A New Form of Bonded Labour: A Comparative Study between Domestic Workers of South Africa and India

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ABSTRACT Post-colonial India and post-apartheid South Africa are undergoing a new phase of internal development. The high levels of unemployment in both these countries have had a devastating impact on the underclass affecting both men and women of Indian and South Africa and societies globally. This paper focuses on particular members of the underclass. The researchers look at women in particular who find themselves in the occupational role of domestic work in both India and South Africa. The oppressed Indian and South African women are among several groups in both societies that experience the remnants of discriminatory practices in different forms: caste-based apartheid in India and race-based apartheid in South Africa respectively. There are many other members of the underclass that have been and continue to be affected and subjugated by the colonial history of both these nations. High levels of unemployment in both countries effectively forces women domestic workers into a new form of bonded labour. Male domestic workers face their own challenges; however, their position is elevated as chauffeurs, chefs and butlers, with higher payments. These women in particular work in isolation, far from their familial homes with little or no support available close to their places of work. This has led to these workers experiencing psychological trauma and self-alienation as a direct result of their occupational roles as domestic workers. This paper focuses on the alienation and isolation of domestic workers of both India and South Africa, while comparing their shared lived experiences of their oppression in both these nations.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic workers are referred to as housemaids, servants, *mamas, kaamwalis, naukranis, gogos* and *ayahs*. These are a few among a long list of other names applied to domestic workers in both India and South Africa. The domestic worker can easily be forced to work anywhere between twelve to sixteen hours a day, seven days a week (ILO 2013). The number of homes varies between five and eight a week, or possibly in a day, depending on the role of the domestic worker in the employer's home. Each home requires approximately two hours of intensive labour, and it is reported that domestic workers in India work many homes in one day (Patel 2011). South African domestic workers, on the other hand usually work in one household for the day; their hours are similar to those of their Indian counterparts. Their work generally involves washing dishes, cleaning the home, doing laundry, child minding, cooking and wiping floors. This practice is specific to the demands imposed on the domestic worker in the individual households in both India and South Africa. In South Africa, domestic workers tend to work in one home, or they work a few days a week in different homes (Seedat-Khan 2011). The domestic worker has no guaranteed salary increase, no specific day off in the week and it is unlikely that she will receive paid annual leave or an annual bonus from her employer. The hours of work and the remuneration for domestic work can vary from employer to employer and from nation to nation. It is important to note that the remuneration is poor, domestic workers are in no position to negotiate a higher wage. Their vulnerability and poor skills leaves them with little negotiating power. It seems, however, that there are similar unfavorable experiences among domestic workers globally. Nunes and Theodoro's (2003) study reflects that in Brazil maids are poorly paid and the job offers no possibilities for promotion or escape. It is also very difficult for them to earn extra money beyond their salary, when they are confined to the domestic sphere of the household with specific duties. Some domestic workers who have not secured accommodation on the employers' property are forced to find cheap substandard living spaces near their places of employment. They spend a great deal of time and money, every day to travel

to and from work. Their unpredictable working hours does not always give them easy access to public transport.

The domestic worker's sector in India, South Africa and globally is not effectively regulated and therefore the conditions under which domestic workers are employed cannot be closely and effectively monitored. Domestic workers have no guarantee of retirement benefits and as a result they face an insecure retirement and a bleak future. These are among a series of challenges that domestic workers face and continue to face both locally and globally.

There is a significant amount of literature that deals with the topic of domestic work in both South Africa and India: Ally (2004), Ray (2000), Cock (1989), Seedat-Khan (2011), Meer (1972), Hertz (2005) and Dirks (2001) are among the academics that have conducted research on the subject of domestic work and have brought the voices and life experiences of domestic workers to light.

