about the rights of the workers. So the business men could change the rules of work as well - either they made people work longer hours, or hire and fire them as they liked. They would also contract out the work so that people could work from home⁴⁰ and get paid for the job done and not a monthly salary.

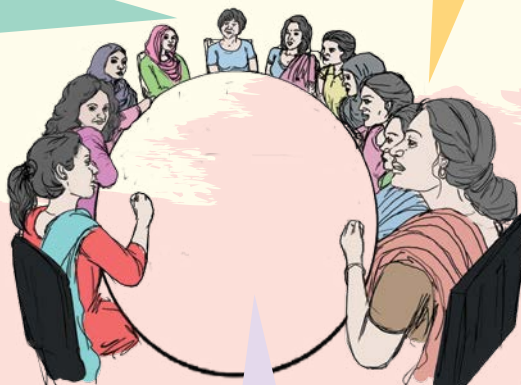
40. Flexibilization of labour

Flexibilization refers to the changing work practices by which firms no longer promise employees lifetime job security, but rather seek flexible employment relations that permit them to increase

or diminish their workforce, and reassign and redeploy employees with ease. They also may not depend on the local labour market but employ labour wherever it is cheapest.

F: That's right. But simultaneously, technology is also advancing and less workers are needed in production. The internet also came into existence and that changed everything phenomenally. We can buy online, we can communicate online and children begin to play online games etc. etc. So there is a huge change in the way life and work are now organised compared to the past. Fewer of us are engaged in production and more of us are finding work as domestic workers, delivery boys, sales girls, maybe nurses and masseurs and beauticians or cooking street food⁴¹.

S: Yes, our children are working like this. They have to work so hard and are not sure whether they will have work next week.



T: But isn't that good? At least there is some work.

F: It is true there is work, but it is informal - no security at all, so much cheaper for the employer. It is they who make more and more money and we only serve them. Life becomes more expensive and we all need to borrow money. How many of you have debts?

All: All of us.

Fish: Yes, while you borrow money and pay high interests, you will remain poor while the others make the money. Over these last 20 years, the gap between the rich and poor has increased phenomenally and it will grow further during this time of COVID.

S: Yes Fish. Not only do we not have money, but we also now have no work. What will we do?

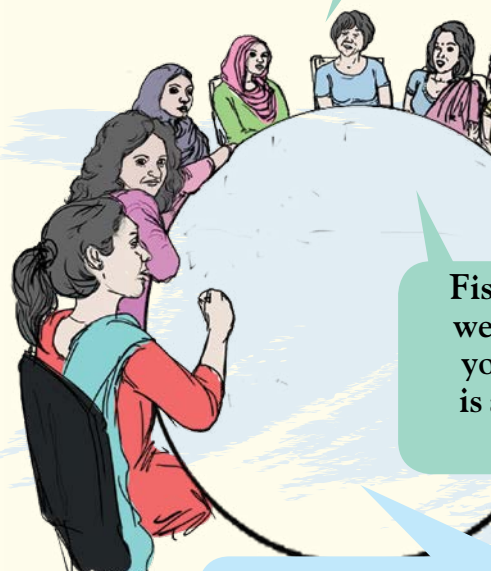
Fish: Yes, we are going to face huge problems. Earlier when people lost work in agriculture, they moved to the cities and became domestic workers. Today, even that work is being lost for various reasons. We are considered to be carriers of the disease, and so we are treated even worse, despite the fact that people continue to need domestic workers. So we have to continue to organise and demand recognition even as 'essential workers'. So let us not give up. Let us keep organising more and learning more and raising our voice.

41. Service Sector

The economy actually is made up of different sectors. The primary sector is that which is involved in primary production, like farming, fishing, mining. Then there is the manufacturing sector which includes factories

and all small-scale production units. The service sector is that which provides services, like in health, education, banking and all other services into which domestic workers also fall.

What is development and progress?



Fish: Hello everyone! I hope you all had some good discussion with your children on all that we shared the last time.

T: As usual there were a lot of arguments.

S: In my place there was agreement.

Fish: OK. Now with all that we have been discussing, do you think that our society is actually progressing and developing?

T: How can we say society is progressing, if the majority of us are still poor and struggling?

L: If there is so much bribery, corruption and violence, how can the society be progressing?

S: Fish, this is development for some at the cost of others.

F: Yes, you are all right. This is neither development nor progress, but greed and plunder at the cost of not only the poor but at the cost of destroying our mother earth as well.

All: Yes exactly, exactly. Climate change is killing us too.

T: All should have the possibility to live in peace and with all their basic needs met.

F: So, what would you call development and progress?

L: All should have work and be able to live a decent life.

J: There should be equality between men and women.



S: Fish, from all we have been learning from you, there should be no exploitation of anybody. Also we should learn to live in harmony with nature and also not exploit nature. There is no need for greed, we can share and there will be enough for all. This is what the government should protect and should listen to all and not only the business people who bribe them.

F: Wonderful, you have said it all very well. True development is when we will live in a just society; when no one will be exploited because of their gender or caste or race or religion; where all will be able to work and contribute to society according to their talents; where we will all be satisfied to have all our needs met and not be greedy; living in harmony with nature and not exploiting her either. We should all be able to truly participate in the governance of our society, so that the state protects its citizens and we have friendly relations with our neighbouring countries who speak different languages and have different cultures.

T: Then it will be like heaven on earth - ha ha ha

L: It is impossible.

S: Actually, it will not be impossible if we believe in it and we all work together.

F: Well, it certainly will be difficult and we may not be able to reach there in our lifetime but if our children also believe and work together, then it may be different for them. Now this COVID is shaking up the world and attacks even the rich. Even the rich countries like America have not been spared. Now, all efforts are on developing a vaccine, but if we are able to change our ways, eat more healthy, live in cleaner surroundings, be more friendly at the local level and produce locally so that all have work and peace, then we can be sure that there will also not be another pandemic.

All: Hum sab eik hai we shall overcome.

CHAPTER 19

Migration and Care Work

Fish: Hello everybody! How are all of you?



J: Fish, yesterday, I got a phone call from one of our members, Suma, who was working as a domestic worker in the Gulf. She returned home last week by the special plane that the government had arranged. It seems the situation in the Gulf is so bad with the spread of the disease and they had no work from March onwards. They ran out of food and water. She was living with her friends in a rented house and they had no means to pay even the rent. Anyway, she got a seat after one and half months wait, and she came back last week.

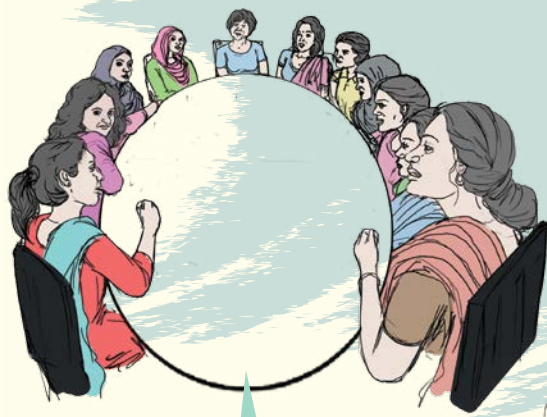
F: Good you brought us this information, Jeena. We should find out how many such workers are coming back and what their situation is.

F: Yes, this is a good opportunity for us to know more deeply about their situation and how they manage.

S: Yes, I know many women who have gone abroad to work. There are many stories that are circulating regarding their travel and the work they do.



J: Suma shared some of her experiences with me. She has been working in the Gulf for more than 10 years now. She struggled a lot in her family with two little kids, as her husband abandoned her when the children were small. She had no support from any others including her family at that time. She used to go to 2-3 houses to earn a living as a domestic worker. Later somebody told her that if she goes abroad as a domestic worker, she will get good money and after some years she can come and look after her children.



S: Yes, so many women go abroad. I always wonder about the benefit of working in those countries, that too as a domestic worker. Do they actually offer a better opportunity and does all this work abroad actually change the lives of poor women like us?

F: That is a good question. We should definitely discuss more, whether migration abroad will give us greater prosperity than working in our country.

J: There are a lot of other issues that Suma discussed with me too, regarding her visa, people who helped her and how she actually boarded the airplane etc.

F: Tell us more about it.

J: When she was struggling to manage her children doing domestic work locally, a distant relative visited her house and told her about the possibilities of work in the Gulf. He promised to help her to go to Kuwait, where she would get a better salary with all other needs being taken care of and she could come back with enough money after few years and live with her children. She believed him and he helped her to get her passport⁴².

42. Process of Migration

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, with the intention to settle or work either temporarily or permanently. It can be from one country to another or from one state to another or from the rural to urban areas. Since time immemorial, people have been migrating. While large numbers of people migrate voluntarily, others may be forced to migrate either in search of work or because they are displaced as a result of war, natural disasters or even seeking refuge due to political or religious conflicts. But entry into another country is governed by migration laws which have the power to restrict the entry and stay of non-nationals.

There are many patterns in migration based on socio-economic divides. Most of migration occurs from developing to developed countries. There are global agreements and international treaties and agreed protocols for migration. International legal standards govern migration and provide protection of the rights of individuals involved in migration. Recognition of these rights and the promotion

and protection of these rights are the responsibility of the both the countries involved in migration. Immigration laws govern the immigration and deportation regulations from a country. This includes rights of entry and exit, rights within the country, duration of stay, freedom of movement etc.

National laws regarding the immigration of citizens of that country are regulated by international laws. A passport is a legal document, issued by governments to certify proof of identity and citizenship. It includes the person's photo, valid address, and several blank pages for official documentation of entry and exit. The regulation of immigration is through the customs department mostly in the airports where travel documents are inspected. The documents include passport, onward ticket, and international certificate of vaccination. Sometimes the travelers are required to declare or register the amount of money they are carrying. A Visa is required for entry in a foreign country for specific purposes. Visas vary depending on the length of stay and purpose of the visit. It can be a paper document or a stamp inside the passport.



He told her that there will be an expense of around 1500 USD to get her work visa. She borrowed that money at high interest from a private money lender and handed it over to him and he arranged everything else.

Even after these many years she has no clarity on the process, how she managed to get the visa and go. She knows that she had an employer who sponsored her emigration and she had to go to his house to work. She worked there for 3 years with a lot of difficulties. It was a huge house with more than 10 people, and she had to cook and clean the house and had very few hours of rest. She was not given enough food and she wanted to leave. But her passport and other travel documents were with the employer and she realized that it will be difficult to escape from the house. She tried her best to cope with the situation but finally when the son of the employer started harassing her, she was desperate and she took the risk and escaped from the house with the help of the driver.

She had no clue on her further stay in the city. Finally, she reached the embassy and she reported her situation. Sadly, the embassy was not helpful but she found there some other women with similar experience and they all decided to find a place to stay together. Then they began to find work by themselves with the help of other local people, mostly domestic work for few hours in different houses. They were able to live with that money and gradually earned better money than they used to earn in the sponsor's house.



But actually they were illegal and anytime they could be caught by the police. Their main worry was that they could not go back home as they didn't have their legal documents like passport and visa.

Finally, they had to wait for the amnesty declarations that happen occasionally, and then they got deported without any documents.

J: She has many such incidences to share from her 15 years of experience and it is worth listening to.



F: Yes, we have to discuss this in detail. The experience of Suma helps us understand the different aspects of migration, what is legal and illegal, how women get trapped and trafficked and how these agents connect from one country to another - the migration chain. Can we connect all this with some of the earlier discussions? Maybe we can have a little recap of the discussion we had earlier and draw the connections.

S: Yes, I remember we talked about the system and the chains but that was related to production.

J: We also talked about the exploitation of labour by the employer and how capitalism works.

F: Good. Go ahead. Think more. Did we talk about domestic labour and how domestic labour is linked to the structure of capitalism and how our labour is used by the capitalists?

J: Yes, I think we have to relate it to the gender division of labour and patriarchal structure too. How the society has generated division of labour taking advantage of the unpaid⁴³ care work of women.

