

**SALARY FOR HOUSE WORK AS A MEANS TO FIGHT DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*A lot of Women behind closed doors face domestic violence in one form or other. One of the forms as well as the reason for domestic violence may be attributed to the belief that whatever a woman does within four walls of her house amounts to 'no work'. Ironically household chores include enormous amount of work that no employer could ever assign, nor would any employee ever do in any of the existing paid jobs. Therefore, in the light of the same, the present research strives to analyze the impact of providing salaries for house work on domestic violence against women. Section I delineates the meaning and significance of Salary for house work whereas Section II presents in brief the history associated with the same. Section III analyzes the legal and judicial approach to the demand. Section IV & V critically analyze the impact of salary for house work in general and on domestic violence in particular. Section VI presents certain suggestions to overcome limitations associated with the demand followed by conclusion and bibliography.*

**Keywords:** *Domestic violence, salary, housework, housewives, gender parity.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Recently in December 2020, Actor Kamal Hassan promised salaries/wages for housewives in *Makkal Needhi Maiam* (MNM) his newly formed Party manifesto for the upcoming elections. His stint was followed by several other regional political parties in Tamil Nadu promising wages for housewives on similar lines in recognition of their back-breaking labor. MP Shashi Tharoor twitted his support for the same claiming “*monetize the services of women house works in society, enhance their power and autonomy and create near-universal basic income*”.<sup>1</sup> This set in motion a nationwide debate with people in support and opposition of the idea of providing wages to housewives for carrying out household chores daily. In this context, the present research strives to analyze the concept of providing salaries for house work and its possible impacts including the reduction in domestic violence against women behind closed doors.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What does ‘Salary for House work’ signify?
- Why salary should be paid for carrying out house hold chores?
- How did the concept of ‘Salary for House work’ take its shape?
- What is the current legal position with respect to the concept of Salary for house work?
- What is the Indian judiciary’s stance on the matter of Salary for house work?
- What are the merits associated with providing salary for house work?
- How salary for housework may help prevent domestic violence?
- Whether salary for house work would actually help better life of housewives?

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the meaning and significance of the concept of ‘Salary for House work’.
- To investigate the history associated with notion of ‘Salary for House work’.
- To find out various national as well as international legal framework and provisions associated with the concept of Salary for house work.

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<sup>1</sup> Samarender Reddy, *It's Time We Start Valuing Women's Household Work By Paying House works*, THE WIRE (Mar. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021), <https://thewire.in/women/its-time-we-start-valuing-womens-household-work-by-paying-house-works>.

- To analyze the attitude of the Indian judiciary on the matter of paying salary for house work.
- To examine the various benefits associated with providing salary for house work to women with special emphasis on its impact in combating domestic violence inflicted upon women behind closed doors.
- To investigate the feasibility of implementing policy providing salary for house work.
- To analyze possible alternatives to overcome the limitations associated with implementation of policy providing salary for house work.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present research has been carried out through doctrinal method using secondary sources of information available in Research papers and on articles over internet. The research strives to analyze critically the feasibility and impact of implementing a national policy for providing salary for house work as a measure to tackle domestic violence faced by many women behind closed doors in the Indian context. With regard to the same, the necessity, significance, benefits as well as limitations associated with the notion of providing salary for housework has been delineated. A brief history associated with the demand has also been outlined. At times reference to international scenario has been made to strengthen the arguments. At appropriate places certain facts, figures and judgments have been quoted with necessary citations.

## **SALARY FOR HOUSE WORK – MEANING, NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Salaries for housewives connotes remunerating pecuniary rewards to women staying indoor for carrying out a number of odd tasks like cooking, cleaning, organizing, planning the budgets, looking after the needs of children and elderly alike and providing emotional support to the family members among others.