Domestic workers in both India and South Africa share similar lived experiences that force them into the occupational role of domestic work; these include but are not limited to class, gender, skills level, socialization, poverty, apartheid, caste and socio- economic factors and a series of other key sociological factors. Even though the caste system may impose a different burden on Indian domestic workers and apartheid may impose unique burdens of South African domestic workers their stories intersect at important levels which further helps to understand their positions within a global occupational role of domestic work. The majority of the domestic workers in both countries and around the globe are poor, unskilled rural women (International Labour Organization 2013; Lutz 2002; Grant 1997; Dinat and Peberdy 2007). Although male domestic workers in both South Africa and India are not uncommon, it is important to note that female domestic workers far outnumber male domestic workers in both of these countries and globally, for specific reasons in each country. According to Van Onselen (1982), in the later part of the 1800's and the early part of the 1900's African men dominated domestic work in South Africa. The "African Peril" was a time during which white women lived in fear of sexual assault from African men against both themselves and their children. It is at this point that we begin to see African men being replaced by African women as domestic workers in the household in South Africa.

In India, on the other hand, the researchers of this study indicate that men have always been employed as domestic workers. The men, however, are employed as skilled workers such as chefs, chauffeurs and butlers. Their salaries have always exceeded those of their female counterparts and continue to do so at present. India is unique in its structure of gender, patriarchy and caste and therefore the male domestic worker has a slightly better advantage (Patel 2011). There are two aspects of their domination identified by Meer (1991), the first is the objective reality of their domination and the second is the subjective experience of their domination.

It is estimated that there are between 2.5 and 90 million female domestic workers in India, a country with a population of 800 000 000 people and between 842 000 to 1.1 million domestic workers in South Africa with a population of 47 000 000 people (ILO 2013). This however, is not an accurate reflection of the number of domestic workers in these countries. The statistics disclosed by the International Labour Organization indicate a large gap for both India and South Africa. This gap is evidence of the difficulty that researchers face in establishing numbers for domestic workers in both nations and globally. Researchers in the field are forced to utilize these guesstimates due to the challenges faced in obtaining accurate numbers in any part of the world. The isolation and nature of their work, in single dwellings, makes it challenging to enumerate every single domestic worker. It is important to note that the sector is regulated differently around the world, and in some cases there is little or no regulation of the sector at all (Hertz 2005). Women who are employed as domestic workers are often the poorest of the poor, with few other employment options available to them (ILO 2013). They are forced to enter the labour market at its lowest rungs (ILO 2013; Patel 2011; Kaga 2012; Sarka 2005; Hertz 2005). Their lack of skills, lack of training, race, ethnicity, low levels of education, gender and high levels of poverty have been some of the key sociological factors that academics in the field have highlighted as the impetus for their entry into the occupational role of domestic work.

India and South Africa, although both unique societies in their own right, share similar histories of colonialism and its accompanying sys-

tems of oppression. They have been and still are subjected to diverse stratified cultures that are patriarchal and highly exploitative in nature (Patel 2011). The patriarchal nature of both societies has further subjugated rural women leaving them with few choices for employment. Women in both countries are part of an entrenched patriarchal culture that has historically placed the women into an increasingly subordinate role (Kaga 2012).While both India and South African have made great strides to include women at all levels in society, the reality is that women are still represented in small numbers in all parts of society. While strides are visible and efforts are being made to empower women through the South African Gender Commission and The Federation of the Self Employment of Women in both South Africa and India respectively, it is important to note that the position of domestic workers remains unchanged in both nations. Gilbert Sebastian, in Mainstream Weekly (2013) makes reference to the conditions of domestic workers of India, refers: "They are far better off in terms of care, feudal relations and salary". The tradition of Indian families to appoint the domestic workers who belong to exclusively to their own caste could be one of the reasons for this advantage. Westernized societies like South Africa, wherein capitalistic relationships prevail; one would have no reasons to wonder why the domestic workers especially the South African maids are treated as use and throw materials" (Mainstream Weekly 2013).

The domestic workers of both India and South Africa suffer different forms of oppression. In the former country it arises from the caste hierarchy and in the latter it is based on race. India has historically been subjected to and continues to subject its citizens to the social, political and economic ills of the caste system while South Africans deal with the remnants of apartheid two decades later. While women leaders of nations are given attention, women such as Indira Gandhi, Albertina Sisulu, Mamata Banerji, Jayalalithaa, Uma Bharati and Sonia Gandhi are few and far between. The majority of women in both nations continue to suffer under post-colonial conditions of apartheid and caste. Nicholas Dirks (2001:34) argues that caste is in fact, neither an unchanged survival of ancient India nor a single system that reflects a core cultural value. Rather than a basic expression of Indian tradition, caste is a modern phenomenon-the product of a concrete historical encounter between India and British colonial rule-caste did become a single term capable of naming and above all subsuming India's diverse forms of social identity and organization.

