

Women's Unpaid Work Through the Eyes of Men in Odisha, India

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Abstract: *Acknowledgement of unpaid household work by male members of the household and the society is significant to take cognizance of the efforts made by women to accomplish domestic tasks. The article at hand, attempts to understand how men value the contribution of women to the household and comprehend the gender relations prevailing in the family. It outlines some aspects critical for understanding how different factors influence men's perception about acknowledging the value of unpaid household work. The paper discusses pertinent concerns related to the accepted practices and gendered ideologies and how they intertwine with other factors such as sharing of household responsibility, appreciation by members of the family for women and influence on intra-household bargaining power.*

Keywords: *Gender, Appreciation, Perceived Contribution, Perceived Interest, Recognition*

1. Introduction:

Within the framework of gender relations, women are constrained to participate in the labour market due to the household responsibilities which fall in the category of unpaid work. The labour and pain endured by women in giving birth, rearing future labour force and taking care of the existing manpower of the nation, besides undertaking unpaid household responsibilities are generally overlooked by the policy makers. Women's biology is often perceived to be a constraint that obstructs her from taking up productive work. "Freud's famous phrase 'Anatomy is Destiny' reiterates the fact that labour efforts by women while giving birth and taking care of a child along with other reproductive activities. Household tasks are the function of their biology or 'nature' because 'nature' has provided women with an uterus and these activities are considered as extensions of their physiology and not as conscious interaction with nature like other plants and animals." (Bose & Panda, 2016, p. 22). "Therefore, due to biologicistic definition of women's interface with her nature, giving birth and taking care of children along with the rest of domestic work is not considered as labour" (Mies, 1986, p.45). Yet, women even in their seventh month of pregnancy can bend to accomplish the paddy transplantation activities for 7-8 hours a day, or carry

heavy loads of grains, bricks, stones, firewood, water etc, while the male farmers often try to justify that they cannot bow for long hours to carry out the transplantation activities in agriculture (Mencher, 1993). These women also share a substantial contribution of their earning for sustenance of their family particularly in lower income households, yet their contributions are neither valued nor recognized by other members of the household (Chhachhi, 2011). The difference of production from domestic work broadened the existing gender differences within the society. Men got engaged in the work outside their home and women took up household, reproductive and care responsibilities (Bose & Panda, 2016). Due to the gendered ideology embedded in the process of socialization, men and women are expected to follow specific behaviours that are considered categorical to one's gender. Hence the perception of an individual may vary as a result of the socialization process starting in early childhood and developing during adolescence. Waring (1989) pointed out that "Isn't reproduction just a special case of production?" (p.94).

Besides, the fact that women's unpaid domestic activities have significant contribution and social cost/value associated with it, yet the paradox is that they lie outside the production boundary and eventually left out of GNP and GDP, which are the two key indicators of national income accounting in India (Bose & Panda, 2016). If such activities would not have been accomplished by women at household level, then it would have been purchased as essential services and goods from the market. Researchers and activists emphasised that unpaid domestic responsibilities was necessary for social and individual life (Okun, 1971; Sundstrom, 1982; Macdonald, 1995; Waring, 1997; Menon 2012; Mehta & Arora, 2015).

Unpaid household responsibilities accomplished by women as explained by Amrita Pritam in her poetry:

The Housewife

If the woman's husband is asked What does his wife do

The answer is

" My wife does not work. " Then

Who bears this world in her womb?

Who gives birth to the farmers, the workers? Who cooks, washes, cleans and fills waters?

Looks after the child and the sick?

Whose labour gives men leisure for liquor, tobacco and card session?

Whose labour gives men their strength to go to work?

Who labours without being noticed?

Mutely working, without being paid, without being appreciated ever....