Salary for housework essentially constitutes an acknowledgement of the work done by house wives around the world. Generally, housewives are deemed as '*unemployed*' despite working round the clock for years together. This is so because employment traditionally denotes performing tasks in return of a salary. In this scenario, giving financial remuneration for the odd tasks performed by millions of women every day at home would help burst the myth that housewives are '*unemployed*' persons not doing any economic work. In essence, it would help establish the economic importance of the mundane household chores performed by majority of women.

Any productive labor which translates into contribution towards the Gross National Products (GNP) of the country constitutes Economic Activity. In order to estimate the number of workers in a country, people engaged in economic activities are taken into consideration. India in 2011-12 had 473 million strong workforces of which about seventy percent was constituted by men and rest by women in both rural and urban areas combined.<sup>2</sup> The statistics are so because majority of women in rural as well as urban areas were found engaged in cooking, cleaning, fetching water and other household chores which are not included within the definition of Economic activities contributing to GNP.

Similarly, the gender ratio is skewed in the Worker Population Ratio reported by NSO in India for the year 2020-21 wherein only 39.8% of the population is engaged in economically productive labor.<sup>3</sup> This is so because the traditional definition of productive work excludes from its ambit the work done by women within four walls of a house. Certain Economists argue that this narrow definition should be replaced by a broader one wherein the services rendered by women must be accounted for as Economic activities thus contributing towards Economic growth of the country. If that becomes reality, then it would certainly improve the conditions of women.

In order to do so, a proposal as well as a demand by women and feminist organizations around the World is to provide salaries to housewives who live and carry out innumerable tasks in their homes contributing indirectly to the Economy.

A stay-at-home parent who in majority of cases turns out to be a woman wears many hats during the day; she provides daycare to the kids and toddlers, works as the personal chef of stubborn teenagers and fussy elders by preparing at least four different dishes per meal, supervises house hold helps, overseas repairs and keeps everything in working order. She also manes the job of resident finance minister by preparing monthly house budgets, keeping track of household purchases and ensuring that all the monthly bills are paid and up to dated. At times she might also be the chauffeur ferrying kids to school and after-school activities, the home tutor helping kids in their homework and studies or the errand girl buying grocery items, fruits and vegetables required for running the kitchen too. All in the same day for years together!

According to OXFAM, Women around the world carry out 12.5 billion hours of unpaid work every day which when estimated at minimum wages would represent around 10.8 trillion-dollar

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<sup>2</sup> *Employment: Growth, Informalisation and Other Issues*, INDIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 118 (NCERT, 1st ed., 2022) (Ebook).

<sup>3</sup> Aditya Anand, *India's Work Population Ratio Is 39.8%, Latest NSO Report Says.*, ABPLIVE (Jun. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 02:31 PM), <https://news.abplive.com/business/nso-periodic-labour-force-survey-report-says-india-work-population-ratio-39-percent-see-data-on-unemployment-rate-average-incomes-1539042#:>

monetary contribution towards global GDP.<sup>4</sup> If someone or a particular class of society has so much unacknowledged contribution towards Economy, then the least that can be done is to acknowledge the same. Paying salary is one means of acknowledging the blood, sweat and tears of millions of women who contribute silently towards making the world a better place.

## **SALARY FOR HOUSE WORK: A BRIEF HISTORY**

Debates surrounding the concept of salary for house work came to the forefront when Actor turned politician Kamal Hassan promised wages for housework for the upcoming State elections. However, salary for house work is not a never heard of before demand, springing out of no-where. Feminist organizations around the world have been demanding for wages to home makers since a long time now.

### **At the International Level**

The first such instance dates back to 1920, when economist Pigou observed that while the services rendered by a woman in the home or at the workplace in exchange of a salary is calculated in the Economic growth of a country but the same when rendered gratuitously at home is deemed to be uneconomical. He remarked “...*Thus, if a man marries his housekeeper or his cook, the national dividend is diminished*”<sup>5</sup> calling attention to the drawback in not calculating the women’s contribution to the National Income of a country.