The treatment of the poor in India and poor rural women in particular has remained unchanged over time. Women in both India and South Africa continue to suffer multiple systems of oppression on the basis of race, gender, class, and ethnicity among others. This oppression affects women far more than their male counterparts due to the added burden of gendered systems of oppression (Sarkar 2005). As a result, women in both countries are forced to enter the labour market at its lowest rungs, leaving them vulnerable to high levels of exploitation.

South African women have been subject to harsh apartheid laws and continue to suffer under the remnants of these laws that stratified and disadvantaged people on the basis of race. In a post-apartheid society, "The racial distribution of domestic workers in South Africa is highly uneven with the vast majority classified as "African" (91 per cent) and the remainder as "Coloured" (9 per cent). This is as a result of the persistent effects of the "colonial past" (ILO 2013).

It is African rural women in South Africa who are the poorest of the poor. They engage in domestic work as a last option. For them it is not an occupation that they choose readily. According to Seedat-Khan (2011), domestic workers end up in the occupational role to make ends meet. They are forced to take care of themselves financially. When women fail to fulfill so called traditional roles of marriage, they seek employment outside the home. They are socialized in their familial homes to depend on their future husbands to provide financial support to them and they do not expect to work when they get married. When marriage does not materialize or when a husband dies or becomes incapacitated and unable to take care of his wife, the woman is forced to engage in domestic work. The only skills they have available are those that they have obtained in the household where they were trained with domestic chores and underwent a gendered socialization in their childhood home (Seedat-Khan 2011).

Citizens of both countries' continue to be affected by these ingrained, stratified and radicalized systems that are difficult to detach from.

Impoverished women face serious challenges when attempting to remove these oppressive shackles (Human Rights Watch 2006). Apartheid in South Africa and the caste system in India have both been abolished. However in practice and socialization both of these oppressive systems remain an inherent part of society and the most impoverished members of these countries are negatively affected. Domestic workers continue to be negatively affected by the occupational roles that they engage in. The statements given below from domestic workers in South Africa and India would be the standing examples of their suffering.

"It is difficult for me. They see me as the black girl. I will never be anything more than that to my madam" Sibongile, Domestic Worker, South Africa.

"My memsaab treats me like dirt. I am low class. I know my place. They will never let me have anything nice" Geetha, Domestic Worker, India.

Domestic workers in both countries have always been and continue to remain an invisible group of women. They can range in age from ten years old and upwards in both South Africa and India. These women are taught to be invisible in the homes of their employers and to refrain from engaging in spontaneous conversation with their employers and guests of their employers. They are seen as workers in the household; employers neglect to realize that they are people with feelings and emotions; the way in which they are treated deeply affects and isolates them.

"I am reprimanded and scolded if I talk to anyone in the house without permission. They don't like me to talk to visitors. They act very nice to me when the people visit from other countries." Sibongile, Domestic Worker, South Africa.

Evidences from interviews indicate that domestic workers are unhappy with the treatment that they receive in general. Nunes and Theodoro (2003) argue that since the days of slavery, domestic service has been an area of employment where both extreme domination and a relationship of intimacy simultaneously co-exist between worker and employer. This is mainly because domestic work itself involves both distance and proximity. This is a peculiar feature of work in the "domestic space" which is an intimate space. Therefore while a maid moves in this space, she should be deaf and not listen to secrets and have a discrete presence in the home. She is also required to take on different roles such as raising the children of others while being separated from her own children (Nunes and Theodoro 2003). While she is physically close to the family she is expected to see nothing and hear nothing. She is expected to reserve all judgment and get on with the job at hand.