43. Women's paid work

The huge burden of unpaid work acts as a barrier for women to join paid work and to earn equally as men. Society undermines women's work easily, and in most countries, women continue to be paid less for comparable work than men. Many of the working women are the sole bread winners of their family. Their jobs are primarily concentrated in a narrow range of sectors, mostly in service

with low pay and minimal job security where labour laws and regulations are not applicable. These women workers do not have steady wages, adequate occupational, health and safety protections, employment security and social security. Many women in the paid informal workforce adopt part-time jobs. In South and South East Asia, women who work in export-led manufacturing jobs are paid significantly less than men. In developing countries, women make up only 31% of the formal labour force.

F: Yes, the household and national economies, benefit a lot from the unpaid care work of women. This work is mostly invisible and unrecognized. We can easily relate it to our own experiences as workers. Our own experiences and our mothers' experiences are the same. We see that the daily household responsibilities are ours and we do it without expecting any support. Men in the family work outside with the support of this labour, we perform like cooking, cleaning, looking after the children, elders etc. May be in some houses we see men supporting their wives in the household chores, but majority of this labour is carried out by women. This is a universal phenomenon.



M: Will this issue be solved if the unpaid work we perform becomes paid work? That means, the labour inside our family will be paid? Suddenly I thought of this.

F: Good question, but we did discuss this earlier. Let's recap a bit. We always think of the family as very personal and intimate, built on trust and mutual respect. Love is the basis of this togetherness. So much care and other things are required to keep a family going. But all this care and reproductive labour is done by women. So, do you think that the labour inside the family should be paid or shared? How do we overcome the gender division of labour within the family? This is the same all around the world.

J: Yes, I remember we discussed this but how do we change this situation? Apart from this house work, if I need to work outside it means I do double work. So, most of the women, especially when the children are young, don't want to work outside. But the situation now is changing. The household expenses are increasing and with one income in the family we are not able to survive. Women have to work outside the home to keep the family going. What choices do we have? In my family my husband shares the work. That is why I am able to work outside. I am slowly involving the children in the house work as well, as they also should shoulder our responsibilities and learn for the future.

F: Good for you Jeena. I think we should discuss this further in order to understand the broader dimensions of our work.



F: That will be wonderful. We can have more live discussions when we meet next week.



J: Yes, Fish. We are interested to explore and learn more. I think I will bring Suma for the next session as she has a lot of experiences to share, which will enable us to go deeper. She will finish her quarantine by then.

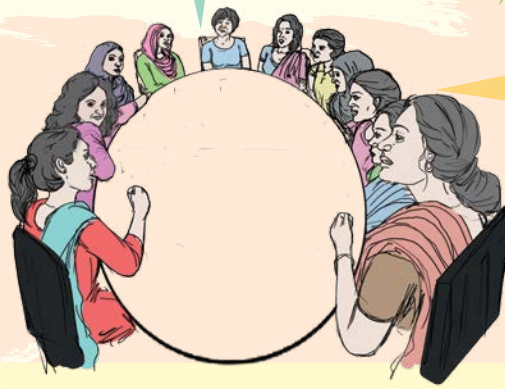
CHAPTER 20

Unpaid and Paid care work

F: Hello! Happy to see you all back. Oh, that is Suma. Welcome Suma, to this discussion group and relieved that you are fine in this difficult situation. We salute you for the courage to manage to get into the first list of migrants to return from Kuwait. Hope you will enjoy the discussion and can enrich it with your experiences.

J: Yes, when I explained to her about our learning process, she was very happy to know more about it. So, she came along with me happily.

S: The discussions we had last week was very thought provoking as it was a different experience we were sharing. So we should discuss more on the care work⁴⁴ and how it is affecting women's paid work⁴⁵.



44. Unpaid Work

All work that is undertaken to maintain the well-being and care of the household members, such as cooking, cleaning, child-, elderly- or sick- care is unpaid work. It also includes the subsistence activities women are involved in for the survival of the family. Much of this unpaid work undertaken by women is unrecognized, and referred to as 'reproductive' work. This is the result of patriarchy and the sexual division of labour. Unpaid work is indispensable and contributes to the overall existence of the family and the labour supply to society and is crucial for the economy, but is not calculated as part of the country's productive output. The burden of unpaid work is the main barrier for women to join paid work and also earn equally. Patriarchal structures are stabilized by unpaid work and the domestication of women. This house- wifeization is the exploitation of women's labour. It assumes that the wage of the husband or father, also pays for the labour done by the mother or wife.

Care Work

Care work involves both paid and unpaid work. It consists of direct, indirect and relational care activities which involves service to others. It is normally regarded as work undertaken out of affection or responsibility to other people, especially family members. This implies that women voluntarily involve in care work. In the industrial era, when the production activities shifted to public spaces, men became the workers and women remained at home to nurture and care for the children. In the familial hierarchy they were considered 'housewives'. The productive or economic activity became completely separated from the household and the duties performed by women were counted as natural.

When the care activities like childcare, elderly care, sick care, household chores like cleaning, cooking, washing etc are performed for payment, it is paid care work. When women started doing this work outside their homes, it was considered as an extension of their household duties and thus paid less, compared to men's work. These jobs have become a double burden to women, as they continue to perform their own household duties too. Domestic workers, who provide both direct and indirect care in households, are also part of the care workforce. Most of the care workers are women from socially disadvantaged groups, and fall into the informal economy.

Care services are essential in society. In many countries, there are public care policies and services to the citizens. Private sector institutions also offer paid care work, which turns out to be very expensive. Care services available through informal labour markets are comparatively cheaper. Migrant women workers form a significant force in this informal chain of care work. Paid care work will remain an important future source of employment, especially for women.

45. Gross Domestic Product - GDP

Gross domestic product (GDP) is the total monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period. Simply speaking, it is everything that is produced and sold. So, all that is produced and not sold does not enter this calculation. Hence, all the work that women do for the household does not get calculated.

F: Good that you have reflected on the discussion we had last week. Unpaid care work is one of the main obstacles to women's advancement and participation in public life. So, we need to understand it more and see how we can change the situation towards a more egalitarian life. Since domestic work is often seen as an extension of the care work we do at home, it is not valued, less paid and not recognized.

Suma: Yes, this is correct. When my husband abandoned me, I had no option other than going for domestic work. The income from 3 houses was not enough to meet my expenses. I worked from morning to evening, around 9 hours and altogether got around 70 USD per month. I did not understand that I was underpaid and not even once did I ask for a salary hike. I used to get food for my children and also old clothes and I was satisfied at that moment. I lived without anyone's support. When my children were in school I needed more money so when my relative proposed migrating to Kuwait, I accepted.



F: Yes, this is exactly the situation. Since the work we do in our family is taken for granted and unpaid, the same thing happens when we do it in a different home. It is considered as unskilled and therefore underpaid. The other home is seen as an extension of our own home and hence we are not considered as individuals performing work with skill and dignity, thereby permitting others to do other highly paid work. Suma herself is saying that she never thought about it in that way. But now she is able to recognize it.

J: Exactly, we are also realizing it now. But paid care work is still not recognised as work with rights. Domestic work is still not even recognized as work in many countries after 10 years of the passing of ILO convention 189.

F: I would like to ask Suma one more question. Did you finally get more money by going to the Kuwait?

Su: First of all, I did not get payment every month. The employer told me the salary will be secure with him and that I would get a good amount at the end of the year. I used to beg the employer to put some money in my account to send home. Finally, when my accounts were settled after a year, I realized that I was being paid much less than the amount promised. But there was no way to ask or raise my voice, I was completely under their control. Towards the end, when I was thinking of escaping by myself from that house I knew I was going to lose many months' salary. So I actually lost out.

I had all the debt to repay.



F: Yes, Suma. This is the reality of many migrant domestic workers. We have to understand this situation in the context of care work. Unpaid care work impacts on paid care work. It leads to lower wages and poor working conditions in the care sector⁴⁶. Care work basically requires affection and love. Hence when a domestic worker does this work, the worker necessarily establishes such a warm relations with the client, be it an old person, sick person, child or a house owner and a sense of obligation is developed. So neither does the worker see herself as a worker or does the employer treat her as one with dignity and certain rights. Hence the employer-employee relationship is undermined and the employer says, “she is one of the family” or thinks of her as a slave. Unlike other kinds of care work like nursing for instance, domestic work is considered the lowest in the care hierarchy. Despite the fact that our work is so tedious and can entail sleepless nights too, the employers pay no heed to our needs. Sometimes we may not even get proper food, or sufficient rest.

46. Hierarchy in care work

When a worker engages in care work (domestic worker), she engages in a series of employment relations. Some may relate directly with the employer, others may go through employment agencies either public or private. At all these relationships, she encounters different levels of subordination arising from the fact that care work itself is not recognised as work, let alone professional work, and is considered lower than all other kinds of work, as it is seen as an extension of her household work. Her professional skills, training and experiences are not considered qualities which have to be

considered on par with men's work. This undervaluation of the care work in turn results in the undervaluation of paid care work, which results in lower wages and poor working conditions. Combined with this, race, caste, class and ethnic differences add to the inequalities. These inequalities create a deep division in attitude and performance. There are several examples of higher caste or white women who are in supervisory/ professional roles, while lower caste or black women do the hands-on care services. These attitudes towards care work, which get revealed through the social status, give rise to hierarchies between care workers.

J: What about the reason for Suma running away, losing her documents and risking her life? What gives the employer's son the right to harass her, even touch her? Even if Suma had complained, no action would have taken. We too experience this.



F: That is also true. This hierarchy also needs to be understood. In many of the houses the employers prefer to employ domestic workers because the women in the family may be working. The changing economic situation⁴⁷ is forcing many in a family to take paid jobs to sustain the augmented needs of the family. Inadequacy and inefficiency of the public care services even in developed countries make employers prefer the services of paid care givers. Some countries have introduced the provision of individual paid care which most of these working women prefer to institutional care. They prefer care workers who are lowest in the category, who have no other obligations or bargaining power. In most of the cases they are widows or those abandoned by their husbands or survivors of domestic violence.

I hope you are understanding the links between unpaid and paid work and the politics of it?

M: Yes, Fish. It is interesting, and we are able to relate it to our own life and working situations. We never think about any of these, though it is important for us to understand as workers. The experience of Suma has opened our eyes and we are able to relate many things.

Su: Definitely, Fish. I am so excited to learn more through my own life journey itself.

F: I think this is enough for today. When you return for the next session, you should try to explain this notion of care work with Suma's option of migration to another country. Think about it. Suma, hope you will come back again.

F: Okay. Thank you and goodbye for now.

47. Globalization of care work

Globalization and the restructuring of economy have changed the production relations patterns in the world. Over the past few decades, changes in the labour markets have affected the provision of both unpaid and paid care work. New global value chains and export processing zones have emerged in order to maximise profit through reducing the labour costs. It has led to growing insecurity and income inequality among the workers. The changing economic context, men's unemployment and poverty, has forced many women to start taking paid jobs to compensate for job losses and increasing expenses. Increasing employment participation of women has resulted in more tensions on social reproductive activities and also on care work at home. Public care policies are insufficient to satisfy

the care needs of the women, because neoliberal policies have pushed the countries to withdraw from public care policies and greater dependence on the open market linked private care services. Care services are labour intensive and wages to the care workers are reasonably high. Hence they depend on the informal market, hiring workers on low pay and poor working conditions. Since most of these workers are women and informal, this leads to growing inequality and marginalization of the workers. Care work becomes increasingly the main source of work for poor women of the poorer countries, satisfying the unmet care needs of the developed countries.

Global care chain, Migration and Trafficking

Fish: Good Morning and welcome to all. I hope you had a peaceful week amidst all the uncertainties.

J: Yes, Fish. Many women still have no work, and many have come back from the Gulf countries too.



S: I reflected on our last week's discussion and was trying to understand how care work is integrated into the labour market. From Suma's experience we see how and why we are forced to find work in other countries⁴⁸. In her case she was a single mother who suffered violence but so many others are going after the cyclones and floods⁴⁹, war, political instabilities, poverty and non-availability of other jobs. Because we have no other skills we have to continue domestic work.