(" From the Darkness of Womb to the Silence of the Grave", 1975, cited in Patel, 2002)

Hence, in order to assess the value of unpaid domestic activities, it is important to understand how other members of the family especially men perceive the value of women's contribution to the

household. The article at hand, attempts to understand men's perception about women's contribution towards the household economy. However, perception is subjective, which an individual tends to develop, get influenced by their nature and the manner in which they are socialized. The article is divided into ten sections. After the introduction and methodology, the third section discusses multi-tasking nature of unpaid domestic work. This is followed by the emotional, mental involvement and physical efforts required to accomplish household tasks in fourth and fifth sections respectively. The sixth section discusses the skills required to complete domestic duties as identified by the respondents during the discussions. Subsequently, the next section attempts to understand the fact whether male members of the family shares the household responsibilities and appreciate the same in seventh and eight sections respectively. The ninth section analyses how the same influences the bargaining position of women within the household. The last section provides a few suggestions for policy implication and concluding remarks. Domestic responsibilities, tasks and duties are interchangeably used in the article.

2. Methodology:

The research attempts to explore the perception of men regarding unpaid domestic works of women through an exhaustive literature review and empirical study conducted in Khordha district, Odisha during 2015-16. The empirical study was conducted in both rural and urban locations of Khordha district based on purposive sampling. To get an in-depth understanding of the quantum of work done by women in rural areas, 25 male respondents were interviewed in both tribal and non-tribal communities/villages. The study tribal villages, six were from Centre for Action Research and Documentation (CARD) NGO intervention villages i.e. Majuhar, Kunjuri villages of Kunjuri panchayat in Tangi block; Sorana village of Soran panchayat in Chilika block; Ekadalia village of Manibandha panchayat; Girigiri village of Pichukuli panchayat in Bolagarh block; and Govindpur village of Badaberana panchayat in Begunia block and one non-intervention village i.e. Belapada village of Kamaguru panchayat in Tangi block were covered in the study. In case of non-tribal villages, three were selected i.e. Ratanpurpatna– Brahminsahi of Tangi panchayat; Nuagaon of Badapari panchayat; and Kamaguru of Kamaguru panchayat in Tangi block were covered in the study. Similarly, in urban areas, 25 male respondents belonging to low-income, middle and upper-middle groups were interviewed for the same purpose.

Attempt was made to understand men's perception regarding the unpaid household tasks based on factors such as multi-tasking, emotional and mental stress involved, physical exhaustion, dedication and skills necessary to accomplish domestic responsibilities. The paper also attempts to understand the shift in the way the women's unpaid household responsibilities are portrayed by media. Media as an industry has undergone a complete information revolution in portraying women in Indian society.

3. Multi-tasking household responsibilities:

In Indian society, women are expected to represent an embodiment of Goddess Durga who is "Dashabhuja" (10 armed goddess) which designates a woman to be a multi-tasker, who manages

everything efficiently (Bose & Panda, 2019). For example, at a given point of time, a woman is taking care of sick and on the other hand, she may be executing the tasks of cooking food or cleaning the house or looking after children and so on. This requires her to be alert and flexible in order to accomplish all the household tasks that overlap at the same time. Multi-tasking becomes an inevitable part of a woman's life as they are expected to be 'super women' or 'super mom' taking up the burden of work overloads efficiently. Many Indian soap operas also project such women regularly in the light of 'super women' making it look like a well accepted norm in society. Women engaged in paid employment outside their home are multi-taskers as well, who can cope with their domestic responsibilities and balance their engagement in paid career outside their homes (*ibid*, 2019). Multi-tasking becomes more inevitable for women accomplishing household responsibilities along with pursuing career outside their homes. Director Shoojit Sircar's movie *Piku* released in 2015 showed the struggles of a young independent woman juggling with her personal and professional life. *Piku* was the lead character played by actress Deepika Padukone who took up the responsibility of taking care of her aged father and career along with other domestic duties. This movie depicts the reality of many working women today. Furthermore, interviews with male respondents in the field reveal that they were of the opinion that women put in efforts to accomplish domestic tasks along with engagement in paid employment outside their home which compels them to multi-task. Men in rural areas acknowledged that women take up paid employment and community activities along with domestic duties that must be appreciated.

One of male respondents asserted that women can perform multi-tasking and they have a significant role in community development activity.

"In my village women contribute fifty percent to their household expenditure. However, that cannot justify contribution of a woman. It's not that women's works are not recognized, but ignorance is still prevalent."