In addition to being vulnerable to labour exploitation in the work environment, domestic workers are often victims of sexual abuse and rape (Nunes and Theodoro 2003; Grant 1997). Domestic workers in both India and South Africa have reported that they are expected to have sex with the man of the house and if they refuse they are fired by him. If they agree and the wife finds out, they are fired by the wife. The women reported that they can only hope for the best outcome and sometimes the choices are difficult (Seedat-Khan 2011). Nunes and Theodoro (2003) discovered that domestic workers can also be forced to have sex with employers or their sons while being separated from their own husbands or boyfriends and are forced to engage in these activities because it could earn them their freedom from bonded labour. These women are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases and are forced to endure the consequences without the help and support of the employer. The Human Rights watch report of (2006) indicates high levels of abuse against domestic workers taking place in private homes and hidden from the public eye, that have garnered increased attention in recent years. The long list of abuses committed by employers and labour agents includes physical, psychological and sexual abuse, forced confinement in the workplace, non-payment of wages and excessively long working hours with no rest days. In the worst situations, women and girls are trapped in situations of forced labour or have been trafficked into forced domestic work in conditions akin to slavery.

This paper therefore seeks to bring to life the stories of both the domestic workers and their employers. Their stories are by no means different from hundreds of other women employed as domestic workers around the world. Both in South Africa and India domestic workers are forced to make a living. Domestic workers and employers forge complicated relationships with each other (Cock 1989). Their perceptions of each other are however of great in-

terest and importance in understanding their place in both India and South Africa. The researchers will embark on a sociological journey that will help understand both the domestic workers perceptions and the perceptions of the employers in the context of domestic work.

UNDERSTANDING THE EMPLOYER

There is evidence of an increase in the ratio of male domestic workers; female domestic workers are however more common than male domestic workers because they are cheaper to employ and easier to exploit. Ray (2000) talks about the increasing recruitment of women as domestic workers:

The more expensive male workers, being out of reach for most middle-class families today. Yet employers still think male servants are better; even though they can no longer afford, nor perhaps would hire a male servant today. At the same time, it becomes clear that many men have options other than domestic servitude; those who remain in this profession must explain it to themselves and to others. (Ray 2000)

Both male and female employers in both countries place more value on male workers than female workers.

The below given statement is an extract from an interview conducted with an employer in the elite suburb of La Lucia in Durban, South Africa. The employer is a married female medical doctor with four children. She relies on her domestic worker seven days a week, twelve hours a day. She sees her domestic worker as part of or an extension of her family.

"She is part of our family. We take care of her, her mother worked for us. She gets all the old clothes, she eats all the leftovers and she has a bed and her own room. When we bought new TV we put the old one in her room. She will do anything for this family. We can wake her up at midnight and ask her to prepare a meal and she does it with a smile on her face. Our gardener comes home once a week and he is paid R 130 per day, while our maid earns R 2000 a month" Employer 1, South Africa.

However, the domestic worker sees it very differently. When she speaks about her relationship with her employer, she says:

I have known this family since I was born; when my mum retired they gave her R 10000 which was in 2006 she worked for doctor's mother for thirty-two years. Is that how you treat your family? They pay me R 2000 a month. What can you buy for R 2000 a month? I work like a slave. I am telling you, seven days a week. When I want time off they make me feel bad. Sometime they give me an extra R 100. I see doctor; she spends more than R2000 on a pair of shoes. I am not their family I work here if I had somewhere else to work for more money I would go. True they feed me. I am not hungry here. I got a nice place to stay, but I am always tired" Thobi, Domestic worker 1 from South Africa.

The domestic worker believes that her employer regards her as family because she is always there. She, on the other hand believes that because she is employed as a live-in worker she is highly exploited. She has nowhere to go and she cannot afford to live on her own with a salary of R2000 per month. With her poor salary, accommodation, transportation and food costs would be impossible. She chooses to live in because she has no other alternative. She has no other job options either.