Later on, feminist-Marxist Selma James in an attempt to incorporate value into unpaid house work organized a Woman’s Liberation Conference in 1972 at Manchester, England followed by the International Wages for Housework Campaign (IWFHC). In the same year, the “*Statement of the International Feminist Collective*” in Italy rejected all kinds of theoretical distinction between unpaid housework and paid work at the factories thereby symbolically establishing the importance of housework at par with paid work outside home.<sup>6</sup>

Through their constant work and effort, the IWFHC convinced the UN to pass a resolution recognizing, valuing and measuring the unpaid labor of women carried out at home in the 1990s at the Copenhagen and Beijing Conferences. Subsequently in the year 2000 on the occasion of International Women’s Day, women from around 60 countries participated in a

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<sup>4</sup> Porcsho Moran, *How Much Is a Stay-at-Home Parent Worth?*, INVESTOPEDIA (Apr. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022), <https://www.investopedia.com/financial-edge/0112/how-much-is-a-house-work-worth.aspx>.

<sup>5</sup> *Kirti v. Oriental Insurance Company Ltd.* (2021) 2 SCC 166, 182 (India).

<sup>6</sup> Reddy, *Supra* note 2.

Global Women's Strike demanding "*Payment for all caring work – in wages, pensions, land and other resources.*" More recently in 2014 Italian Lawyer and Ex-Parliamentarian Giulia Bongiorno proposed for creation of a law providing wages to housewives as a means to address the debate on domestic violence.<sup>7</sup>

### **At the National Level**

At home, an organization called the National Housewives Association submitted its application for recognition as a trade union in 2010. However, their application was squarely rejected by the Deputy Registrar of Trade Unions on the ground that housework is neither a trade, nor an industry.

Subsequently in 2012, the then Women & Child Development Minister Krishna Tirath announced that the Government was mooting enactment of law mandating salary for housewives from their husbands. But this proposal never saw the light of the day afterwards.<sup>8</sup>

## **SALARY FOR HOUSE WORK: THE LEGAL ANGLE**

### **Laws in Support of the Concept of Salary for House Work**

#### **At the International Level**

In the international sphere, Article 11 of the Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) oblige States to "*take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment*".<sup>9</sup>

In order to bring into effect, the above stated provision, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1991 adopted the General Recommendation 17 with a view to quantify the "*unremunerated domestic activities of women*" and to place its value in the national GDP of respective country. In this Recommendation, the committee acknowledged that quantification of unpaid house work "*will help to reveal the de facto economic role of women*".<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Manasi Gandhi, *Should There Be Wages For Housework?*, THE WIRE (May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016), <https://thewire.in/labour/should-there-be-wages-for-housework>.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> C.E.D.A.W. art. 11 cl. 1.

<sup>10</sup> General Recommendations, C.E.D.A.W., U.N., Recomm. No. 17, 1991, A/46/38.

### **At National Level**

Providing salaries to home makers certainly would be in line with the Constitutional ideals and values of Social and Economic Justice welfare of citizens. The Preamble to the Constitution guarantees eloquently to all the citizens “*Justice, Social and Economic*”. Similarly, Article 38 puts an obligation on the State to minimize and eliminate inequalities in “*income*” as well as “*status, facilities and opportunities*” amongst individuals and groups.<sup>11</sup> All the citizens, men and women, have the right to have an adequate means of living as per Article 39(a) and that there should be equal pay for equal work as per Article 39(d). And most importantly, the demand for salary to home makers finds resounding support under Article 43 which obligates State to secure through legislation or through any other mode, to all kinds of workers including those apart from agricultural and industrial work “*a living wage, conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities.*”<sup>12</sup>

### **INDIAN JUDICIARY AND THE CONCEPT OF NOTIONAL INCOME FOR HOUSEWIVES**

It is worthwhile to mention here that while the country has awakened to the debate surrounding salaries/wages for housework only now, Courts and Tribunals across the country have been awarding compensation for unpaid housework for a while now under the heading of Notional income for housewives. Majority of these cases arise out of the decisions of the tribunals in Motor Vehicles Accident compensation claims by the victims from the Insurance companies under the Motor Vehicles Act 1988<sup>13</sup>.

