Chapter 4

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE WOMEN DOMESTIC WORKERS

The chapter deals with the socio-economic conditions of the domestic women workers in Silchar town. It discusses age-group, caste, religion, family, living conditions and home appliances used by the women domestic workers. Domestic work is an important source of employment for poor women from socially discriminated communities with little or no education. For these women, domestic work is one of the few openings available as regular paid work in the labour market. Theirs is unskilled work, and hence not real work; it is poorly remunerated and regarded. Another problem is with the bias that women have an inherent or natural ability, much more than men, to clean, cook, wash, take care of children, and therefore domestic workers are viewed as simply helping the women of the household. Socially discriminated and backward communities are usually highly represented in domestic work. Various studies and interactions with activists and workers' organizations highlight that domestic workers are from backward communities, tribal villages or scheduled caste communities, who have been traditionally cast into a role of subordination and inferiority, due to caste, class and gender hierarchies (Tsushima Reiko 2010). Domestic workers in India usually work seven days a week, 365 days a year. In most cases, leave, if any, they are granted grudgingly and are usually unpaid. Domestic workers need to be recognized as workers and treated in a humane and dignified manner (Kathyayini Chamaraj 2007). Domestic work which has feminine nature calls our attention to see the nature of their work. There is no specification of their work, no work contracts, no terms and conditions to regulate their work. Therefore, they are always at the mercy or good will of the employer with regard to leave, pay, rest and leisure. Such scenario is prevalent everywhere in India without any exception to Silchar town. The following is a peep into the living conditions and their family background and various other dimensions of their life. Their socio-economic background of the women domestic labour is being discussed under three sections; namely, the socio-economic anchorage, the living conditions and problems at home.

I

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANCHORAGE

This section comprises the slum pocket, religion, caste, age, marital status, type of family, educational level, income etc. These are analysed below.

Slum Pockets, Caste and Religion

It is a common knowledge that the growth of town leads to the creation of slums everywhere. The poor, landless, jobless, rural people migrate to the urban cities in search of jobs and better living standards and settle down in slums. The respondents are also from slum pockets in Silchar. They belong to different castes and religions. Their distribution into slum pockets by religion and caste in the town is shown in the following table:

Table 4.1

Slums Pockets of Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Name of Slum Pocket	Hindu				Muslim	Grand Total
	General	S Cs	OBCs	Total		
Malini Beel	1 (10)	48 (30.57)	-		-	49 (24.5)
Sarat pally	-	10 (6.37)	-	10 (5.71)	-	10 (5)
Malugram	4 (40)	9 (5.73)	3 (37.5)	16 (9.14)	-	16 (8)
Chingkuri Road	-	15 (9.55)	-	15 (8.57)	-	15 (7.5)
Madhur Bandh	-	-	-	-	20 (80)	20 (10)
Kalibari Char	3 (30)	40 (25.48)	3 (37.5)	46 (26.29)	-	46 (23)
Tarapur	2 (20)	31 (19.75)	1 (12.5)	34 (19.43)	-	34 (17)
Bhakatpur	-	4 (2.55)	1 (12.5)	5 (2.86)	-	5(2.5)
Kanakpur	-	-	-	-	5 (20)	5(2.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)
Hindu						175 (87.5)
Muslim						25(12.5)
General Castes						10(5.0)
SCs						157 (78.5)
OBCs						8 (4.0)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The above table shows that out of 200 respondents 87.5 percent of them are Hindu and only 12.5% are Muslim. 78.5 % belong to Scheduled Castes, 5 percent General Castes and 4 percent to Other Backward Castes.

Thus, most of the respondents are from Scheduled Castes; they are mostly from Malinibeel, Kalibari Char and Tarapur slum pockets. Muslim respondents are from Madhurband and Kanakpur area.

Age Structure

Age is an important factor taken into consideration while assigning any work to a worker. This fact is quite visible among the unskilled labourers. Though the domestic work can be done by anyone of women category, yet, there is preference for the young and middle aged people. The women domestic workers categorized according to their age, caste and religion in Silchar town are shown in the following table:

Table 4.2

Age-composition of Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Age-group	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
<15	-	14 (8.91)	1 (12.5)	15 (8.57)	2 (8)	17 (8.5)
16-25	3 (30)	21 (13.38)	3 (37.5)	27 (15.43)	2 (8)	29 (14.5)
26-35	4 (40)	59 (37.58)	2 (25)	65 (37.14)	6 (24)	71 (35.5)
36-50	2 (20)	47 (29.94)	2 (25)	51 (29.14)	13 (52)	64 (32)
>50	1 (10)	16 (10.19)	-	17 (9.72)	2 (8)	19 (9.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