Another male respondent expressed:

"I am surprised...how women manage to perform all these multiple roles together"

Table 3 gives an idea about men's perception regarding multi-tasking of women in unpaid work. Among 20 male respondents in rural areas who claimed that women 'sometimes' need to do multi-tasking; 75 percent responded the unpaid household activities undertaken by them have value but only, 46.7 percent emphasised that their work at household level should be recognised. Whereas, in case of urban areas out of 19 men who claimed that 'sometimes' women need to do multi-tasking; 63.2 percent acknowledged the value of the unpaid household work but only, 41.7 percent were of the view that unpaid domestic duties should be recognised. This substantiates the fact that in urban areas, due to exposure to outside world, there is awareness among majority of men regarding the value of unpaid household works and they expressed that these activities should be recognised. Besides, multi-tasking abilities, domestic responsibilities involve emotional and mental exertion as discussed in the following section.

Table 3. Men's perception about multi-tasking in unpaid work							
Location	Multi-tasking	Total	Have value		Should be recognised (in percent)		
			Percent	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Often	4	100.0	4	50.0	50.0	0.0
	Sometimes	20	75.0	15	46.7	33.3	20.0
	Never	1	100.0	1	0.0	0.0	100.0
Urban	Often	4	100.0	4	50.0	50.0	0.0
	Sometimes	19	63.2	12	41.7	33.3	25.0
	Never	2	100.0	2	0.0	100.0	0.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

4. Emotional and mental involvement:

The accomplishment of household responsibilities demand both emotional and mental involvement of women along with a great deal of time. A woman tries to justify herself by believing that her sacrifice leads to the well-being of the family. Observations from the field reveal that women in tribal villages feel disheartened with the lazy attitude and liquor consuming habit of their husbands, which demoralizes them. Further, it has affects their morale and shatters their emotions as well as expectations. Observations from the field also show that men acknowledge women's emotional and mental stress while accomplishing unpaid household duties. One of the male respondents was of the opinion that:

"In case of working women belonging to orthodox families, where household responsibilities are considered to be the responsibility of the daughters-in-law and no one is willing to share the same. In such cases, women have to take up double burden of responsibilities. On one hand, she takes up paid employment outside their home for the sustenance of the family. She is also expected to take up domestic duties efficiently without questioning. The irony is that often women engaged in paid employment instead of being appreciated for their contribution, are suspected to have extra-marital relationship with their male colleagues. Whereas, in case of men, they hang out with colleagues anytime they feel like for leisure and refreshment. This affects their emotional and mental harmony resulting in conflict within the household."

Another male respondent stated:

"Women should get proper treatment, appreciation and respect from the in-laws and other family members, that will keep them balanced mentally and emotionally."

It is evident that men are aware of the burden of emotional stress that women carry, when they are engaged in paid employment outside their home along with domestic duties. Table 4 gives an idea about men's perception regarding emotional and mental stress handled by women while accomplishing unpaid household responsibilities. In rural areas, out of 14 male respondents who

were of the opinion that women face emotional and mental stress while taking up domestic tasks, 85.7 percent acknowledged that such activities have value but only 33.3 percent emphasised that the same should be recognised. Whereas, in urban areas, out of 16 male respondents, 81.3 percent acknowledged the value of women's work but only, 38.5 percent responded that such activities should be recognised. The web series 'Mentalhood' created by Ekta Kapoor is a parenting drama that hinges on the struggles of five mothers in different circumstances. The story revolves around life of urban mother dealing with motherhood. She makes an attempt to demonstrate how multiple roles of women as mothers influence their emotional and mental state which also depends on the physical labour they put in for accomplishing domestic tasks.

Table 4. Emotional and mental stress in unpaid domestic work and men's perception							
Location	Emotional and Mental Stress	Total	Have value		Should be recognised (in percent)		
			Percent	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Yes	14	85.7	12	33.3	41.7	25.0
	No	11	72.7	8	25.0	37.5	37.5
Urban	Yes	16	81.3	13	38.5	46.2	15.3
	No	9	55.6	5	40.0	40.0	20.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

5. Physical efforts in domestic duties:

Unpaid household activities by women in rural areas such as fetching water from long distances, are physically tiring and time-consuming, especially during the summer months. Other activities such as washing clothes, cleaning dishes, sweeping and wiping the floor, collecting firewood are among the different tasks that also require physical effort. Besides, participation of women in the agricultural work involves manual labour to undertake cultivation and processing activities in the fields (Duvvury, 1989, Agarwal, 1994).