J: Yes. Earlier we talked about how the anti-people development policies are taking away all our land and natural resources. We are forcefully displaced from our land and workplaces. We are left with nothing, except our bodies to work with.

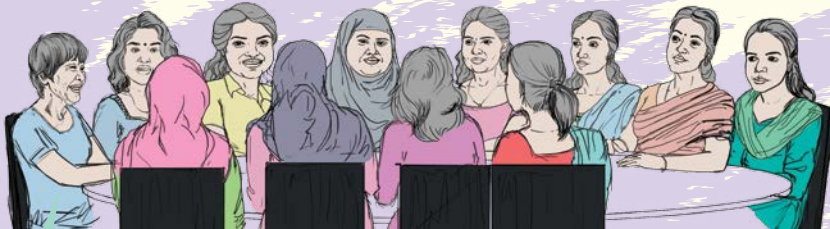
48. International Labor Market

The demand and supply of labour is called the 'labour market.' The supply and demand of labour is influenced by bargaining power both of the employer and the labour. International Labor Markets grow when the demand for and supply of labour becomes more international. That means the labour is not restricted at national levels, it has demand in other countries too. Changes in global economic policies have influenced the change in the labour market. While goods, services and capital move more easily across national borders, the movement of labour across borders is very insecure and exploitative. The dynamics and politics of international labour markets vary from region to region, and reflects the different norms, values, culture and legal policies of different societies.

49. Natural calamities

More than ever, today we are experiencing many disasters like cyclones, floods, tsunamis, earthquakes etc. When these occur, they cause a lot of distress to people, and people may also have to find new areas to live in and survive. These are referred to as 'natural calamities' which means they are a part of nature and we humans can do nothing about it. It is true that some natural calamities may be caused because the earth is continuously in motion and the physical formations may change thereby causing disaster. These are natural. But these happen over long periods of time, unlike today when several disasters are a result of human intervention which has resulted in climate change and hence more frequent disasters.

Su: My parents were daily wage labourers working in the field, and when I grew up even that work was not available. All the fields had disappeared. I had no option other than domestic work.



F: Mind you, all this does not happen by chance. It is all well planned, the way the System works, as the rich need cheap labour. Those who have the regular work, then need people to serve them - sales girls, delivery boys, domestic workers, workers in the garment industry etc. So, there you see how all of you are integrated into this global system, but at the very bottom of the chain.

Let us look at the care work. In the developed countries, people live longer and have less children⁵⁰ so there is nobody to care for the old and sick. Earlier, governments created care homes, but now even that has reduced or been privatized. Governments sometimes give special allowances for care at home and care jobs of all kinds become available. So workers are invited⁵¹ in and an international chain that links poor workers to the needs of the rich is established. This chain reflects the social divisions of labour on the basis of class, caste, gender, and ethnicity too, which we have discussed earlier. So do you understand better now how women's labour also becomes the center of global care supply chains⁵² ?

Su: We never thought about these relationships between countries and between workers, the hierarchy it maintains and the consequences of it. These are our own life experiences.

50. Life expectancy and fertility rate

Life expectancy means the length of time a person will live. This is generally calculated for a large population. For instance, the life expectancy of people in Japan in 2019, was around 84 years of age while it was 69 years for people in India, and 71 years in Indonesia. Generally life expectancy is higher in countries with better health facilities and higher income levels. Fertility rate is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime. For instance in 2019 the fertility rate in India was 2.22, in Indonesia was 2.30, in Japan was 1.36 and in China was 1.69

51. Outsourcing of labour

Many employers do not employ labour directly but through an agency/labour supplier. This is called outsourcing. In this case the labour is not employed by the company and hence will not be able to access the benefits of employment that other directly employed workers enjoy. This is a way for the employer to cut labour costs.

52. Global care supply chains

Supply chains are the sequence of processes involved in the production and distribution of goods and services. It involves the

transformation of natural resources and raw materials into a finished product and its delivery. These supply chain for care work stretch over different countries in order to maximize profit. Supply Chains create many employment opportunities at different levels. The basic and the least valued part of production in the supply chain happens in developing countries. The organizational structures of the supply chains are so complex that the main employer is invisible. Contractors and subcontractors manage the chain through the outsourcing of production. But services are also globalised, for instance care work. The workers in the developing countries experience very exploitative conditions and are completely invisible. Since labour laws operate within national boundaries, cross-border sourcing of goods and services creates difficulties in implementing laws and workplace compliance. Workers have no access to any labour laws or collective bargaining process.

F: Just as the family exploits the labour of the mother, this same kind of exploitation happens when a domestic worker is hired - the same kind of inequality in the family is reproduced. That is why we experience more exploitation, inhuman behaviour, sexual harassment and insecure working relationships in these countries. Also, the labour in our country is cheaper than theirs, so they prefer to hire us.



All: Yes, that is right.

F: Now reflecting on Suma's experience, let us look at the larger picture. She decided to work abroad thinking that she will get more money to improve her life. She was forced by her circumstances, just like people in the rural areas are forced to leave for the city when they suffer from poverty for various reasons⁵³. But as we have discussed earlier, there are your sisters also working at home but making parts of products that are sold abroad. This is called the global supply chain, transnational supply chain. So the cheap labour of the women in the less developed countries⁵⁴ who even work in their homes, is linked to the global chain. These poor home-based workers are not even recognized as workers.

S: Yes, yes. We talked about this earlier.

J: In our area where a huge high rise building is coming up, the workers are from the other provinces/states.

53. Push and pull factors in migration

Migration or the movement of people from one region to another is a natural phenomenon and has happened since time immemorial. People move in search of better living conditions, and a lot of women move when they marry. But more and more people are obliged to migrate because of poverty, caused by various reasons which are referred to as push factors. These can be climate disasters, communal tensions, war, displacement by development projects etc. But there are also times when one area may need workers for a variety of reasons - like need for labour in time of harvest, or need for labour in certain sectors like nursing, domestic work or just because there are no more young people to work like in Japan where the fertility rates are very low. These are called pull factors. Some such countries specifically grant visas and make it easier for specific groups of people to enter so that they are encouraged to migrate there. This happened a lot in Europe in the middle of the last century

when they needed workers in public services of sanitation and construction and made it easy for people from North Africa and Eastern Europe to move in.

54. Third world

This term is less used today. Earlier it was used to refer to the 'developing' countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. But it was called 'third world' because there was a first world, that were the countries that had technical advancement, particularly America, Western Europe and their allies and the other world, which was not actually called the second world, but which also existed which was the communist countries of the Soviet Union, China and their allies. But as we know today, there are rich and poor in all countries all over the world so these terms are less used. People prefer to refer to the 'global south' - which includes the poor of all countries all over the world.

F: Yes. When you look around, you will see much of this happening. So, I guess you understand more easily the global care chain and the migrant workers' situation. As we discussed above, the lack of employment opportunities in our own countries (countries of origin⁵⁵) and the expectations of higher earnings in the countries we choose to go to (destination countries⁵⁶) drive women's migration. Domestic work may not be the first choice of the women. Most women who desire to migrate would look for other opportunities like hospital cleaning or work in beauty parlors or as office assistants etc. But they generally end up in domestic work as there is an increasing demand for low paid home-based care and domestic work in high income countries.



Su: Yes, Fish. I had decided in the beginning itself to work as a domestic worker as I was sure of my skills and was not ashamed of doing domestic work. But the women with whom I was sharing the house were brought by the agent together with 4 others for hospital cleaning. The agent assured them a job in the hospital and offered 100KD (Kuwaiti Dinar) a month. They were taken to another city to a different airport and somebody in the immigration desk helped them to pass immigration smoothly.

When they reached Kuwait, they were taken to a flat and asked to stay there. There was no sign of any work for some days. Then when they agitated, the agent also changed his attitude towards them. After some days they were taken to some unknown place and sold by the agent to different people who used them sexually. One of these women then jumped from the balcony to escape and fractured her leg. Somebody took her to the hospital, and she was in plaster for many days. They then introduced her to my other friend who by that time was living independently. She took care of her and later this woman also started going for domestic work.


55.56. Countries of Origin and Destination

When people migrate from one country to another, their home country is called the 'country of origin' and the country they go to is called the 'country of destination.'



Fish: Yes, this is another aspect of migration. We are cheated many times. There are many agent rackets who recruit women to other services without their knowledge. This is called trafficking⁵⁷. I guess you understand this better now as Suma has shared her experience.

Trafficking of people is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. Every year thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad. Since so many poor workers are ignorant and badly in need of work, they get trapped through deception or coercion and then exploited. In some cases girls are forced into sex work; men tricked into accepting risky jobs and trapped in forced labour in building sites, farms or factories. Women who are recruited to work in private homes are trapped, exploited and abused behind closed doors with no way out. Trafficking does not happen in foreign countries alone. It can happen in one's own country too.



S: Wherever it happens it is a crime. Most of these stories never get known. So, the people who cheat remain invisible and continue to do so and it is they who finally make all the money.

J: Yes. When it happens outside our country, where we don't have any rights, we are treated like slaves. Please explain what you mean by forced labor, Fish.

F: When a person is forced or threatened to work for long hours, in bad conditions it is called forced labour⁵⁸. Suma has explained that she felt trapped and unsafe too and wanted to escape. Today this is called modern slavery.

57. Trafficking

When agents/recruiters or employers make false promises about wages and jobs to workers and allure, deceive, or force workers into work without the worker's willingness (either in their own country, community or outside the country), or when employers and/or recruiters exploit or control workers for their own financial or personal gain it is called trafficking. Human trafficking is a crime against the person because it violates the worker's right of movement and right to decent work; through coercion and because the worker is being commercially exploited (sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, or removal of organs). This trade in labour is one of the biggest money making businesses in the world today. Human trafficking is also a crime against the State, and almost all governments have created laws to 'prevent' such activity but not to abolish it by creating safe and transparent channels for labour migration. When workers who want to migrate abroad do not have the reasonable opportunity to access safe and regular labour migration channels, they have to rely on dubious brokers and possibly traffickers to find employment opportunities abroad. When they are irregular migrants, they do not

have access to any legal remedies abroad to complain against abuse and exploitation.

Regular migration is not in itself a protection from trafficking. Migrant workers' work permits are often linked to a specific employer, rendering a worker irregular or "illegal" if s/he wants to leave an abusive or exploitative employer. The lack of access to legal remedies and the risk of losing their legal status make many migrants vulnerable to exploitative work practices and trafficking.

58. Forced labour

Forced labour refers to situations in which persons are forced to work under difficult conditions through the use of violence or intimidation. Sometimes people are forced to work as a means of repaying accumulated debt. When employers retain domestic workers by retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities, it is also forced labour.

**S: Modern slavery⁵⁹ !!
Another new term! What
do you mean by it?**



**F: For an outsider
everything looks good-
your work situation, the
family you are working
and the safety of it. But
in reality, the person
involved in the work will
be suffering, working
with no rest, no food, no
money and sometimes
sexually exploited too - a
new form of slavery.**

**Su: So I was trapped in
modern slavery? It is
terrible. I have other
experiences also to share.**

**F: Yes, Suma. It is good that you now
understand the situation you have gone
through. Maybe you can share more in the
next session. Today we have discussed many
new words relating to our situations.
Please read the notes too.**

**S: Yes, Fish. Thanks so
much. So nice of you to
take the trouble to do that.**

**F: I am so happy that you are all so
interested and learning more. So, it is a
pleasure for me. See you all in a few days.**

59. Modern Slavery

Unlike Trafficking, Modern Slavery is not defined in international law. However, many people are using this as an umbrella term to refer to trafficking, forced labour and bonded labour. References are made to workers in highly exploitative situations in brick kilns, mines, waste gathering and the various cottage industries like carpet making, embroidery etc. Although they are not held captive like in olden days of slavery, poor wages, working conditions and lack of any social security are modern ways of keeping workers enslaved.

Slavery-like practices are prohibited by the 1956 UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Practices similar to Slavery. The Convention lists a number of practices and institutions that constitute slavery-like practices such as debt bondage (use of one's labour to repay a loan), serfdom, forced and early marriage, and the exploitation of children and adolescents.