X=30

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table shows that of 200 women domestic workers over four fifths (82%) belong to the age group of 15 -45 years, around one third each (35.5% and 32%) to the age-groups of 26-35 and 36-50, about one tenth (9.5%) to the age of

above 50 years and 8.5% are child labourers. Of 157 Hindu women domestic workers four fifths (81.71%) are in the age group of 15-45 who are mostly from the Scheduled Castes while very few are in the age-groups of below 15 and above 50. On the other hand, of 25 Muslim women over a half (52%) of the workers are found in the age group of 36-45 years, one fifth (24%) of the workers in the age group of 26-35 and the rest in the age groups of below 25 and above 50 years. Average age of the respondents is 30 years.

Poverty and lack of interests in study has pushed them into the labour market and are happy to earn a meager income to the family. Parents of these child domestic workers are quite happy and satisfied that their children earn and share their burden of looking after family.

Marital Status

Marriage is a social institution through which a family and a society are established. Women domestic workers as part of the society are bound by social bonds, customs and traditions. It is also pertinent that they too experience the odd states of marital status like divorce and widowhood which influence their socio-economic conditions. The following table shows the marital status of the women domestic workers.

Table 4.3
Marital Status of Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category
(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Marital Status	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General Castes	SCs	OBCs			
Married	4 (40)	108 (68.79)	4 (50)	116 (66.29)	15 (60)	131 (65.5)
Unmarried	1 (10)	15 (9.55)	1 (12.5)	17 (9.71)	6 (24)	23 (11.5)
Widow	4 (40)	28 (17.84)	2 (25)	34 (19.43)	3 (12)	37 (18.5)
Divorcee	1 (10)	6 (3.82)	1 (12.5)	8 (4.57)	1 (4)	9 (4.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table shows that of 200 workers, about two thirds (65.5%) are married and the rest are unmarried. Besides, of them 18.5% are widows and 4.5% are divorcees.

Of 175 Hindus women domestic workers, half (50%) of them are married and only 9.71% are unmarried. About one fifth (24%) are widows or divorcees. Among Muslims workers, two fifths (60%) are married (24%) are unmarried, 12% are widows and 4% are divorcees.

The widows and divorcees have to shoulder the responsibility of looking after their families single-handed. To earn their living and to look after their children they have joined this sector. So, the economic compulsion is the main reason for taking up the job as domestic worker.

Age –at -Marriage

Age-at-marriage also is an important factor in determining social conditions of people in the society. Early marriage is a characteristic of backward social groups as it leads to blockade of one's development in various ways, including education, health etc. So, the following table shows the age-at-marriage among the domestic women workers in Silchar Town:

Table 4.4
Age-at-Marriage of Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category
(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Age-at-Marriage	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General Castes	SCs	OBCs			
<15	2 (66.67)	39 (24.84)	1 (33.33)	42 (25.77)	7 (50)	49 (27.68)
16-17	-	35 (22.29)	-	35 (21.47)	4 (28.57)	39 (22.04)
>18	1 (33.33)	83 (52.87)	2 (66.67)	86 (52.76)	3 (21.43)	89 (50.28)
Total	3 (100)	157 (100)	3 (100)	163 (100)	14 (100)	177 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table shows that of the married women domestic workers, a half (50.28%) have married after attaining marriageable age (i.e., legally recognized age of 18 years) and the other half (49.72%) have married before the legal age of marriage.

Of the Hindu women domestic workers, 52.76% have married as per the legal age of marriage and the rest (47.24%) who have married before the legal age of marriage belong to Scheduled Castes, outnumbering the rest of the women workers, i.e. General and Other Backward Castes.

Of the Muslim women domestic workers, three fourths (78.57%) married before they attained the marriageable age (i.e., legally recognized age of 18 years). one fifth (21.43%) have married as per the legal age of marriage. Thus, under age marriage is rampant among the Scheduled Caste and Muslim workers.

Since this section of the society is uneducated and poor, parents generally give them in marriage at very tender age to get rid of their liability. By the time they reach the legal age of marriage they are already the mothers of one or two children. Therefore, poverty along with illiteracy needs to be addressed.