One of the male respondents expressed his view that:

"The work that a woman does cannot be substituted. She never complains about the physical exertion. Hats off to all the women in this world."

Another male respondent expressed:

" We cannot remunerate our mother and wife for the amount of work done and their physical and mental exhaustion. And only thing they want is our love and appreciation."

Moreover, women are engaged in family enterprises in cultivation, handloom, small-scale and non-agricultural production as unpaid workers (Mazumdar & Neetha, 2011). Besides, engagement

of women in agriculture fields, require manual labour related to cultivation and processing in the agricultural fields, yet as mentioned earlier are often considered as ‘reserve army of labour’ or helpers to male farmers (Duvvury, 1989, Agarwal, 1994). Engagement of women in carrying heavy loads of grains, bricks, stones, firewood, water etc. involves physical efforts (Mencher, 1993). Women’s unpaid household responsibilities can lead to health problems at time and this was acknowledged by male respondents during the interviews.

Furthermore, discussions with men’s group revealed that accomplishment of unpaid household duties requires women to cope with stressful situations (Green, 2011). Table 5 is about men’s perception about physical exhaustion handled by women while accomplishing unpaid household responsibilities. Findings from the empirical study shows that in rural areas, 15 male respondents were of the opinion that household women encounter physical drainage while taking up domestic duties. Among these men, 80 percent acknowledged that such activities have value but only, 33.3 percent emphasised that the same should be recognised. On the other hand, in urban areas, out of 16 male respondents who were of the opinion that accomplishment of domestic duties involves physical drainage. Out of these men, 87.5 percent acknowledged the value of women’s work but only, 35.7 percent responded such activities should be recognised. This substantiates the fact that men acknowledgement the physical exhaustion undergone by women to accomplish household responsibilities and its value. Still there remains a lack of awareness and understanding in the need to recognise the unpaid household duties and make it countable. Accomplishment of household responsibilities also require skills along with physical efforts.

Table 5. Physical exhaustion in unpaid work and men’s perception							
Location	Physical Exhaustion	Total	Have value		Should be recognised		
			Percent	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Yes	15	80.0	12	33.3	41.7	25
	No	10	80.0	8	37.5	50	12.5
Urban	Yes	16	87.5	14	35.7	42.9	21.4
	No	9	44.4	4	25.0	50.0	25.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

6. Household duties and skills:

According to Satapathy and Mishra (2015), accomplishment of household responsibilities require different managerial abilities resulting in development and prosperity of the family. A few studies have strongly advocated that the extra-domestic activities performed by women such as transplantation, weeding, sowing etc. in case of agriculture, household work such as cooking and child care not only, consumes time and labour, but also, requires certain skills and expertise at various levels (Agarwal, 1994: 51-81; Banerjee, Sen and Dhawan 2011). Accomplishment of unpaid domestic duties require knowledge and skills which are associated with the social world within and outside their household (Rogoff, 1990; Scribner & Beach, 1993). Observations from

the field show that though male respondents acknowledge the value of contribution made by women, yet many do not realize that accomplishment of household unpaid activities require skills. There are two different views about skills involved in domestic work. One group of men were of the opinion that accomplishment of household duties do not require any skills.

On the other hand, some male respondents were of the opinion that unpaid domestic duties require skills. One of the male respondents expressed that:

“There are a lot of reports which state that empathy, emotional quotient, stakeholder management are most essential skills for the future. A homemaker has all of that. In fact most of the concepts of management have taken shape after observing homemakers. To give a few more examples: a mother nursing her ill children and elderly parents, cooking the right food for them, tutoring children, providing logistics support to family events...All have a cost. Do we still doubt on the skill required??”