One of the landmark decisions in this regard has been the case of *Lata Wadhwa vs. State of Bihar*<sup>14</sup> wherein the Apex Court granted a Notional Income of Rs. 3,000/- P.M. for the deceased appellants. Herein the Court estimated the annual income of Housewives to be Rs. 36,000/- P.A for those aged between 34 to 59 years and the Notional Income to be Rs. 20,000/- P.A for those falling within the age group of 62-72.

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<sup>11</sup> India Const. art. 38, cl. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* art. 43.

<sup>13</sup> The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, No. 59, Acts of Parliament, 1988 (India).

<sup>14</sup> (2001) 8 SCC 197 (India).

Similarly in *Sasidharan vs. Anandan*<sup>15</sup>, the Kerala High Court rejected the contention of the Insurance Company that the appellant was not entitled to compensation because of loss of dependency as he was the earning member and not dependent on his deceased wife and observed that “*Even though the deceased as a house wife was not earning any positive income, she was rendering services in the house to her husband and daughter which are lost to them after her death.*”<sup>16</sup> The Court fixed the Notional Income for the deceased wife at Rs. 3,000/- P.M for granting compensation the appellant for loss of dependency while acknowledging the difficulty in fixing a price to the unpaid work of women at home.

In *Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company Ltd. vs. Bhimrao*<sup>17</sup>, Bombay High Court highlighted the “*multifarious services*” provided by a house wife towards her family members including emotional support and henceforth awarded a Notional income of Rs. 5,000/- P.M for the deceased wife of the respondent.

In *Arun Kumar Agrawal vs. National Insurance Co. Ltd.*,<sup>18</sup> the Apex Court recognized the importance of the “*gratuitous services*” rendered by a wife or a mother in a family and held it to be invaluable and irreplaceable observing that “*A housekeeper or maidservant can do the household work... but she can never be a substitute for a wife/mother.*”

Very recently a 3-Judge bench of the Supreme Court consisting of Justice N.V. Ramana, S.A. Nazeer and Surya Kant, JJ in *Kirti vs. Oriental Insurance Company Ltd.*,<sup>19</sup> upheld the validity of awarding Notional Income to Housewives by various Courts and Tribunals. In this case, a motor vehicle accident claimed the lives of two persons, a man and his pregnant wife leaving behind their parents and two toddlers aged 3 and 4 years respectively. The bench increased the compensation amount to Rs. 33.2 lakh from Rs. 22 lakhs payable at 9% interest rate by the insurance company.

Justice N.V. Ramana in his concurrent opinion acknowledged the fact that housewives perform multitude of tasks at home with women in rural household performing additional tasks like sowing, harvesting, and firewood collection along with the typical tasks involving cooking, cleaning and taking care of children and aged members alike. “*However, despite all the above, the conception that housemakers do not ‘work’ or that they do not add economic value to the household is a problematic idea that has persisted for many years and must be overcome.*”<sup>20</sup>

In the judgment, certain facts and figures have been cited to show that household work is grossly gendered with the weight falling on the side of women. A whopping 159.8 million

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<sup>15</sup> (2009) 2 KLT 969 (2008) (India).

<sup>16</sup> *Id.* ¶ 4.

<sup>17</sup> (2019) 3 Mah LJ 344 (India).

<sup>18</sup> (2010) 9 SCC 218 (India).

<sup>19</sup> (2021) 2 SCC 166 (India).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* ¶ 25 (per Ramana, J., concurring).



women in India have stated '*household work*' to be their main occupation in comparison to the meager 5.79 million men, as per Census 2011. Similarly, the report by National Statistical Office (NSO) titled "*Time Use in India 2019*" reflects the same gender disparity when it comes to household tasks with women on an average spending **16.9 %** of their day in unpaid domestic services for family members and men only **1.7 %**.<sup>21</sup> This certainly explains the gender gap at work.