Slavery-like practices involve a one-sided economic exploitation of a person and the infringement of said person's formal or legal status that results to deprivation of fundamental rights.

Migration Process, Systems, Legal/Illegal



F: Good Morning, welcome back. In the last session we discussed a number of issues and concepts. Was it too much for you? Any difficulty in understanding it? Do you want a recap and more discussion?

J: Actually Fish, even though it looks like a complex chain, it is our reality and we are able to link it with our own life and struggles.

Su: You helped us understand how we are forced to do paid care work, and how the poor workers from the third world are used in the global chain to fulfill the needs of the rich. We are exploited in this process, overworked and even expected to offer sexual pleasure, which is modern slavery. May I share some other experiences to make it clearer?

F: Sure, Suma. Let us all understand these global chains and how you were cheated. It starts from the issuing of the Passport and getting the visa to travel. Each country has varied rules and regulations on migration⁶⁰. For example, in India according to the law, workers below the age of 30 years are not permitted to migrate for domestic work.

60. Migration laws and labour laws

There are two significant aspects of migration laws. One is the principles and standards from a country's sovereignty perspective. This includes the right to protect borders, to confer nationality, rules to admit and expel foreigners, to combat trafficking and smuggling and to safeguard national security. The other side is to protect the human rights of migrants and to regulate migration. There are many international conventions to protect the rights of migrants. International migration laws are the international legal framework governing migration that are aimed at addressing the movements of persons between countries, to regulate a country's competence and obligations, migrants' status, rights and duties as well as international co-operation. A Convention is an umbrella term used to describe the various bodies of laws, principles and norms that together regulate migration. Based on the provisions in a convention, each country develops its own legal framework to regulate migration and to protect human rights of migrants. All these together form the migration governance which is a combination of legal norms, laws and regulations, policies and traditions. The national, sub-national, regional and international organizational structures advance these principles.

Labour protection irrespective of work and place of work is a

universal right of the workers, including migrant workers. All

international, regional and national labour laws are applicable to migrant workers. Many international labour standards that have been adopted over the years are the key pointers in safeguarding the rights of migrant workers.

Even though the rights of migrant workers are protected under the international law, labour laws of many receiving

countries have not included the migrant workers in their purview. This makes it difficult for the workers to claim their basic rights in those countries. In many countries migrant workers are not allowed to organize and collectively bargain. This is a violation of international labour standards and core conventions. Neither are they classified as migrant workers in their own country. It is the Ministry of External Affairs or Overseas Affairs and not the Labour Ministry that regulates emigration. Hence the labour rights of the migrant workers are not protected or discussed by the Labour Ministry in the country of origin also.





Su: Fish, let me share that experience too. When my distant relative proposed that I go abroad, I was only 28 years old. He took the responsibility of getting the passport. I didn't have to go anywhere. When I got it, I noticed that my age was 31 and I asked about this. He was not able to give me a reasonable reply. He just told me that the travel agency is very experienced, and we can trust them fully. My first travel experience was with this passport and later I understood that it was a fake passport. There are many agencies who issue these kinds of passports and they facilitate the travel arrangements. I am still unaware of the process. I could not leave from my own city but had to travel to a different airport. Each time the agents give us instructions and we have to do as we are told. Inside the airport also there were people waiting for us both at departure and arrival there.

F: This should really open your eyes. First of all, there is a nexus of agents. Suma, your relative is not even an agent. He may be the lowest in the chain of agents. There are many unauthorized recruitment agencies⁶¹ and they flourish with the help of the officers inside whom they bribe heavily. Each government has a list of authorized recruitment agents only through which overseas migration is possible. But since many workers live in remote areas and do not have the information, the sub chains also thrive and have their own network- starting with people in the passport and visa departments and all the way to officials in the immigration department. That is why the agents keep instructing you to be careful and go through specific desks only. This process is called “pushing”⁶² -literally meaning pushing without proper documents.

61. Recruitment process

This is a process to hire a worker. Recruitment involves several stages like advertising, selection, placement and if it is to another country, emigration process also. This latter also includes medical tests, document processing, pre-departure orientations and travel to the destination country. If a person has to leave their resident country to other place to work or settle, that act is called emigration. This movement is called immigration, if the international movement of people to a destination country of which they are not natives or where they do not possess citizenship .

Both private and public establishments can offer labour recruitment or placement services. Private entities can be registered agencies or informal non-registered agents or sub-agents. In the recruitment to Arab countries, labour recruiters in countries of origin and destination need to cooperate thereby reducing high transaction costs and administrative challenges.. The labour recruiter in the country of destination (often referred to as a placement agency) will have contacts and deals with prospective employers (families seeking domestic workers), assists with job matching and is responsible for processing the necessary immigration documentation. Migration can be regular or irregular. Irregular migration in the international context includes breach of immigration laws which can lead to exploitative work situations.

Private labour recruiters make use of the formal and informal situations and also play with the compliance or non-compliance of national and international standards. This leads to extreme conditions of trafficking or forced labour.

62. Pushing

Domestic workers generally migrate through private recruitment agencies who operate through a chain of sub-agents. These sub-agents turn out to be neighbours or distant relatives of the potential migrants. They will be offered good jobs through decent recruitment process. But it includes forging passports and visas and also significant involvement in the immigration process – choosing a comfortable airport where these recruiters have tie-ups with the immigration officers, smooth clearance in the destination airports until they reach the employer's house. For example, migration of domestic workers in India is banned below 30 years. Hence agents forge passports and visas and other documents and send the workers through the immigration clearance in specific airports. The agent gives instructions to the worker regarding the counters to move through. In doing so, the worker will be pushed to clearance without proper documents. This process is called Pushing and is a very common way for domestic migrant workers to migrate through private recruiters.

Su: So I was also “pushed”. I still remember that day in the airports in both the places.

F: Suma also told us that all her travel documents were with the employer and she couldn't get it back. Why are all our documents with the employers? As workers, shouldn't you have the possession of your documents? Have you thought about it, Suma?



Su: First, I thought it would be safe to keep my documents with the employer. Later, when the entire situation changed, I realized the implication of them keeping my documents. I had to escape without anything. Yes, it should be our right to keep our documents.

F: So, let's understand why this happens. The entry, stay and exit of migrant domestic workers in the Arab countries are governed by the Kafala system- a private sponsorship for migrant workers. Every Arab Kafeel (employer) has the right to engage two migrant domestic workers. But not all Arabs hire domestic workers, so they sell their visa rights to agents. On the other hand, there are many Arabs who want more than 2 workers, so they pay the agents to get workers. The agents buy visas to import workers and they get paid when they supply the worker. Because the Kafeel has paid and since the visa lasts for 2 years, the Kafeel makes sure that the worker remains with him. So he keeps the documents. But after that he can do whatever he wants with the worker, even sell the worker to other employers or make them work in multiple houses. Employers of domestic workers are excluded from the labour laws in the country.

Su: Yes, Kafeel is familiar to us. But we don't know about the Kafala system⁶³. My friend told me that she was forced by the employer to work in two more houses apart from his house. It was terrible hard work. We never had any freedom to move or

interact with people. That is why, even without thinking about any future consequences, I escaped from that house. I knew it was going to affect my future life, but I had no other way to save myself.

When I left the house without any documents, I became illegal. But I felt so much freedom and wondered why it was not possible to work legally on our own? We had to always avoid the police and I realized I would not be able to go home. I had to wait for the amnesty declaration to come out from there. Nevertheless, I went back again to another country (Saudi) with a proper passport with my real age. There was a proper agent and a contract. But the situation there was quite different. That place had so many restrictions for women. We had to dress according to their religious norms. I worked there for three years and the Kafeel was kind enough to send me back, when I had some emergencies at home. But even there I did not get the promised money. I have a question, Fish. Are there any policies or regulations to support us in the foreign countries? When something happens to us, does our country have any responsibility regarding our safety and rights?

F: Good question, Suma. In the last session we discussed about sending (origin) and destination countries. Our passport identifies our country of origin. But when we start working in another country, we become workers of that country. The labour laws of our country do not apply in another country. Unfortunately, most of the destination countries, the Gulf countries, do not have labour laws that support migrant workers especially blue collar⁶⁴ workers like us. So, when something happens to us in the destination country, there is little or no support. There are embassies of our country in the country you go to and there will be Attaché's⁶⁵ attending to various subjects. But they are few in number and the blue-collar workers and domestic workers are none of their concern. You yourself told us that when you escaped and went to the embassy first, nobody helped you. There you found other women with similar experiences and you decided to live together and fend for yourselves. The role of the sending country is very minimal unless the country itself decides to protect their workers abroad. We always affirm that migration is our right, and nobody can take away that right from us. Internationally many efforts have been made to support the rights of migrants, especially the rights of labour migrants⁶⁶.



J: But apart from the Kafala system will there be alternatives for the poor workers to migrate and work in GCC⁶⁷ countries?

F: Jeena, let's talk about that the next time. Today we have discussed many things and you need to digest it all. Thanks for all your patience and enthusiasm.

63. Kafala system

Kafala is a sponsorship system practiced in the Gulf Countries and some other Arab countries to regulate the relationship between employers and migrant workers. It is followed in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and also in Jordan and Lebanon. This is mostly applicable for construction workers and domestic workers. Under this system the migrant worker's immigration status is legally bound to an individual employer known as Kafeel (sponsor) for the prescribed period. To enter a destination country, to work and to leave the country, the written permission of the Kafeel is essential. So the migrant worker must be sponsored by a Kafeel to work in these countries and they remain tied to this person during their entire stay. The worker has no direct relation with the embassy, the Kafeel has to inform if the worker wants to leave the country and also has the responsibility to send her/him back after the contract ends. The Kafeel keeps the documents of the worker during the contract period which he uses as a tool to control the worker. Migrant workers are dependent on the Kafeel fully for their livelihood and residency.

64. Blue collar, white collar workers

This refers to the hierarchy among workers. Those who do the hands-on work are referred to as the blue collar workers - they include those who work on the machines in factories. The white collar workers are those in the supervisory positions, those doing office work.

65. Embassies and Attaché's

In order to facilitate cross border relationships between countries, the destination states set up diplomatic missions known as Embassies. This is the main office of a country's diplomatic representatives to another country, headed by an ambassador or High Commissioner. Consulates are smaller diplomatic missions located in major cities of the receiving countries which focus on individual persons and businesses. A Consulate or Consulate General is a representative of the embassy. Apart from these, there are non-resident permanent missions too.

Embassy staff who have a specialized area of responsibility is an attaché. There can be cultural attaché's, labour attaché's, military attaché's etc.

66. Migration for labour

Everybody has the right to migration. Labour migration is defined as the movement of persons from their home state/country to another state/country for the purpose of employment. Poverty and increasing unemployment situations force people to search for jobs in other countries. The shortage of workers in other countries, especially in the unskilled categories, promotes migration for labour in a large scale. Migrant workers simultaneously contribute their labour to their countries of destination and remittances and acquired skills to their country of origin. Women also migrate independently on a large scale to other countries. Despite the efforts made to ensure the protection of migrant workers, many migrants continue to experience numerous problems, particularly more vulnerable groups such as female domestic workers, entertainers, and lower skilled workers. Since international labour migration is a transnational phenomenon it has to be addressed at national, bilateral, regional and international levels. Labour migration policies, legislations and systems are required to protect migrant workers and to optimize the benefits of labour migration for both the country of origin and destination.