During the focus group discussions in the field, men asserted that women should have knowledge about the household dynamics in order to maintain peace and harmony. They also mentioned that in order to accomplish housekeeping and extra-domestic activities, women need to have the ability to have self-control, able to cope with mental stress, and capability to plan and execute. In addition, women also need to take timely and appropriate decisions as part of cognitive skills. Women often need to have the ability to meet challenges to make proper utilization of scarce resources available and fulfill the needs of members of the household. Table 6 gives an idea about men's perception on physical strain handled by women while accomplishing unpaid household responsibilities. In rural areas, out 19 men who were of the opinion that women need to have skills for taking up domestic duties, cent percent acknowledged that such activities have value but only, 31.6 percent emphasised that the same should be recognised. On the other hand, in urban areas, out of 15 male responds who asserted that women need to have skills for accomplishing unpaid domestic duties; 93.3 percent acknowledged the value of women's work but only, 28.6 percent responded that such activities should be recognised. This substantiates the fact that although men recognize value of unpaid household responsibilities and the skills required to accomplish the same, there still remains a lack of awareness among men in the need to recognise such activities. Besides, the acknowledgement of such activities by men, it is also important to understand men's perspective about sharing of such responsibilities.

Table 6. Men's perception about skills required to accomplish unpaid work							
Location	Skills required	Total	Have value		Should be recognised		
			Percent	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Yes	19	100.0	19	31.6	36.8	31.6
	No	7	14.3	1	0.0	0.0	100.0
Urban	Yes	15	93.3	14	28.6	35.7	35.7
	No	9	44.4	4	25.0	50.0	25.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

7. Sharing and allocation of household responsibility:

Sharing of household responsibility is based on gender stratification that is represented by gender based division of labour and the social arrangements predominant in the society. *‘Social arrangements regarding who does what, who gets to consume what, and who takes what decisions, can be seen as responses to this combined problem of co-operation and conflict. The sexual division of labour is one part of such a social arrangement, and it is important to see it in the context of the entire arrangement.’* (Sen, 1987.p. 13). The sexual or gender division of labour is unequal in most gender stratified societies resulting in concentration of power and economic resources in the hands of men and as a consequence women became dependent on men (Chafetz, 1990). This results in the unequal position of women within the society, where men are considered the saviour and women as survivors.

The gender division of labour within the household is influenced by ‘power’ that plays an important role within a social association that influences women’s position in their household and society as well. Gender roles play a crucial role for understanding the relationship of work and domestic sphere (Cerrato and Cifre, 2018). In a society like India, generally women take up long hours of tiresome work as a result of the existing unequal power relations within the household, influenced by existing social arrangements and norms (Sadan, 2004). The status of sharing of the household responsibilities by men and helping female members of their household to accomplish domestic activities influences their perception about the women’s contribution towards the household. Sen (1990), emphasises that perception is one important parameter in the determination of intra-family divisions and inequalities households are experiencing represented by ‘cooperative conflict’. He further reiterates that conflicts of interest between men and women are very unlike other conflicts, such as class conflicts. The gender division of labour within the household leads to two concerns i.e. cooperation and conflict. On one hand cooperation includes adding to the total availabilities, whereas conflict embraces dividing the total availabilities among the family members within the household. The gender division of labour within the household is influenced by the social arrangements. Social arrangements concerning who does what, and who takes what decisions are responses to cooperation and conflict. Within the household the relationship between men and women are conditioned by gendered division of domestic responsibilities, sharing and supporting each other. This further influences individual’s idea about the value of unpaid household responsibilities.

Table 7 gives an idea that in rural areas, out of 14 men respondents, 92.9 percent responded that such activities have value but only, 30.8 percent replied that women’s contribution should be recognised. In urban areas, 15 male respondents shared household responsibilities with their wives out of which 86.7 percent acknowledged the value whereas, only 23.1 percent responded that such activities should be recognised. This substantiates that the existing gender divisions of labour within the household get manifested through the different roles played by men and women.

Table 7. Men's perception about sharing of responsibility of unpaid household work							
Location	Sharing Responsibilities	Total	Have value		Should be recognised		
			Percent	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Yes	14	92.9	13	30.8	53.8	15.4
	No	11	63.6	7	14.3	57.1	28.6
Urban	Yes	15	86.7	13	23.1	46.2	30.7
	No	10	50.0	5	20.0	40.0	40.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

There were incidences, where men acknowledged that unpaid domestic work is not only the responsibility of women, rather it should be gender neutral and shared equally by men and women. Observations from the field shows that the perception of men regarding unpaid domestic work is influenced by their lived experiences and their exposure to education and awareness. Surprisingly, the entry of women in the labour market has not led to a substantial improvement in men's involvement in domestic work (Hooff, 2011). The frequent lack of harmony between values and practices is a consequence of variance that remains between men's involvement in domestic work as 'helping' and 'taking responsibility' (Bose and Panda, 2019). The gender differences in human behavior is further reflected in the way how other members of the family appreciate the contribution of women towards the household.