DOMESTIC WORKERS IN INDIA

It is not uncommon for young girls to be sold into a life of domestic servitude by their parents and/or extended family members. Nunes and Theodoro (2003) believe that the working life for domestic workers often starts before the age of 14 years, with a significant percentage starting from the age of 8 years onwards. In spite of the fact that many domestic workers consider their job as a temporary one, they do not change activity readily or easily. Child domestic workers are persons under 18 years of age who work in other people's households and sometimes their own family's home, doing domestic chores, caring for children, running errands and helping their employers run small businesses. Child domestic workers include both those who 'live in' and those who live separately from their employers. A child domestic worker may be paid, unpaid or receive 'in-kind' remuneration such as food and shelter (antipoverty.org). The reasons for children being sold into domestic servitude can vary and this can depend on the parent's level of poverty. Additionally, it may involve addictions to either drugs or alcohol. Domestic workers are vulnerable to alienation and loneliness as they sometimes live in isolation in

their employers' homes or in makeshift dwellings near the homes of their employers for long periods of time without any additional human contact. One of the domestic workers from India reflects:

"I don't know my parents. I am nineteen years old. I have lived with auntie's family since I was young, maybe twelve years or younger. I always thought that she was my family, now I am older I know that I work here. I am happy. I don't like to get a beating from my employer. I need some friends. I don't have time for friends." Sona, Domestic worker 1, India.

According to ILO (2007), there are roughly 54000 children under 15 years of age working in South Africa as domestic workers, the majority of whom are girls. The challenges that these young women face once they are in this situation are extremely difficult. They feel trapped and are unable to consider a life outside their current life. They are children and do not have the skills to survive outside a familial setting.

While employers claim to treat the domestic workers as family members, the workers themselves know that they are not family and do not believe that they are treated like family. The domestic workers see very little benefit compared to the benefits that the employers gain by the presence of a domestic worker in the household. The interview with a domestic worker who was a child of twelve years old when she came to live with her employers reflects the following.

"When I want to leave they say that I cannot go. You are part of this family. No one wants you. Your parents threw you away. You cannot go anywhere. You will be begging on the street." Renuka, Domestic Worker 2 from India.

The same family that she currently works for employed her mother and when her mother had taken very ill, she borrowed a large amount of money from her employer. Her mother was unable to repay the debt and her young daughter was forced to leave school and work for her mother's employers as a bonded labourer in order to pay off the debt. She indicates, *"They are very wealthy people, yet the money that I get does not allow me to do anything or go anywhere. Renuka, Domestic Worker 2 India.*

This employer saw nothing wrong with the way she treated the young woman. She believed that she was helping this young girl by providing employment. She sees herself in a positive light; she is after all protecting this young girl from a life of poverty on the street. She also believes that. *"She is very lucky that we have kept her to work for us, she would have been out begging on the cold streets in Delhi. Then what future would she have. At least she knows that the meals are taken care of here, these workers are very ungrateful sometimes." Employer 2 from India.*

Domestic workers are sometimes victims of torture, violence and exploitation in the homes of their employers. While the job of a seven-year-old domestic worker would include cleaning, this can occur under very harsh conditions which a child should not be subjected to. Young girls are forced to clean with harsh cheap chemicals which are detrimental to their health; few employers offer any protective gear such as gloves and masks. Human Rights Watch Report (2006), ILO (2013) and Blunch (2000) indicate that this has had adverse health effects on the young girls who stay with these employers throughout their lives. This argument is further supported as the results of their research reflect that domestic workers are isolated and vulnerable, especially those who live in their employer's home where they depend on the good or bad will of their employer (www.wiego.org). As women, they are subjected to gender discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping in relation to their work, which is regarded as low status and accorded little value. They risk physical and psychological abuse and sexual exploitation with migrant domestic workers and children being especially vulnerable.

DOMESTIC WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Indian women in South Africa have a unique history. They arrived on the shores of the East Coast of South Africa in 1860 as mothers, wives, daughters and sisters of male indentured labourers. Both Indian and African women played an important role in maintaining the culture of their families in a colonial society. These women were and continue to be the backbone of the family. It is also important to note that it is these very women that have engaged in domestic work to maintain and support their families (Dinat and Peberdy 2007).