Taking into consideration the gendered nature of housework with an overwhelming number of women being engaged in it as compared to men, Justice Ramana highlighted the importance of fixing notional income for such housemakers observing the same to be "*recognition*" of the multitude of work performed by women either out of choice or out of cultural norms, "*an acceptance*" that these activities "*contribute in a very real way*" to the economy of the nation and "*is a reflection of changing attitudes and mindsets and of our international law obligations. And, most importantly, it is a step towards the constitutional vision of social equality and ensuring dignity of life to all individuals.*"<sup>22</sup>

This judgment certainly is a milestone in the demand for wages for housework as it not just acknowledged the sacrifices of a woman and the economic value associated with household chores, but it also upheld the fact that once someone is employed in a venture, be it household work only, income becomes a necessary corollary. This justifies the award of notional income to deceased housewives.

## **CALCULATION OF NOTIONAL INCOME BY THE COURTS**

The Notional Income may be calculated by various Courts through different methods but surely all of them have to take into consideration the Loss of Future prospects and the Opportunity Cost associated with doing house works. *Loss of Future Prospects* essentially is based on equity and justice which helps Courts to grant just compensation taking into consideration the realities of life like contribution of loved ones and the experience on quality of work. On the other hand, *Opportunity Cost* signifies the value of opportunity that was given up in order to fulfill other wishes or roles. In case of house work, this may include the housewives' own dreams, aspirations or ambitions or any previous job that she might have left to take care of household chores.

Indeed, this tradition of awarding Notional Income by the Courts is not a new one. There are plethora of judgments given by various tribunals awarding this Notional Income to deceased

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<sup>21</sup> (2021) 2 SCC 166, ¶ 23 (India).

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* ¶ 30

housewives which Professor Prabha Kotiswaran of King's College, London finds this "recognition of unpaid work at par with an occupation quite noteworthy" even though the amount being quite nugatory. This makes academicians in this regard wonder "if a family can be compensated for unpaid work done by a woman after she has died, why not pay women when they are alive?" Discussions and deliberations on this question surely is the need of the hour.<sup>23</sup>

## **SALARY FOR HOUSE WORK: THE MANY BENEFITS**

### **Salary for House Work and Prevention of Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence can be described as violence inflicted on any person within a family. It is also described as domestic abuse as it involves abuse in various forms, may it be physical, emotional, mental, economical, emotional or sexual. Any one, irrespective of age, gender, race or nationality can be a victim of domestic violence. Nevertheless, it is women always who are found to be the biggest victims of domestic violence. In India, domestic violence is sought to be prevented under the Domestic Violence Act<sup>24</sup>. However, time and again this law has failed to come to the assistance of the victim due to various legal, procedural and societal limitations.

If one has to ask why women are the biggest victim of domestic violence, the answer to the same could be manifold. However, one of the biggest reasons for the continuation of the status quo is the prevailing patriarchal norms and traditional belief systems existing in society which has resulted in the sexual division of labor with household tasks falling squarely on the shoulders of women.

For centuries altogether, women have been subjugated and made to believe that their rightful place belongs to the kitchen and household. Whatever a woman does within four corners of her house, may it be parental or in-laws house, has been deemed to be 'out of care, love and affection.' All the multifarious activities have been classified as the 'duty' of a woman deserving no recognition whatsoever at all. There would have been nothing wrong in this belief, if not for the fact that for this very reason, women are often deemed to be doing 'no work'. The innumerable household chores and care services towards different family members have often been taken for granted, denoted as women's work deserving not even a single penny.

This belief system of the male member being the sole bread-winner of the family has in turn led to the development and propagation of a toxic culture based on male chauvinism and so-called

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<sup>23</sup> Soutik Biswas, *How India calculates the value of women's housework*, BBC NEWS (Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 2021), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-55762123>.