8. Appreciation of value of unpaid household responsibilities:

Despite taking up excessive burden of household responsibilities, women's contribution is often not acknowledged neither appreciated. Observations from the field authenticates that men employ reason to justify prejudices rather than tracing the means how they came into being (Wollstonecraft, 1792).

One of the respondents claimed:

"Women must learn to take up domestic duties from the childhood as they are destined to marry and accomplish such tasks in the house of her in-laws."

Such a statement substantiates Freud's famous phrase 'Anatomy is Destiny' that describes labour pains by women while giving birth and taking care of a child along with other household activities are considered to be the function of their biology or 'nature' (Mies, 1986). Men's perception of unpaid household responsibilities accomplished by women is an outcome of subjugation of women both within their families and society not only by use of violence but also, as application of force (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Some men thrive to prove it normal, natural, and essential for them to enjoy authority over women and would like to believe that confrontation to hegemonic masculinity can promote gender justice (Connell, 1987).

Besides, there were male respondents with different views in valuing of unpaid domestic activities accomplished by women.

One of the male respondents stated:

“Most of the time we donot even recognise the domestic work of our mothers and wives ... we take it for granted. We think women are meant for those workd, but a progressive society is one where we value the contribution of both men and women to their family”.

He further reiterated:

“We are in a country where we worship goddess Durga, Lakshmi, Sarswati, Kali, Santoshi and others, but within our family we fail to acknowledge and value women who really deserve it.”

Table 8. Appreciation of unpaid household responsibilities by men							
Location	Have you ever appreciated	Total	Have value		Should be recognised (in percent)		
			Percent	Number	Yes	No	Dilemma
Rural	Often	4	75.0	3	66.6	33.4	0.0
	Sometimes	17	76.5	13	38.5	40.5	21.0
	Never	4	100.0	4	0.0	50.0	50.0
Urban	Often	3	66.7	2	100.0	0.0	0.0
	Sometimes	17	76.5	13	46.2	38.5	15.4
	Never	5	60.0	3	33.3	66.7	0.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2016

Those men who appreciate women's unpaid domestic duties tend to acknowledge the value associated to such activities. It was observed that 76.5 percent responded that unpaid activities at household level have value but only, 38.5 percent acknowledged that such activities should be recognised in rural areas sometimes appreciate women for their efforts (see table 8). Similarly, in urban areas 76.5 percent responded that such activities have value but only, 46.2 percent acknowledged that the same should be recognised sometimes appreciate their wives for their contribution to the household. Moreover, there has been a paradigm shift in the way media portrays the role of women and acknowledge the unequal division of unpaid domestic responsibilities in a marriage and questions gender equality within the household. This influences men's perception about women's contribution to the household. In director Gauri Shinde's bollywood movie English Vinglish released in 2012, is a story of a common housewife Shashi Godbole played by Sridevi. It displays how the burden of unpaid household responsibilities accomplished by women confines her life within the home giving away her dreams. As a result she is looked down upon and made fun of by her daughter and husband just because she is unable to speak fluent English. Moreover, appreciation of the efforts put by women for accomplishment of unpaid domestic tasks by the other members of family, also influences the bargaining position of women within the household as well as the society.

9. Influence on intra-household bargaining power:

The bargaining position of women within the household is an useful approach to examine the prevailing gender relations. There are a wide range of factors that define an individual's bargaining power. Some of these factors are quantifiable, such as individual economic assets, while others such as communal/external support systems, or social norms and institutions, or perceptions about contributions and needs are not (Agarwal, 1997). Unpaid domestic responsibilities are a struggle in which women serve and resist misogynist notions of dominant patriarchal ideology. It challenges the binary of the private unpaid sphere associated with women and the public and paid sphere with men.