Domestic work and the chores that are associated with it have a long history and are by no means uncommon to South African and Indian

women, both in the past and in their respective societies today. The household and the responsibilities therein have always fallen under the guardianship of the women, their daughters, sisters, mothers and aunts. This has and continues to be part of gendered societies that can be found in both countries (Meer 1990).

Each domestic worker tells a unique story but irrespective of which part of the globe she works in her story tells a tale of oppression, exploitation, disadvantage, alienation and self-estrangement. The vulnerability of domestic workers is largely hidden because they work in private residences. Research indicates that tensions and conflicts are seen as "family problems" and resolved through decisions made within the family, whereas they should be seen as workplace and work-related problems. Employing domestic labour in the household facilitates the entry of professional women into the labour market. They are released from domestic chores by the presence of the domestic worker in the home. Domestic workers live with "social violence" because they must live with unequal integration. The data from this study illustrates this reality, only 1.9% has access to crèches so in order to work they must organize childcare with older children or other family members. These solutions cause tensions particularly for mothers working as domestics who see the privileges enjoyed by their employer's children (Nunes and Theodoro 2003).

Therefore the domestic workers are a common feature in the household of professional working women in both countries. With advances for women, higher levels of education, skills and training the need for the domestic workers in familial households will remain essential for a long time to come.

COMPARING INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

Domestic workers who live on the properties of their employers feel often trapped as they have few options available to them. They can be found in the back rooms on the property of their employers. To some, home is the kitchen floor, or a small closet in the employer's home. The conditions under which domestic workers are forced to live are tragic. They are confined to individual households for extended periods of time, sometimes with little interaction with other people outside the employer's home. It is not uncommon for domestic workers to see only her employers and their families for days and weeks (Seedat Khan 2011). Jabu, a South African domestic worker feels out her sense of alienation that she suffers at the hands of her employers:

"I would never be allowed to receive visitors in my house here. I don't get visitors. Sometimes I see the neighbor's maid when she is hanging out the clothes. I am a domestic worker. I will never try to visit others who are working as domestic workers. I don't think that it will be allowed. The neighbor's maid is my friend; I have not been to her place. I live here next to the garage, my room is small. I don't have hot water and I have a bathroom and toilet. I have a small television in my room. I earn R 2000 a month. I get breakfast, lunch and supper every day. I go home every Saturday and return to work at 6am every Monday morning. I come in at 6 am and go to my room at 5pm. In the evening I come in at 7pm to do the dishes and collect my supper." Jabu, South African Domestic Worker.

While Jabu only sees her family on the weekend, she indicates that she is lonely in the week. She sees her employers and their children. Once a week she talks to the gardener. She says it is a lonely life. She had a choice to live with her family however due to the high transport costs she decided to live with her employer on the property.

Diiya has worked for her employer for 14 years since the age of 12. She was forced to find employment to feed herself. There was no food at home. Both her parents were unemployed. She only sees her family once a year and she takes all the money that she has saved. She opines.

"I don't have my own room; I sleep in the kitchen corner. We have a grass mat and a blanket that we roll out every night. We bath outside and the toilet for us is outside. There is no place to rest or sit. We keep our clothes in a cupboard outside. We cannot have a visitor. I go home once a year for one week and then I am called back to work."

The International Labour Organisation (ILO 2013) defines "A domestic worker is someone who carries out household work in a private household in return for wages."Domestic work is one of the fastest growing employment sectors for women in the world. This is as a direct result of the incorporation of qualified women

into the professional labour market which has left gaps in the gendered family structures and households. These gaps are filled by domestic workers typically women with poor skills and training who are entering the labour market at its lowest rungs. This occurs in both India and South Africa.

The incorporation of women into paid labour at its lowest rung does not necessarily emancipate women from traditional gendered roles. For the domestic worker it further ties them to a double burden of domestic chores in two separate households one of which is paid and the other unpaid. Other skilled and/or middle class women employed on different levels engage the services of domestic workers cheaply and readily in order to support themselves and their familial responsibilities. They too are subject to this double burden but they simply shift the unpaid labour that they can no longer perform onto other poorer women transforming it into cheaper paid labour (Keefe 2002).The women that access these jobs are often women with poor levels of education women from poor socio-economic backgrounds who have poor employment options as a result of their lack of skills lack of finances and poor levels of education (Nunes and Theodoro 2003).