67. GCC Countries

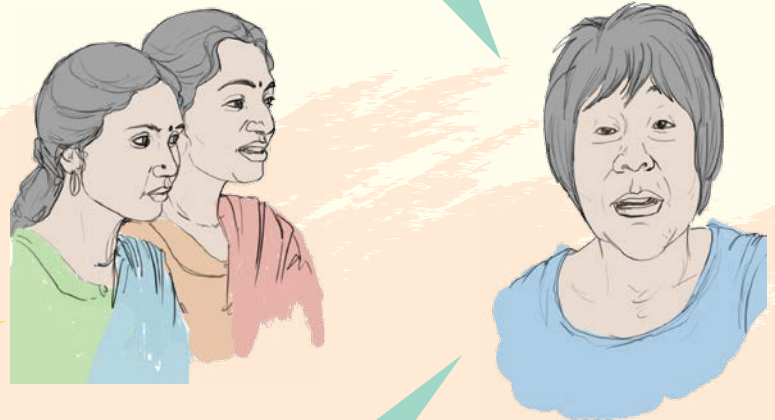
Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf. It is a regional intergovernmental political and economic union of six Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The GCC was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 1981. The purpose of the GCC is to achieve unity among its members based on their common objectives and their similar political and cultural identities, which are rooted in Arab and Islamic cultures. All current member states are monarchies, including three constitutional monarchies (Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain), absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia and Oman), and one federal monarchy (the United Arab Emirates, which is composed of seven member states, each of which is an absolute monarchy with its own emir).

Migration Trends and change in country policies

J: Hello, Fish! Hope you are well. Actually, the situation continues to be bad, Fish. As there is still no work neither for us nor for the garment home based workers. How does the government expect us to survive? After all these years of work, neither the employers nor the government give us any support?

F: Good Morning! Yes, Jeena. This is a concern for us too. We will come to that, after going to your last question on whether other forms of migration are possible. Let me start with our own situation. We discussed many things regarding migration to the GCC countries. But our own part of the world, Asia, is a hub of migrants and many countries within Asia are both sending and receiving states. Do you realize that?

S: Yes, Fish. This is our experience too. Many of our workers/husbands are going to Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore etc. for domestic work and other work. Many are going to Israel, Europe and Canada too.



F: Many women from South and South East Asia find employment in the care economies of wealthier countries in the region itself. The four main destinations for migrant domestic and care workers in the region are Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. Thailand also is now hosting migrant workers from neighboring countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and more recently Vietnam.

Different countries deal differently with migrant workers. Countries like Japan and South Korea have adopted stringent measures towards migrant workers, and they have developed better public care policies internally. That is why these countries are not in the list. But other countries mentioned above, where migration is permitted, have implemented financial support measures, tax incentives and immigration policy reforms to help families employ migrant domestic and care workers. This has led to a large intake of migrant workers in these countries. The only condition is that they cannot become long-term residents. There are strong unions of domestic workers in Hong Kong and Singapore.

S: Yes. Many of our members there are also members of their union. They also have a lot of problems. Many of them face abuse, bodily harm, assault, and even don't get the promised wages. One of their main achievements, as I know, is their community gathering on Sundays. They have a paid off and all of them gather on Sundays to relax and rest. They use this day for meetings, send their money home and do their shopping.

F: But since the HK government has banned public gatherings on Sundays after the outbreak of COVID 19, this has become a problem. They are forced to work on Sundays now and are not allowed to go out. If they express their need, the employers threaten dismissal. Workers are scared and so oblige for fear of being ill-treated or dismissed. This is a huge problem.

Su: But I think they enjoy more rights as workers than people like me who worked in the GCC countries. They are also legal, as I understood from Fish's explanation.



F: True to a certain extent, because the local unions have fought for this. In the employment contract, free medical treatment for the migrant domestic worker is included, but no other social security provisions. Yet, there continue to be cases of trafficking and undocumented workers in these countries also, and such workers are treated very badly. So workers should know how to migrate through proper channels.

J: I have heard that the Arab region, especially countries like Saudi have very stringent policies and laws.

F: True. Most of the national labour laws are not applicable to migrant workers. The significant thing is that even when some improvements were extended to migrant workers in the Arab States, they did not extend to the domestic workers. They say, that domestic work cannot be regulated in the same manner as other works, because the employer's household is private and privacy cannot be violated. But Suma, some countries have developed draft Standard Unified Contracts (SUC)⁶⁸ for migrant domestic workers like in Kuwait, although these are not legally cohesive.

For example, India has a bilateral agreement⁶⁹ with Saudi for domestic workers. But in a country where no labour laws include migrant workers or domestic workers, these are all futile

68. Standard Unified Contract

Countries of destination employ a number of measures to extend rights and protection to migrant domestic workers. Standard Unified Contract is one such measure to formalize the employment relationship. Written employment contracts play an important role in levelling the playing field between domestic workers and their employers. A contract proves the existence of the employment relationship and clarifies its terms when a dispute arises between the parties. Some countries make model

contracts available to facilitate compliance. Even though the Gulf states have not ratified the ILO convention 189, the labour ministers have discussed a draft Standard Unified Contract (SUC) for migrant domestic workers. In June 2015, Bahrain, Lebanon and Jordan have adopted SUCs for domestic workers and states like Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE have developed draft SUCs for migrant domestic workers. But these SUCs do not substitute labour laws or resolve recruitment related issues.



Su: Yes, Fish. It also depends on the employer. In my later experience in Bahrain, I went there with a proper contract and I had to pay nothing for my visa.

After 2 years I wanted to leave the employer again because of the exploitation from the family members, especially the son. The employer was kind enough to give me the passport, provided I pay him some money for it. I paid it from my savings, and I left the house and started working independently. I could work in 2-3 houses and that was a good opportunity for me to make some money. But Covid became a real setback as I was not allowed inside any houses where I used to work and then we had to depend on the embassy for our return. We struggled a lot for food also. Somehow, I got a ticket which was arranged by an organization working there. That is how I am here. The visa we possess was known to us as free visa⁷⁰. So, I could work and now I have all my documents with me.

exercises. Answering your particular question, at present, no governments in the Gulf Cooperation are willing to go beyond Kafala. But we hear that recently Qatar has abolished the Kafala system. I am not sure how it works now.

F: Suma, you have all kinds of experiences. These legalities are complicated. There is no such thing as a free visa available for domestic workers. You had gone with a sponsorship visa with a contract (Kafala system) and the sponsor agreed to give you the documents back, though he deducted some money. Your visa had validity for those two years. Now it will be difficult for you to go back with that visa.

69. Bilateral Agreement

Bilateral agreements are agreements between two countries, which are legally binding and define the co-operation between the two countries mostly related to trade and commerce. Agreements on labour issues are called Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements. These ensure that migration takes place in accordance with agreed principles and procedures. This is one of the common mechanisms to regulate labour migration. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is a less formal form of agreement. Most of the countries prefer MoUs as they are non-binding forms and are easy to negotiate and change according to the economic and labour market conditions. It can be signed for political reasons or friendly relations or to reinforce co-operation in managing irregular migration. For the destination countries, bilateral agreements help achieve a flow of labour that meets the needs of employers and industrial sectors, while providing for better management and promotion of cultural ties and exchanges. For the countries of origin, these agreements ensure continued access to overseas labour markets and opportunities to promote the protection and welfare of their workers. Bilateral agreements frequently include a model employment contract which regulates some aspects of employment (e.g. contract period, travel expenses, wages, accommodation, medical care and annual leave) but these typically fall short of international labour standards and do not necessarily have the force of the law.

70. Free Visa

A free visa is not an officially accepted terminology though migrant domestic workers in the GCC countries use it frequently. It is an



outcome of the Kafala system. Under the Kafala system, the sponsor is responsible for the worker and hence retains the worker's documents, thereby also controlling the worker at all levels. When workers suffer from abusive and exploitative work relations, many desire to escape from the employers' house and seek help by any means possible. Some workers are able to bargain with the sponsors and they pay money to get back their documents. If they succeed, they can leave and find work according to their wish. They then work in many houses and earn better money. They say that they have a free visa. Some sponsors exchange the passport for a declaration that the worker has received all their wages that they are due, prior to change of employment or exiting the country. Workers who become undocumented (without any documents) also find work as the demand is so high and local employers prefer such workers without any obligation. They do not possess any legal status and can work until they are caught and deported.

Su: But Fish, after all these years of working as a migrant domestic worker I am not eligible for any social security provisions like Provident Fund or Pension or health insurance. Workers like me are even excluded from the public distribution system here on return because of our NRI status. I have heard others (construction workers or other workers on the same kind of visa) saying that our remittances⁷¹ contribute a lot to the financial situation of our country. But no consideration is shown towards us and our futures anywhere. We are not recognised as workers in our own country or the destination countries

F: Yes. It is unjust. For many of our countries the foreign remittances sent back by the migrant workers is a big source of income. The Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka are among the top remittance receiving countries in the world. This is definitely a huge advantage for the national economy and an important source of foreign currency. I will prepare a list for you to understand the benefit of the hard work of migrant labour to our country.



F: Sure, Sheela. This is the capitalist system furthering inequality among us. The migrant workers who have worked for many years risking their life in other countries are not respected or treated as equal partners in the development process of their country. They have no means to prove that they were workers in those countries because of illegal documents. Poor women who are mostly illiterate have no means to understand these traps of the socio-political system. Our own experiences show, how only a few are unionized. Most of the workers are outside the process of collective bargaining.

Shall we stop here today?

S: That will be extremely helpful, Fish. We will have a good understanding about these things. Otherwise, nobody bothers to explain to us. We can be proud of our own sisters and brothers who leave their family to earn a livelihood in distant countries. And after we return there are no schemes for us. We are not covered under any social security measures, we are just left out. Truly unjust system! We should spread awareness about these realities as much as possible among our members.

71. Remittances

Remittances are the money or goods that migrants send back to families and friends in their home country. These are private international monetary transfers that migrants earn in the destination country. Increasingly, the terms “social remittances” or “social capital transfer” are used in the context of transfers of non-monetary value that migrants acquire as a result of migration, such as transfer of knowledge, ideas, networking and skills which they bring back to the community of origin.

Remittances have an impact on the macro-economic (larger picture of economy) indicators of the origin country like the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), financial inclusion or poverty reduction. The Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka are among the top remittance-receiving countries in the world. These remittances are a significant contribution to the national economy of these sending countries and are an important source of foreign currency. This indicates the importance of migration for the development of the country of origin.

CHAPTER 24

Rights of Domestic Workers and Organising

Fish: Hello, everybody! Maybe you can just start with what you know about C 189 and I will join you as I have a bit of work to complete. Sheela, maybe you can start as you have been for the training in Sri Lanka too.



Sheela: Yes. I will do that, Fish
OK, everyone. I will begin. Convention 189 was won in 2011 at the ILO⁷². A Convention is a binding agreement, like a law. This was a struggle to get domestic workers recognised as workers and to establish their rights. It was won because domestic workers were present there through their unions and though several governments and employers tried to put blocks in the way, the Convention was finally passed on June 16th. So now each country has to ratify this Convention and by doing so it becomes a law in that country too.

All: Yes, Domestic Workers Day - Zindabad, Su,SuSu.

Fish: Very good, Sheela. But can you tell more about what is in the Convention? What are these rights?

Sheela: First of all C 189 defines who is a domestic worker, namely anybody who works in and for another household or households for remuneration – i.e. part-time or full time.

L: Oh! Even part time? Great!

T: Does “for the household” include the gardener, the driver?

72. ILO

This is an institution of the United Nations and focuses on universalizing labour standards. It is a tripartite organization in which governments, labour organizations and employer organizations participate to discuss labour standards and issues. This process of tripartite discussion is called Social Dialogue (73). Decisions are made by consensus, which means all parties have to agree.

Sheela: Yes. Those who are employed by the household, in an employment relationship.

Then it specifies that there must be a work contract in the language of the worker.

The contract should specify the working conditions, hours of work, the wages, the holidays and the social security. The point is that if our country does not ratify the Convention, then we do not get these rights legally.

That is why we have to organise and pressurize our government to ratify the Convention.



Fish: But Sheela, there is more in the Convention.

Sheela: I know, Fish. You please continue

Fish: First of all it says that domestic workers contribute substantially to the global economy and because of their special workplace - which is a private home, they require a separate Law.

It also says that this is in the context of the core labour Conventions. Does anybody remember what are the 4 Core Labour Conventions?

Sheela: Right to organize and collective bargaining.



Tina: No child labour.