<sup>24</sup> The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, No. 43, Acts of parliament, 2005 (India).

*machismo*. This toxic notion treats women as objects, as chattel, belonging to some man who has to take care of them as their providers and protectors. When certain sections of the male population take the notion of belonging, providing and protecting the woman to their extreme, it results in abusive relationships thereby culminating in domestic violence.

In the light of this therefore, provision for providing salaries to housewives would help in breaking this notion of '*sole male bread winner*' or the woman being the '*damsel in distress*' whose duty is to do household tasks. Many women bear with various forms of physical, emotional or mental abuses simply because they don't have a way out of it. They cannot walk away from the abusive relationship because they don't have the finances to take care of themselves even after investing hours together in doing back-breaking, emotionally draining work throughout the day for years together.

Providing salaries to women carrying out household activities may not only give their work recognition, but would also help develop a sense of independence and dignity among women. Financial independence would give better bargaining power to women in their households. Women would have confidence to defend their position stand for their choices better in their household. This would lend them much needed financial security and safety, the ability to walk out of an abusive relationship. Many times, in domestic violence, women dare not leave their house because lack of adequate shelter and other facilities which require money. Financial recognition would help eradicate such complications. They would no longer be at the mercy of their abusive husbands. Financial recognition is therefore vital.

### **Other Socio-Economic Benefits Associated with the Salary for Housework Policy**

Apart from protecting women from domestic violence, salaries for housework would serve as an additional income for the family. Women would be able to save some money for the interests of their family better, without unnecessarily compromising with their wishes.

Karuna Nundy, a Supreme Court lawyer, considers that certain sum of an earning partner's income must go to the other spouse as without the latter's contribution and work the former would never be able to carry out his/her job efficiently. This would solidify the concept of marriage being "*equal economic partnership*".<sup>25</sup>

Provision of salaries for house work may also have the benefit of making household work sector gender neutral. If domestic work becomes paid, it may have men also joining it and not just women, thereby breaking the stereotype of domestic work being a woman only work. It is

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<sup>25</sup> Jagisha Arora, *Women and the Burden of Unpaid Labour: What Is the Way Forward?* LIVE WIRE (Jan. 29<sup>th</sup> 2021), <https://livewire.thewire.in/gender-and-sexuality/women-unpaid-labour/>.

not a fantasy. Presently there are male chefs, babysitters, sweepers, chauffeurs, delivery agents, tutors, etc.; all because the work pays. These are works which, as already outlined above, are done by housewives on a regular basis at home. But when it pays financially, it becomes a professional service with many men pursuing those professions. Salaries for housework would at least compel or motivate men, some if not all, to take up the job of a stay-at-home parent or partner doing domestic chores while receiving money.

Financial assistance for domestic work would also make the work voluntary thereby providing women, their much-needed leisure time to rest and relax. It also gives women the opportunity to spread their wings, learn new skills and take up new jobs i.e., traditional paid jobs outside home.

This in turn will increase gender parity at work and employment. The patriarchal notion of men being the sole bread winner would stand broken then as more and more women take up jobs outside.

### **Provision of Salary as a Means of Recognition of a Mother's Contribution**

Although doing domestic work should be the choice of a person, but for a woman, becoming a mother is a choice, but not the duties that it entails afterwards. The amount of trouble that a mother goes through and the innumerable sacrifices that she makes for her child(s) routinely has always been taken for granted. The least that a mother deserves is recognition for her immense sacrifices. It is at this juncture that a salary comes into picture. In all sincerity, putting a price tag on all that a mother does or compensating through money is virtually impossible. However, a salary is not compensation; rather it's recognition of the enormous contribution and sacrifices of a mother.

Salaries for housework would have not just philosophical but also tangible physical benefits for women. Preventing domestic violence is just one among the many benefits that it entails.