It was observed that women confined to the domestic works do not only, forego the opportunity of paid employment outside the household but also, sacrifice their needs. This critiques Becker's (1965, 1981) unitary model of the family which is based on altruistic assumption that all household resources are allocated equally to all members of the family and seeking maximum household utility. This widens the gendered poverty trap as both the social relations and state policy do not take into account or value the unpaid household responsibilities (Elson & Cagatay, 2000; Hirway, 2005). However, the earning opportunities of women outside the household, addresses the three questions related to better bargaining position such as a clear perception of her individuality and well-being, and a higher 'perceived contribution' to the family's economic position (Sen, 1987). Women's involvement in 'gainful' employment not only, influences the bargaining position within the household but also, gets reflected in other institutional arenas such as the community, market and the state (Bose and Panda, 2016).

The seminal work by Amartya Sen on household cooperation and conflict, substantiates how efforts made by women was perceived to influence the bargaining position of women within the household and society. The bargaining position of women and importance of their opinion at household level, influence the perception about the value and recognition of the work accomplished by them. Findings from the field shows that men acknowledge that unpaid domestic responsibilities undertaken by women have value, but are not willing to give up their decision making supremacy.

Field observations also reveal that cultural norms affect the valuing of women's opinion in everyday decision making within the household. In the case of 'Brahminsahi' of the Ratanpurpatna village of Khurda district, husband and in-laws are considered as decision makers of the household and termed as 'Devta', i.e., A deity or God with whom all choice making rests. The irony is that, in India, a woman is expected to represent 'Goddess Durga' represented as the feminine personification of strength and power. Yet, their bargaining position within their household and as well as in society remains rather weak. In Nuagaon village of the same Khurda district, women are obliged to internalize the subjugation and accept the decisions of men without any grievance as they are not financially independent.

10. Policy implications and concluding remarks:

The analysis suggests that in order to assess the value of the unpaid work accomplished by women, it is important to comprehend the perceived worth of such tasks. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how the unpaid household responsibilities are perceived by both men and women in the society. An attempt is made to analyze men's perception regarding the contribution by women towards their household. The non-recognition of unpaid domestic work needs to be revisited and it is essential to consider the value of contributions made by women at the household level. There have been several arguments and debates that have raised the issue and concerns of unpaid household work. Efforts at using time use studies, replacement and opportunity costs to assess unpaid work, have been made to make the same visible particularly in the policy domain. However, insights from the empirical observations ascertain that more differentiated measures are required to understand unpaid household work of women. Such initiatives can facilitate in understanding the value of unpaid work accomplished by women resulting in their economic contribution at the micro-level. Thus, an appropriate methodology to assess the value of unpaid household work of women is crucial.

However, assessment of the value of the unpaid household work, requires an understanding of perceived worth of domestic activities undertaken by women. There still remains a lacunae in understanding the need for recognition of the unpaid household tasks. Findings from the empirical research affirms that unpaid household responsibilities accomplished by women and their contribution towards the household should get recognised at three different levels i.e. household, societal (community) and socio-economic levels. Recognition at household level implies appreciation and acceptance of women's effort by all family members. This includes sharing of household responsibilities by male members of the household which could result in better bargaining position of women within their homes. Various civil society organisations, media and educational institutions can play a crucial role at societal level in educating people and creating awareness among the communities and influencing the perception of individuals to recognize the value of unpaid household responsibilities accomplished by women. They can also encourage understanding of gender equality in division of labour within the household. In addition, the role of government becomes significant in order to confirm recognition of unpaid household work to ensure social security and accrual of socio-economic benefits for such activities. This would safeguard the financial independence of women. Besides, there is an urgent need to consider various internal and external factors that influences perception. Hence, it is important to consider the factors influencing the perception of men about value of women's unpaid household responsibilities. Understanding the perception about the household responsibilities is crucial to address the gender planning and policy recommendation. Therefore, the policy implications from this research reveal that it is essential to redefine labour from a different perspective to address gender justice by understanding the various dimensions of domestic works including multi-tasking, emotional involvement, physical and mental efforts and skills required that could

potentially pave the way to measure and give value to women's contribution to the household economy.

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