Fish: Very good. What else? OK. I will repeat. Right to organise and collective bargaining; No forced Labour; no child labour; and elimination of discrimination regarding employment – these are the 4 core standards.

ILO Core Conventions

- These 8 conventions (4 standards) are:
 - freedom of association (Conv. No. 87) and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining (Conv. No. 98);
 - the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour (Conv No. 29 and 105);
 - the effective abolition of child labour (Conv. No 138, 182); and
 - The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Conv. No. 100, 111).

It also says that the minimum age of employment can be decided by a country but this is only after the compulsory basic education is completed.

Workers must be protected against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence.

While this Convention is meant for domestic workers all over the world, a large part of the Convention focuses on the migrant domestic workers too.



For them the contract too is absolutely necessary and it very clearly talks about workers not being forced to live-in and if they do, then it specifies the facilities they should get especially regarding working time, rest and overtime wages. Moreover it states that the worker should have control over her travel documents.

The Convention also speaks about the need to regulate the placement agencies/recruiting agencies and particularly that the agency does not deduct any money from the salaries of the workers. And that there is a mechanism to handle grievances and complaints. The details are in the notes.

T: Oh, I did not know this part about the agencies.

M: If the workers can keep their documents, then they are more free to leave the work too if they are treated badly.



Fish: We spoke about that in the last session.

L: But then the Convention is not in practice now?

Fish: Well as we said in the beginning, the Convention first has to be ratified by the 2 countries in order for it to come into operation. This happened in 2013. But it will come into operation in our country, only if our country ratifies it. Till today, no country in Asia has ratified the convention except the Philippines.

S: Yes. They are the best.

Fish: So now you must remember all these details because only when you are aware of details, you can convince others of your rights.

T: But Fish, how can we get our country to ratify the Convention?

Fish: We really have to organise, get more members, explain to our employers so that they also support us, and it is only when we are numerous, we can make this pressure on the government.

T: But we are doing this year after year.

Fish: Tina, in our country, where domestic work is not even treated as work, and where the majority of domestic workers do not consider themselves workers, it will take a long time for ratification. The employers will hold on to old customs as long as they can. So it is left to the unions to organise and make the workers aware.

Do you know that not even 30% of the domestic workers in our country are organised? What about the rest of the 70%? Unless we are able to get at least 70% of the workers organised, we will not succeed. We may get some small gains where we collectively bargain with employers, but to get a law that establishes our rights in the country, will take more than that.

M: Many workers want to join, but they do not want to pay union dues each year. Can't we ask for life membership?

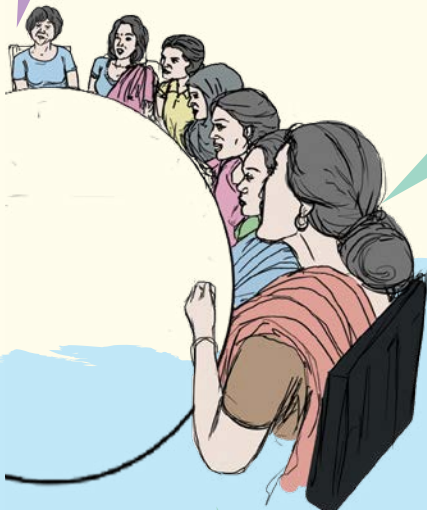
Fish: We will discuss that in another session. For today, you must understand all the points in the Convention and digest them. Then the Convention is also supported by Recommendations 201. This is another long document which explains what steps the governments should take to effectively put Convention 189 in place. It gives details so that the spirit of the Convention is properly understood. But I am not going to explain all that now. You can look at the notes.⁷³

T: Yes, yes. It is too much for today. Please give us some time to understand everything. I will do my best to get more members too, and I will talk to my employer more about all this. She is very nice, she will explain to others as well.

Fish: Yes, that is something we can certainly do as well. We have to build our own understanding and self respect. When we do our work professionally, then the employers also realise that our work has dignity. That is how workers got more rights in Hong Kong and Thailand.

So do you want to continue with these sessions or is it enough?

S: Fish, we need to know more about organising and union fees etc.



M: I am not so confident.

S: Maya, you get five new members and I will help you to explain. We have to make the effort.

Fish: Oh, yes. That is important to know. But I will go on only if you continue to be interested and read the notes. We should also do some recap of the older session, because you should not forget about how everything is connected.

I have a suggestion, why don't each of you make contact with 5 new workers and begin to explain to them about the union and all the things you have learned. Then we can have a few new members and you will see if you actually remember what you have learned.



Fish: Yes, this is the only way to see that our union grows and gets strong too.
So, we will meet after 10 days then, which will give you the time to do this. You can get help from each other when you have doubts. By the way, also remember to sing some of our union songs together so that all learn them too. Maybe some of you can write some more.

T: I will ask my son, he is very good.

Fish: OK. So, we will meet on Saturday. Good luck everybody and keep safe.

CHAPTER 25

Union-building and related issues

Fish: Hello, everyone!
Oh my goodness, so many more new faces.
How come?

All: You told us to make new members and so most of us did this. We feel more confident now to explain to others and get them to join the union.

Fish: Great! So welcome to all the new participants. We have been having these sessions since some days, but if you have not got an understanding of these past sessions, don't worry. You can go to the notes. Read the notes with the help of one of those who participated in the former sessions. Then you will understand better.

Today we will be talking about union-building and issues related to it.

All: Clap hands - and placards
Organize, Unionize - United
we will not be defeated

Fish: Fist of all, one of you can give a brief introduction to our union.

All: I will, I will.

Tina: The name of our union is SEWA, Self Employed Women's Association. It was born in 1972 in Gujarat. SEWA now exists in 18 states in India and has 1.4 million members.

Fish: OK. Tina, you can start.

Fish: Good. OK, Sheela can continue. Tell us something about the structure.

Sheela: Well, we are the members, and represent different trades. The members are the most important part of the union. We are organized into local units and each unit elects its leaders (agevans). The leaders meet regularly to plan the work and take the union ahead. Twice a year, there will be trade committee meetings when the leaders who are of the same trade, meet in the district. In the trade committees specific issues of the trade are discussed and action planned. Once a year, all the trade committee members get together for the annual General Body meeting. At the AGM, the state committee is elected from among whom the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer are elected.

Fish: Very good. Tina, you please explain how you organise locally and what activities you take up



Tina: The local unit is the base of the union. This is where the members of the local area get together every month. The local unit elects its leader - either one or two. The date and time of the meeting is fixed- like the first Friday of every month at 2 pm. At these meetings, the members discuss their issues either at the workplace or in the neighbourhood. Sometimes they also bring issues of their families. So here we discuss them together and see how they can be resolved. Like if there is a problem with the water supply, then we decide to go and meet the ward member and make a complaint. Generally such things get solved like this. So in these meetings, the members feel that as part of the union, we can get our local problems solved and that we are strong only if we stand together and do things together. The success of the unit depends on taking up these issues and the ability of the leader and how she keeps all the members together and also gives time for the others. She encourages the others to bring in other

members and that is how the unit grows. It is she who also goes to the trade committee meetings where she also learns new things about the other areas and when there are bigger actions, she gives us information and we all join. Like when we all took part in the signature campaign for Comprehensive Legislation for Domestic Workers and then a few of us went to Delhi for the demonstration. There were thousands of domestic workers there. So in this way, our members



also participate in the larger issues and learn more. During this lockdown time, the union also helped us to get rations and distributed masks to all. The leader also keeps the records of the unit - the reports of the meetings and collects the membership dues.



S: In our unit we also have fun together, like we sometimes on a picnic to the big park and we share our food. It is so nice to just be by ourselves and enjoy.

L: I really like to go to the trade committee meetings. There the union president gives us so much information and we also can ask for solutions to our issues. Like when the creche was not functioning properly in our area, we did not know what to do. So she told us that we need to meet the ICDS supervisor and make the complaint. So five of us went to the office, met her and told her about the problem. After one week, we got a new teacher in the creche and things are going so well now.

Fish: Yes, the programmes and issues keep changing from time to time and when we take up issues together we also find solutions.

The main thing to understand is that by being members of the union we have collective strength and we make ourselves visible as workers. A union is a workers' organization and is recognised by the government as such. Each year we pay our membership fees which also tells the government how many domestic workers we are. That is why it is important to pay our dues every year. Do you understand why you have to pay dues every year?

All: Yes, because we are workers and this is how the government will know we exist.

Fish: Yes. And also because only unions can take part in the social dialogue - i.e. unions can negotiate/talk with the employers and the government about wages, working conditions etc.

S: Yes, our union Secretary Sonia informs us about those meetings and what is discussed there. That is how we also got the benefits in the Unorganised Social Security Board and we made all our members register.

M: But Fish, when the election comes, the Congress party tells us we should vote for them because they took the initiative to give us benefits. In our family we had decided to vote for the AAP.

Fish: Oh, Oh! That is another subject altogether. It will take too long today. Shall we discuss that the next time?

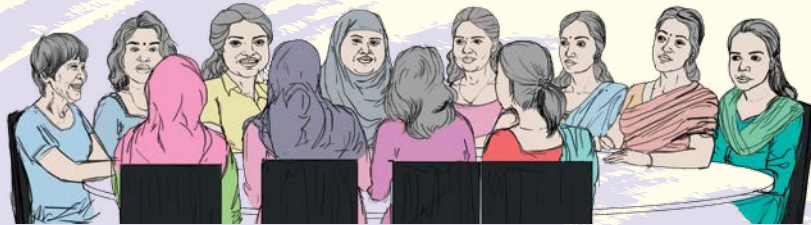
All: Yes, next time please.

Fish: So, goodbye for today.

Unions and Political parties

Fish: Hello, everybody! You all look so bright this afternoon. Maybe the rain cooled the place and made us all feel fresh. I hope all of you were safe?

S: Since the rain was not too heavy, it is OK. We have to take care as our house roofs are not very secure.



Fish: But I thought you got some support to repair the roofs.

S: Yes, we did. But because of this lockdown, we could not complete the work. Hopefully we can do it now.

Fish: Yes, please try to do so.

M: Fish, you said you will tell us about the political parties.

Fish: I will not tell you about the political parties but I will tell you about the unions and their relation to political parties. OK?

All: Yes, yes.

Fish: As I had told you earlier, it is the political parties whom we elect and who become the government. Each party has its own vision.

Many political parties also organise people to support them and their vision. So most people choose what kind of party they will support. In your families you surely know which party you support.

Similarly, political parties also organise the workers and build unions. So while they help workers get rights, during the elections they expect the workers to vote for them so that they can form the government too. If and when a particular party wins the election, the workers of that party try to get their demands met through their party representatives. So while the union may be independent in its functioning, it will follow the broader vision of the party to which it is affiliated.

For instance, the workers who support the Congress party will join INTUC and those that support BJP will join BMS union.

But there are some parties that do not create unions themselves - like the AAP party now, or there are unions that do not affiliate to a political party - like SEWA or HMS. They are independent unions

M: So they are not political?

Fish: No, no. It does not mean they are not political, but they are not affiliated to a political party.

M: So what does that mean?

Fish: Maya, when a group of people take certain positions in society and make choices about where they stand - with the rich, with the poor, with the dalits, with the minorities, for climate change, for equal wages for women and men, then they are political. That is their politics. They need not belong to a particular political party for this. They express their politics by their programmes and actions.

M: So, Sheela, what is the actual politics of SEWA?



Sheela: SEWA represents the issues of informal women workers. So, SEWA's politics is to work for the rights of women workers, to make them visible, and to get their rights. Most people do not think about the women at all, that they also work to support the family, that they also contribute to the building of the nation, that they also have ideas and abilities and they should have the freedom to express them, that they should be involved in decision making in the home and in the community, that men have no right to be violent with them. This is the politics of SEWA, shall we say justice and feminist politics - against patriarchy.



M: Oh, Oh! I really like how you explain it, Sheela. I am so happy to hear it.

T: But don't the political parties also stands for such things?



Fish: Why don't you go home and discuss that with the others in the family, especially those who support a political party at home. Try to understand and make your own conclusions.