### **SALARY FOR HOUSE WORK: THE VARIOUS LIMITATIONS**

There are various benefits associated with the proposal of providing Salary for Housework. But there are certain concerns associated with it.

One of the biggest concerns is that in the long run this policy would end up promoting and perpetuating the gendered division of house work. This is especially true in the Indian societies where traditional beliefs and cultural values still rule the roost. As per these traditional notions, men and women are supposed to have different spheres of duties with women's duties mostly

confined to the household. In fact, it is believed that *'women are meant for housework'*. Efficiency as a Housewife is still regarded as an important measure of success and respect for a woman, along with marriage and motherhood.

In this scenario, providing salary for housework seems lucrative. Once this proposal is implemented housewives all over the country would be regarded as working professional earning salaries and that too without stepping out of their house. This way they would be earning money as well as societal respect, all at the same time without compromising one for the other. However, in the long run, Salary for housework may make matters worse as it would simply reinforce orthodox notions which believe housework to be solely women's work. Women would be discouraged from undertaking traditional paid jobs and the ones who are already in paid employments might leave their jobs to be the so called *good 'earning' housewife* thereby increasing gender inequality at workforce. In the worst case it would adversely affect higher education prospects of women.

Likewise, senior research scholar Arpan Tulsyan contends that, while it is important to recognize the value of unpaid housework, *"creating value isn't always about remuneration."* She argues that making men pay for the services of their wife would further *"enhance their sense of entitlement"* and strengthen patriarchal notions of men being the *'providers in the family'*.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, she contends that this would exacerbate the situation further as it would allow commodification of housework and personal care. Husbands may start ordering their wives to perform basic tasks for them which they can perform very much on their own, merely because they would be paying for the services. Indeed, this is the reason why proposals of noted Italian lawyer Giulia Bongiorno or that of the then MoW&CD Krishna Tirath making the husband pay for the services of wife are plainly not recommended.

Kavita Krishnan, Secretary of All India Progressive Women's Association and member of CPI-ML believes that performing household chores deserve more recognition than being labeled as mere selfless service. However, she also cautions at the same time that salary for housewives for house work may also strengthen the belief that house work is women's work. Since women would be paid for carrying out house hold tasks, men may simply not do anything thinking *'its women's work for which they are paid anyway, so why to do it.'*<sup>27</sup>

Author Joke Swiebel in her discussion paper for the UN titled *"Unpaid Work and Policy-Making - Towards a Broader Perspective of Work and Employment"* has pointed out an

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<sup>26</sup>Arpan Tulsyan, *A salary to women for domestic work institutionalises idea of men as 'providers'*, THE INDIAN EXPRESS (Jan. 9<sup>th</sup> 2021, 09:06 AM), <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/housewives-income-moeny-patriarchy-arpan-tulsyan-7138881/>.

<sup>27</sup> Arora, *Supra* note 26.

objection to the wage for housework that instead of “*increasing women’s economic independence in the long run*”, it would “*discourage labour market participation and investments in education and vocational training of women*” as the wages would be meager and would eventually stop as children grow up.<sup>28</sup>

## **SALARIES FOR HOUSE WORK: THE WAY AHEAD**

Monetization of housework would have a number of benefits particularly for women and their empowerment. It would empower women to stand up for themselves thereby preventing domestic abuse to a large extent. Additionally, it would give them time and money which when invested wisely would definitely reap positive results in the form of self-care and better job prospects for them.

Nevertheless, the various limitations attributed to the concept are justified too. It would help defeat patriarchal notions, but conversely it might end up solidifying them too in the long run. Therefore, certain changes are required to be carried out in order to work out the concept of salaries for house work for the betterment of women behind closed doors. The suggestions are as follows:

1. Instead of providing salary for house work to housewives only, this scheme should be introduced as providing salary to home makers or simply for house work.
  - In fact, the IWFHC always mooted the idea of providing the salary for ‘*housework*’ thereby essentially establishing that household chores are simply not women’s work.
  - Additionally, it will increase participation of men in doing house work as the same would be remunerated, as has been pointed out earlier.
  