Domestic workers are people working in and for households (that is, regardless of the specific task that they perform) and workers who offer in-house services such as cleaning, cooking, ironing. Housekeeping, gardening, child care and care for the elderly in private households. There are numerous cases where children, specifically females are used as domestic workers in households including both paid and unpaid work. There were reported cases where employers were extremely distrustful of their employees. But there is no police record that tracks the sufferings of domestic workers or the cases filed in this regard and list of bonded house owners punished. Not only are the domestic workers subject to exploitation but they are often accused of stealing. One of the employers from India indicates that:

My helper has her whole family living with her in the back room. We pay for everything. When I ask her family to help me, I do not pay them and because they live here for free. I am sure she steals supplies for her family. We have a lot of things and a lot of servants if things go missing we know it is the servants. We have fired many servants in this house. You cannot be too nice to them especially to the young girls; they will take advantage of you.

Despite this attitude which is also prevalent in South Africa, women continue to employ domestic workers to meet their gendered familial responsibilities.

"In our home everything of value is locked away. We do not trust our maid. She is a nice person but we do not want to tempt her. We pay her well (R 2000). She is poor and she has a large family" Hanah, South African Employer.

Notwithstanding the lack of trust that is evident. Both Indian and South African women have left the household and begun to join the labour market in large numbers in specialised fields. Their exit from the household into the labour market has created a vacuum in the familial household. This vacuum has been filled by the appointment of a domestic worker in the household. She is often responsible for child care, preparation of meals, general cooking and cleaning as such. The employer sees her to some degree as part of the family while the domestic worker sees herself as an employee or worker.

While domestic work has a long history the nature and context of this work has changed rapidly (Keefe 2002). This work such as cooking, cleaning, child care, laundry and the women who perform this work are exploited at multiple levels. A situation which is assumed to be as a result of "the feminization" of domestic work (Lutz 2002) makes them increasingly vulnerable to mistreatment. The fact that domestic chores are now performed by poor women of lower castes or historically disadvantaged race groups also decreases the status of this work. Both gender and patriarchy have contributed to the subordinated status of the domestic worker in both India and South Africa.

Not only are these workers victims of economic and gendered exploitation but they are subject to unfavourable working conditions as well. Domestic workers are confined to work areas outside of the public eye. Their work space is often the same as their living space. They live and work on the same premises. They are the invisible workers with poor levels of union organisation and with weak bargaining power (Seedat Khan 2011). It is not uncommon for domestic workers to be subjected to physical sexual and verbal abuse. A domestic worker from South Africa named Joyce says. *"My boss does*

whatever she wants. She hits me sometimes; if I break or damage something she will kick me or scream at me; she cuts my salary; she says I can have the day off; she calls me to work when it is my time off."

The domestic workers feel trapped; they are not in a position to defy their employers. They are extremely vulnerable when they are placed in these situations.

Working conditions in both countries are harsh. There is little evidence of formal employment contracts between the domestic worker and her employer. The salaries that are paid to these women are determined by the employers. The hours are long and the working conditions are harsh. Live-in workers work all day and do not get to go home at the end of the day. They may return home only on weekends or possibly only at month end depending on the agreement with the employer (Chanduri 2006).

Part time workers are often not paid if they are absent from work and they also have no guaranteed annual leave. They are vulnerable and have little job security. In both countries the nature of this work and lack of enforcement of regulations make it difficult for these workers to be recorded and therefore and accurate census cannot be provided. Although South Africa unlike India has managed to include these workers into the legislation, there is not much that has been done in order to make sure that the employers meet the demands of the legislation regarding their working conditions. As a result these workers are not recorded and are often exploited abused and paid very little in addition to sometimes working under very harsh conditions. In June 2006, when 10-year-old Sonu was sadistically tortured and killed by her employers in Mumbai the invisible world of the domestic worker and especially of the child worker lay exposed in all its brutality (Tijdens and Van Klaveren 2011).