It is important for political party leaders to listen to the demands of the workers of its unions. If it does so, then it is wonderful.

Sometimes this happens but sometimes there is a big gap. So there will be struggles between leaders of the union and the party leaders. This is natural provided the party leaders remain open and try to resolve the issues. This is a process and the discussion must always take place in a democratic manner. It is when the leaders of the parties and the unions get so powerful, they do not want to listen to each other or others and work for the general good of all. If they think only of themselves and their own power, then things get bad. So there should always be discussion and change of leadership, so that all participate and no one person controls.

Is it clear now?

So shall we stop for now?

All: Thanks, Fish.

CHAPTER 27

Developing Campaigns on domestic work



Fish: Hello, everybody!

L: Now we really understand better about our union and how to build the units. But Fish, how do we fight for our rights as domestic workers? When will we get the legislation?

F: That is what we can talk about today. You see, the reason why it is so difficult to get a legislation, is because everybody is an employer of domestic workers and they do not want to accept this. They are employers and our workplace is their home. So this is what is specific about our sector. The home is thought of as a private space, so on this ground the employers claim they do not come under the law.

S: Yes. This is correct. Also, because we all work in different homes, it is also difficult for us to organise. It is not like workers in a factory who are all together under one roof and one employer.

F: Precisely, so it is important for us to be able to make our employers aware of these things first. That is why we organise the “My Fair Home Campaign”.

M: What is that?

S: Oh, I can explain. I heard about it at the training. They organise this around June 16th which is International Domestic Workers Day. This is a campaign to make the employers understand how they can make their home fair and safe for domestic workers.

M: Oh, really? That is great! We too must do it.

F: Yes, different groups organise this in different ways depending on what the members decide. Some stand with posters and banners in front of the buildings in which they work - some print little leaflets and distribute them to the employers, some organise meetings with the Resident Association. Some go in and interact with the employers. Many employers are open and do change. We have feedback from workers that things do change in some places and some employers also increase the wages of the workers.

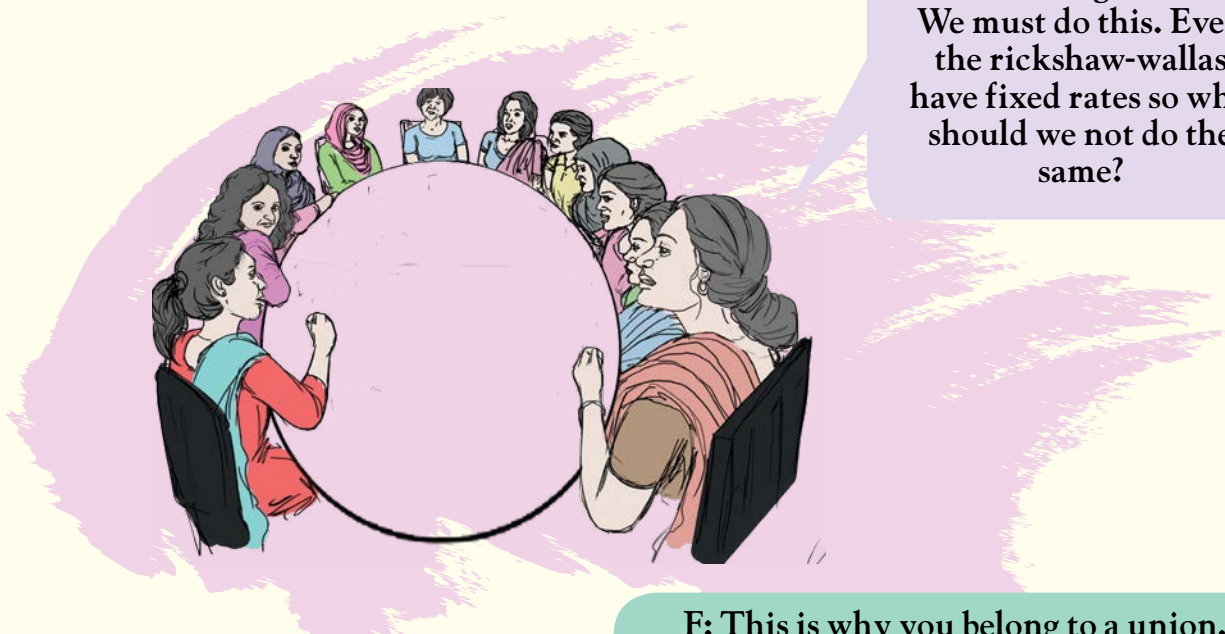


F: Yes, that also happens, as we must constantly interact with the press so that the issue becomes more public.

S: I also heard that the union asks the press to come and then it is published in the newspaper and more people get to know about it.

L: This is great, Fish! But many workers are willing to work for lower wages and so, the employers don't mind about our demands. We are at the mercy of the employers.

F: Yes, yes. The most important thing is that you yourselves - workers among yourselves, have to unite and agree on the wages. Many of you do not discuss this among yourselves as you also try to keep your salaries a secret. But only if you discuss this and fix wages among yourselves can you bargain collectively. Agreeing on wages we call a 'rate chart' - how much you will need to get for doing a specific job, for a specific time. It takes time to agree on this but once you do this, you will see that the employers will not be able to cheat you.



T: That is a good idea. We must do this. Even the rickshaw-wallas have fixed rates so why should we not do the same?

F: This is why you belong to a union. To bargain collectively is the task of the union. But for this you have to come to collective agreements between yourselves. I can give you some ideas about how you can proceed on this.

All: Yes, please do so, Fish. If it is in the notes, we will look at it.

F: Yes, please look at it and begin to discuss among yourselves. Try to be open and honest. Then you can come to an agreement. Remember some states have already announced minimum wages for domestic workers so you can build on that. OK? Take care and see you the next time.

CHAPTER 28

From National to International



S: All our unions have joined together and created an international federation called the International Domestic Worker's Federation. So there are now 77 unions from 58 countries representing over 5,60,000 domestic workers. The focus of this Federation is to struggle for the rights and dignity of domestic workers all over the world. The Federation also has a constitution and I have those papers at home. Each member has to pay an annual fee. The secretariat of the Federation is in Hong Kong. The President is Myrtle Witbooi who was a domestic worker in S. Africa and the General Secretary is Elizabeth Tang from Hong Kong.

F: Wonderful, Sheela! You have remembered all that. What Sheela said is correct. So, what is the name of the International Federation?

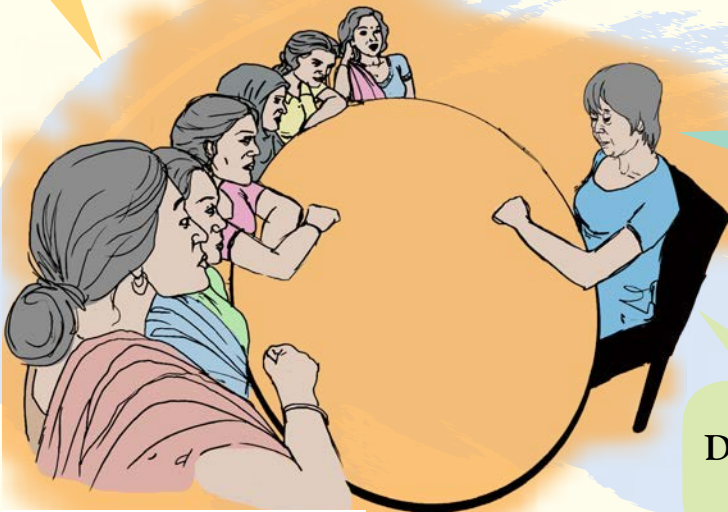
All: The International Domestic Workers Federation - IDWF

F: Great! But this is a federation only of domestic workers. What about all other kinds of workers. Do all workers also come together?

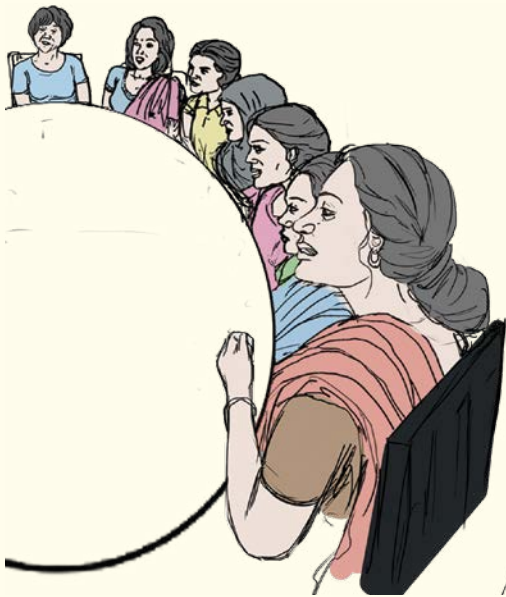
J: Is that the ILO?

F: No. That is not the ILO. The different workers' unions also have joined together at the International level. There are two major international Confederations. One is called the ITUC - the International Trade Union Confederation. The other is called the World Federation of Trade Unions - WFTU

Both these confederations have member unions that represent workers of different sectors. The IDWF is a member of the ITUC. Right now the ITUC is the largest one and hence speaks for all workers in the ILO. Remember that the ILO is where the Governments, the workers and the employers sit together. This is called the tripartite system.



All: Yes, yes. We have read about that and do remember.



F: So, do you see how you, from your little village or town or city get connected to the workers all around the world? Do you see how belonging to a union links you up to the workers all around the world? When you celebrate International Domestic Workers' Day here, workers in different countries are also celebrating on the same day. So all over the world the employers will have to listen and over time your rights will also be met.

Similarly, we as a union should be ready to join other struggles for the human rights of all sections of people in society. Only in this way will the rich and the oppressors understand that people are standing together to change things.

S: Yes, we have been seeing the struggles in Hong Kong on the TV these days and the Black Lives Matter movement in different parts of the world. We have been talking about that and we have sent letters of support.

J: My daughter told me about a young girl who is leading a movement to save the environment and she is joined by so many other children and young people.

F: Yes, her name is Greta Thunberg. A wonderful young girl campaigning to save the planet. Imagine she went in a sail boat all across the Atlantic ocean to speak at the United Nations in America, as she did not want to use fuel and pollute the atmosphere.

M: Oh, my God! How long did that take? She must be really brave!



F: Not only brave, but she believes in what she is doing. And if we want to change things, we have to start with ourselves and make the impossible possible.

There is another global movement which says 'Another World is Possible' and it is made up of all kinds of people, groups, unions that have been already changing things at the local level, living at the local level and building happy communities.

So let us all join together and believe that another world is possible.

**All: Another World is Possible
We shall overcome**



Appendix 1

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redress) Act. 2013

Have you heard about this Act? If you are a worker – a street vendor, a domestic worker, a construction worker, a home based worker, and agricultural labourer etc. you should know about this Act?

Why is it important to know about this Act?

Because it is the right of every woman to work in a safe environment without being harassed, teased, molested by a man at the workplace. Articles 14-15 (a) of the Indian Constitution stress that there should be no discrimination on the grounds of sex. Article 21 focuses on a citizen's right to work with dignity. This Act also specifically mentions all workers in the unorganized/informal sector and domestic workers are covered by it.

More over there is an international Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination on Women – CEDAW, which is the base of this Act.

What is this Act about and how did it come into being?

In 1992, a woman called Bhanwari Devi was gang raped. Bhanwari Devi was employed by the government of Rajasthan as a Sathin to work towards the prevention of the practice of child marriages. During the course of her work, she prevented the marriage of a one-year old girl in the community for which she was opposed by the men. Bhanwari Devi reported this to the local authority but no action was taken. One day while working on her field with her husband, Bhanwari was gang raped by those very men.

A women's group Vishaka, took up her case as she was raped when she was at work (Her agriculture field, which is also a workplace). In this landmark judgment, Vishaka vs. State of Rajasthan (1997), the Supreme Court of India created legally binding guidelines – commonly called the Vishaka Guidelines to prevent such incidences in the future so that women would have the right to work in a safe environment. Irony being that Women like Bhanwari Devi remained excluded from the guideline since only formal workplaces were included while defining the workplace under the guidelines.