2. Secondly, salary should be paid by Government and not by husbands to their wives.
  - This way there would more income coming to the conjugal home, instead of just one. And it certainly would help mitigate fears that salary for housework would strengthen the patriarchal role of men being the provider in the household.
  - Of course, this would come off as more burdens on the government exchequer, but this certainly would not be the first instance of any Government doing it for half of its

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<sup>28</sup>Joke Swiebel, Discussion Paper, *Unpaid Work and Policy-Making: Towards a Broader Perspective of Work and Employment*, U.N.DESA 1, 10 (Feb. 1999), <https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/1999/esa99dp4.pdf>.

population. For instance, Venezuela is quoted to be a country to pay its home makers certain sum of money for carrying out housework.<sup>29</sup>

- Not so far away in the Indian State of Goa, through a scheme called ‘*Griha Aadhar Scheme*’ certain sum of money is provided to housewives/homemakers from lower middle and poor sections of the society in order to help them cope with the rising prices and to provide them additional support.<sup>30</sup> This scheme remarks Karuna Nundy “*works really well*”.<sup>31</sup> The amount may not be huge, but it certainly has helped many women. Nevertheless, this suggestion requires more academic debates and discussions.
3. Thirdly, Mothers across the world face “*time poverty*” the most, wherein there are unable to devote time to themselves or their professional careers. In such a case, salary wouldn’t be enough.<sup>32</sup>
    - Therefore, in addition to financial recognition through salaries efforts should be made to reduce and redistribute responsibilities of mothers.<sup>33</sup>
    - Reduction can be achieved through investment in infrastructure and public services like crèche facility, better transportation, health services and on-site child and community care centers.
    - Redistribution of work would help disburden women as well as break existing stereotypes regarding domestic and care work.
    - Redistribution of household work and parental responsibilities can be achieved through introduction of paid parental and paternal leave provisions, flexibility in work hours for both men and women in addition to existing social security provisions.
  4. Lastly, salary for house work should not be the end in itself. It should be treated as a means to achieve the end of gender parity and recognition of sacrifice of the women behind closed doors.
    - The long-term goal should be to bring about behavioral change in society’s attitude about domestic chores so that it could be made more participatory.

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<sup>29</sup> Aashna Jain, *It’s Time To Talk About Paying Women For Housework?*, SHETHEPEOPLE TV (June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021) <https://www.shethepeople.tv/finance/paid-housework/>.

<sup>30</sup> *Griha Aadhar Scheme*, DWCD, Goa, <https://dwcd.goa.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Griha-Aadhar.pdf> (last visited Sept. 15, 2022).

<sup>31</sup> Arora, *Supra* note 26.

<sup>32</sup> *Mothers’ Unpaid Family Care Work: Vital But Invisible And Unrecognised*, MMM, <https://makemothersmatter.org/poles-of-action/mothers-and-the-economy/unpaid-family-care-work-vital-but-invisible-and-unrecognised/> (last visited Sept. 15, 2022).

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

- Household tasks should be a women's choice and not an obligation. Women behind closed doors should be respected for their choice to stay at home and not ridiculed, harassed or worse yet abused for their choice to be the one staying behind.

## **CONCLUSION**

Women behind closed doors face domestic abuse which comes off in many forms. One of them being not respected, even ridiculed and tortured for having no job and merely carrying out house hold chores. However, as Economists put it, doing household chores should be counted in the national income for its contribution to Economy is huge but hidden. This fact has been acknowledged by the Courts, albeit indirectly. This research tried to analyze the feasibility of paying salaries for housework and its consequent impact on lives of millions of women behind closed doors. Of course, there are limitations. But if worked around, then those limitations can certainly be reduced. Ultimately, salary for house works may not prove to be a panacea, but it would certainly be a baby step towards acknowledging and alleviating the cares and troubles of women behind closed doors.