The lack of formal contracts erodes any possibility of a healthy relationship between the employer and employee. Domestic workers have few alternatives when they make requests to employers and these are denied. The unions that represent their interests are weak and poorly organised due to the very nature of domestic work. The reality is that domestic workers cannot afford membership fees; they cannot attend meetings due to their work responsibilities. If their employers find out they stand the risk of losing their jobs. It is easy to employ domestic workers and they have become a disposable commodity in both India and South Africa

Domestic workers globally represent poor marginalised women with low socio-economic status. There is considerable prejudice and bias towards both the work and the social status of domestic workers and this is firmly entrenched in their place of employment (Tijdens and Van Klaveren 2011). Pay packets for the domestic workers are determined by factors such as "type of work, hours of work, social status, skills (or the lack of it), the need for flexibility and other labour market conditions."

CONCLUSION

Women in South Africa share a unique history with their counterparts in India. Women on both continents have been subjected to high levels of exploitation and subjugation as a direct result of both apartheid and the caste system. Their unique history can be traced back to the religious scriptures, cultural practices and beliefs, patriarchy, slavery, colonization, indentured labour and a series of other socio-political and economic reason. Indian and African women played and continue to play an important role in maintaining the traditional culture and role of the family. They were and continue to be the backbone of their families in contemporary South Africa and India. Domestic work is age old and by no means uncommon to impoverished women today. The familial household and the responsibilities therein have always fallen under the guardianship of the women, their daughters, sisters, mothers, grandmothers and aunts.

The tragedy for women who engage in domestic work in both India and South Africa is that they are often forced to work up to the age of 75 as they are the poorest of the poor, from rural and/or tribal areas. If they return to their homes they will have no way of supporting themselves. When they arrived to work in the city center in the homes of their employees, they were subject to western versions of patriarchy and were forced to re-socialize into a new or alien culture in middle-class homes. They experienced feelings of alienation, made worse by the solitary nature of their work. The return to their rural homes can present similar challenges for these women. Their prolonged absence from

their own familial home has resulted in alienation at a familial level.

Employers need to play an increasingly important role in the lives of the women that they employ as domestic workers. The investment in the welfare of these women would bode well for both employers as well as governments. This could be an important factor in the reduction of poverty for women, who have spent their lives in domestic servitude. In countries like Singapore for instance, the conditions of domestic workers are far better in every sense of the word, as they are provided with an education, self-employment training and even offered jobs with secure payment, health care and life insurances. They are looked after by their respective institutions and their needs taken care of on a regular basis. There are strict laws that enforce security inside the domestic sphere for these workers who are mostly women, and the employers are forced to enter into to a legal contract for employing any domestic worker. They sign assurances to treat them well, with a minimum wage fixed by the government based on the educational qualifications of the worker. During unemployment these women indulge in self-employment like sewing, embroidery or other craftwork, and make a living. They are taken care of by the Singapore government. What Marx refers to in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* this was written in the context of a capitalist society, it can be applied equally to domestic work. Their low wages and having to live far away from their homes alienates them. The tiring condition makes them forget reality and they experience self-estrangement. Karl Marx in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* refers "This fact simply means that the object that labour produces stands opposed to it as *something alien*, as a power independent of the producer. The product of labour is labour embodied and made material in an object. It is the *objectification* of labour. The realization of labour is its objectification. In the sphere of political economy, this realization of labour appears as a *loss of reality* for the worker, objectification as loss of and bondage to the object and appropriation as estrangement, as *alienation* ".There are no laws pertaining to the conditions of these domestic workers, like the laws that apply to factory or industrial workers. In societies that has only recently brought the legal steps to prevent domestic violence, control measures and legal protection for domestic exploitation of labourers in their work places, greater effort and time needs to be invested to realize any results. These women are far away from their families, with very low wages enduring the abuse and even sexual violence by their male employers thereby they undergo serious emotional and psychological trauma. This trauma continues subconsciously into the rest of their lives as they continue to work in a low paid unrewarding job without any hope of improving their circumstances.

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