In 2013, the Act was created. The Supreme Court defined sexual harassment as any unwelcome, sexually determined physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct. Examples included sexually suggestive remarks about women, demands for sexual favours, and sexually offensive visuals in the workplace.

It also defined domestic worker as “a woman who is employed to do the household work in any household for remuneration whether in cash or kind, either directly or through any agency on a temporary, permanent, part time or full time basis, but does not include any member of the family of the employer”

Three key obligations were imposed on institutions to meet that standard, namely Prohibition, Prevention, Redressal of violence, harassment at the workplace.

Do you face harassment at the workplace? Do men abuse you? Do police harass you? Do some contractors or employers of domestic workers ask for sexual favours? Do men at the workplace show you sexy pictures on the phone or exhibit their private parts?

What do you do in such cases? You just leave the job or move to another place for work? But you should/can complain.

How do you proceed to complain?

You can complain either in writing, or through a friend, to the nodal officer in your area within three months of the incident. If there is successive abuse, then it should be within three months of the last incident.

Who is the nodal officer?

The Act provides for the creation of a Local Complaints Committee (LCC). This Committee is headed by the District Officer/Collector. But there will be a nodal officer in every block, taluka, tehsil, ward, and municipality.

The nodal officer has to take the complaint to the LCC

What is the Local Complaints Committee

The District Officer/Collector constitutes the LCC in every district.

The Chairperson will be an eminent woman in the field who understands the rights of women workers, 2 members nominated from among women working in the block, taluk, ward or municipality, members from NGOs who have expertise in working on women's issues, sexual harassment. At least one should be a woman and one should have a specific qualifications in law. There will be one representative from the social welfare department as ex officio member and one from the SC community

The LCC must have 50 per cent representation of women.

Role of Complaints Committee

- a) Time bound treatment of complaints. The inquiry should be completed within 90 days. On completion of the inquiry, the report will be sent to the District Officer, and they are mandated to take action on the report within 60 days.
- b) Maintaining confidentiality during inquiry;
- c) Counseling or other support services to the aggrieved employee; and
- d) Preparing an annual report to be given to the government department concerned with complaints and actions taken to address them.

The LCC will receive complaints from women working in an organisation having less than 10 workers, or from street vendors, contract workers, home based workers, domestic workers agriculture workers etc.

The Local Complaints Committee needs to collect information in five stages

Step 1

Filing the complaint. 6 copies of the complaint along with supporting documents and the names and addresses of the witnesses need to be submitted. If you are unable to make the complaint due to physical or mental incapacity, then your legal heirs, friends, or relatives can do so. Further, if you are unable to file a complaint for any other reason, any person who has knowledge of the incident (e.g. colleague) may file a complaint on your behalf with your written consent.

Step 2

Upon receipt, the LCC will inquire into the complaint and give both you and the offender the chance to be heard, although neither can bring a lawyers to the inquiry process. The LCC can first try to settle the matter through reconciliation. The inquiry must be completed within 90 days.

Step 3

If the LCC finds that the allegation/ charges true, it shall prepare and submit a report to the employer/ district officer within 10 days of the completion of the inquiry to take action. Actions that can be recommended are: 1. a written apology from the offender b. Warnings, reprimands or censure; c. Counselling sessions or community service

Step 4

The LCC must make recommendations within 60 days. If the employer fails to take any action on the LCC'S recommendations, s/he may be fined (upto Rs. 50,000/-). Repeated violations may result in the employer losing his / her license or registration to function. In the absence of an employer, the District Officer must take action.

Step 5

If you do not agree with the LCC'S recommendations, or the employer fails to take any action based on the recommendation, you may file an appeal.

What are your rights when filing a complaint?

- A competent Complaints Committee
- A patient hearing to present your case in a fearless manner
- a time bound process
- confidentiality
- right to appeal to a higher authority, the court

Does the respondent have rights?

Yes, just like you

What should you keep in mind

Do not be afraid to speak up

- Do not take sexual harassment lightly. If you think you are being sexually harassed by an individual or a group, do not accept it as a joke.
- Do not encourage the harasser by smiling, laughing at his/her jokes, or flirting back. Let the harasser know that you do not enjoy and do not want this type of attention.
- Confront the sexual harasser immediately. Tell him that you find that type of attention offensive;
- Seek advice to develop your personal resolution strategy.
- Document all the incidents of sexual harassment. Be detailed, precise about date, time, location, and person/persons involved – use your cell phone to take pictures that can be used as evidence
- If you know someone who is being harassed, give her your support. Encourage the recipient to talk about it and to take immediate action to stop it

Local Complaints Committees have been created in several states but they do not function because workers in the unorganized/informal sector do not complain when harassed. So discuss this in your union, give wide information to your members about the Act, and see that there are posters put up in your working locations giving details of the Act. Get to know more about the Committee, and begin to lodge complaints through your union so that you get justice and make your work environment more safe and comfortable.

Appendix 2

Convention No. 189 Decent work for domestic workers

Domestic work is work. Domestic workers are, like other workers, entitled to decent work.

On 16 June 2011, the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization adopted the Convention concerning decent work for domestic workers, which is also referred to as the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

What is Convention No. 189 ?

What is a Convention of the ILO? A treaty adopted by the International Labour Conference, which is made up of government, worker and employer delegates from the 183 member States of the ILO.

What is Convention No. 189 about?

Convention No. 189 offers specific protection to domestic workers. It lays down basic rights and principles, and requires States to take a series of measures with a view to making decent work a reality for domestic workers.

What does it mean to ratify a Convention?

When a country ratifies a Convention, its government formally makes a commitment to implement all the obligations provided in the Convention, and to report periodically to the ILO on the measures taken in this regard.

Recommendation No. 201 – how is it related to the Convention?

Domestic Workers Recommendation No. 201, also adopted by the International Labour Conference of 2011, supplements Convention No. 189. Unlike the Convention, Recommendation No. 201 is not open for ratification. The Recommendation provides practical guidance concerning possible legal and other measures to implement the rights and principles stated in the Convention.

How is the Convention to be implemented?

The Convention may be implemented by extending or adapting existing laws and regulations or other measures, or by developing new and specific measures for domestic workers. Some of the measures required under the Convention may be taken progressively.

Who is covered by Convention No. 189 ?

What is domestic work?

Convention No. 189 defines domestic work as “work performed in or for a household or households”.

This work may include tasks such as cleaning the house, cooking, washing and ironing clothes, taking care of children, or elderly or sick members of a family, gardening, guarding the house, driving for the family, even taking care of household pets.

Who is a domestic worker?

Under the Convention, a domestic worker is “any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship”.

A domestic worker may work on full-time or part-time basis; may be employed by a single household or by multiple employers; may be residing in the household of the employer (live-in worker) or may be living in his or her own residence (live-out). A domestic worker may be working in a country of which she/he is not a national.

All domestic workers are covered by Convention No. 189, although countries may decide to exclude some categories, under very strict conditions.

Who is the employer of a domestic worker?

The employer of a domestic worker may be a member of the household for which the work is performed, or an agency or enterprise that employs domestic workers and makes them available to households.

In implementing the Convention, will workers and employers be consulted?

The provisions of the Convention are to be implemented in consultation with the most representative workers' and employers' organizations (Article 18).

In addition, the Convention requires Governments to consult with the most representative organizations of employers and workers and, where they exist, with organizations that represent domestic workers and organizations that represent employers of domestic workers on four particular matters: (i) identifying categories of workers who would be excluded from the scope of the Convention; (ii) measures on occupational safety and health; (iii) measures on social security; and (iv) measures to protect workers from abusive practices by private employment agencies (Articles 2, 13 & 15).

What can domestic workers do to enjoy the protections offered by Convention No. 189?

Convention No. 189 affirms the fundamental rights of domestic workers. It sets minimum labour standards for domestic workers.

Domestic workers can:

- organize & mobilize support for the ratification and implementation of the Convention by their Governments;
- use the provisions of the Convention and the Recommendation to influence changes in laws and improve the working and living conditions of domestic workers, regardless of whether or not the country in which they work has ratified Convention No. 189.

What are the minimum standards set by Convention No. 189 for domestic workers?

- Promotion and protection of the human rights of all domestic workers (Preamble; Article 3).
- Respect and protection of fundamental principles and rights at work: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; (c) abolition of child labour; and (d) elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (Articles 3, 4, 11).
- Effective protection against all forms of abuse, harassment and violence (Article 5).
- Fair terms of employment and decent living conditions (Article 6).

Information on terms and conditions of employment

- Domestic workers must be informed of their terms and conditions of employment in an easily understandable manner, preferably through a written contract (Article 7).

Hours of work

- Measures aimed at ensuring equal treatment between domestic workers and workers generally with respect to normal hours of work, overtime compensation, periods of daily and weekly rest, and annual paid leave (Article 10).
- Weekly rest period of at least 24 consecutive hours (Article 10).
- Regulation of stand-by hours (periods during which domestic workers are not free to dispose of their time as they please and are required to remain at the disposal of the household in order to respond to possible calls) (Article 10).

Remuneration

- Minimum wage if a minimum wage exists for other workers (Article 11).
- Payment of wages must be paid in cash, directly to the worker, and at regular interval of no longer than one month. Payment by cheque or bank transfer – when allowed by law or collective agreements, or with worker’s consent (Article 12)
- In-kind payment is allowed under 3 conditions: only a limited proportion of total remuneration; monetary value is fair and reasonable; the items or services given as in-kind payment are of personal use by and benefit to the workers. This means that uniforms or protective equipments are not to be regarded as payment in kind, but as tools that the employer must provide to the workers at no cost to them for the performance of their duties (Article 12).
- Fees charged by private employment agencies are not to be deducted from the remuneration (Article 15).

Occupational safety and health

- Right to safe and healthy working environment (Article 13).
- Measures are put in place to ensure workers’ occupational safety and health (Article 13).

Social security

- Social security protection, including maternity benefits (Article 14).
- Conditions that are not less favourable than those applicable to workers generally (Article 14).

Standards concerning child domestic workers

- Requirement to set a minimum age for entry into domestic work (Article 4).
- Domestic workers aged 15 years old but less than 18 years old – their work should not deprive them of compulsory education, or interfere with their opportunities for further education or vocational training (Article 4).

Standards concerning live-in workers

- Decent living conditions that respect the workers’ privacy (Article 6).
- Freedom to reach agreement with their employers or potential employers on whether or not to reside in the household (Article 9).
- No obligation to remain in the household or with its members during their periods of rest or leave (Article 9).
- Right to keep their identity and travel documents in their possession (Article 9).
- Regulation of stand-by hours (Article 10).

Standards concerning migrant domestic workers

- A written contract that is enforceable in the country of employment, or a written job offer, prior to traveling to the country of employment (Article 8).
- Clear conditions under which domestic workers are entitled to repatriation at the end of their employment (Article 8).
- Protection of domestic workers from abusive practices by private employment agencies (Article 15).
- Cooperation among sending and receiving countries to ensure the effective application of the provisions of the Convention to migrant domestic workers (Article 8).

Private employment agencies

Measures to be put in place (Article 15):

- Regulate of the operation of private employment agencies;
- Ensure adequate machinery for the investigation of complaints by domestic workers;
- Provide adequate protection of domestic workers and prevention of abuses, in collaboration with other Members where appropriate;
- Consider concluding bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements to prevent abuses and fraudulent practices.

Dispute settlement, complaints, enforcement

- Effective access to the court, tribunals or other dispute settlement mechanisms, including accessible complaint mechanisms (Article 17).
- Measures to be put in place to ensure compliance with national laws for the protection of domestic workers, including labour inspection measures. In in regard, the Convention recognizes the need to balance domestic workers' right to protection and the right to privacy of the households' members (Article 17).

**For more information, please contact us,
or the nearest International Labour Office in your country or region.**

Full text of Convention No. 189 is available at: <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp1.htm>

Full text of Recommendation No. 201 is available at: <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/recdisp1.htm>

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