Besides, widowhood has driven the young mothers into this unorganised sector to earn for family members' survival. Due to widowhood the women have to play the dual role of father and mother and take up the family responsibility. Therefore, the following table distributes the widow women domestic workers by their age-at-marriage:

Table 4.5
Age-at-Marriage among the Widow Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Age-at-marriage of Widow	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General Castes	SCs	OBCs			
15-25	-	2 (66.67)	-	2 (5.88)	-	2 (5.41)
26-35	2 (6.45)	-	-	2 (5.88)	-	2 (5.41)
36-50	14 (45.16)	1 (33.33)	-	15 (44.12)	3 (100)	18 (48.64)
>50	15 (48.39)	-	-	15 (44.12)	-	15 (40.54)
Total	31 (100)	3 (100)	-	34 (100)	3 (100)	37 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table shows that out of 200 women domestic workers about one fifth (18.5%) are widows. Near about half (48.64%) of the widows fall under the age group of 36-50 years, two fifths (40.54%) fall in the age group of above 50 years, and over one tenth (11.82%) of the widows belong to the age bracket of 15-35 years.

Thus, up to the age of 50 years among the workers three fifths of them are widows. At a very young age they have become widows and life long live widowhood in the society. In the absence of a male member it becomes very difficult to carry on and live a life. Because of the loss of their life partners they have to head their families and they are the only persons to earn and support their families.

Their life partners died due to negligence of their diseases and some of them used to consume a lot of alcohol and did not take sufficient food. None of them were unhappy because of widowhood as their husbands never shouldered

any responsibility of their family, rather they always thought of their enjoyment. After consuming alcohol they used to beat, torture and take away all their (women's) earning for liquor and gambling. So, there is at least peace in the families, now.

Educational Status

Education can play a pivotal role in empowering women to fight this glaring injustice. Study after study has shown that educating girls is one of the most effective ways to fight poverty and social prejudice. Yet, girls' education is still not valued as highly as boys', despite the evidence of huge benefits it brings to individuals and to the communities. Indeed, women's education has what the head of the UN Development Programme calls a "multiplier effect". Educating women improves their rights in all areas, including property and work. Financial independence attained out of better education, brings prosperity to local communities. Domestic women workers have high rate of illiteracy and low educational level. The following table shows literacy rate among the women domestic workers in Silchar town:

Table 4.6
Educational Status of Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Educational Level	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Illiterate	9 (90)	109 (69.42)	1 (12.5)	119 (68)	20 (80)	139 (69.5)
Primary	-	43 (27.39)	3 (37.5)	46 (26.29)	3 (12)	49 (24.5)
Upper Primary	1 (10)	5 (3.18)	2 (25)	8 (4.57)	1 (4)	9 (4.5)
High School	-	-	2 (25)	2 (1.14)	1 (4)	3 (1.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that of 200 women domestic workers over two thirds (69.5%) are illiterate and only 30.5% are literate. Among the 175 Hindu workers, 68% are illiterate and among the Muslims, four fifths are illiterate. Only 32% of the Hindu workers and 20% of the Muslim workers are literate. Among the literate Hindu workers, 26.29% have studied up to Primary Level and 4.57% have studied up to Upper Primary and only 1.14% have studied up to High School. While among the literate Muslim workers 12% have studied up to Primary Level and 4% each have studied up to Upper Primary and High School Level.

Thus, most of the workers are illiterate and even the literates have very low educational level. Most of the illiterate workers are found in General Castes, SCs and Muslims and most (87.5%) of the literate workers are found in Other Backward Castes, followed by Scheduled Castes (30.57%) and General Castes (30%).

Types of Family

The existence of joint families is very rare today among the slum dwellers, due to the lack of proper space and poor economic condition. The following table speaks of family types among the women domestic workers:

Table 4.7
Family Types among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Family	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Nuclear	10 (100)	148 (94.27)	7 (87.5)	165 (94.29)	2 (96)	189 (94.5)
Joint	-	9 (5.73)	1 (12.5)	10 (5.71)	1 (4)	11 (5.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The data reveal that most (94.5%) of the families are nuclear and the rest are joint (5.5%). Of 189 nuclear families, most (94.27%) of the families belong to Scheduled Castes, followed by the General Castes and the Other Backward Castes. All the families of Hindu General Castes are nuclear.

It is very difficult for a large family to live in small houses where they have hardly any place to live and move about. Thus, the nuclear family is the predominant type among these workers.

Monthly Family Income

Monthly Family income is a measure of the combined incomes of all people sharing a particular household or place of residence. It includes every form of income, e.g. salaries and wages, retirement income, near cash government transfers like food stamps, and investment gains. Average household income can be used as an indicator for the monetary well-being of a family. It is an indicator to measure the standard of living, because they include only disposable income and acknowledge people sharing accommodation benefit from pooling at least some of their living costs. The following table shows the family income of the women domestic workers:

Table 4.8
Monthly Family Income among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Income-group (in Rs.)	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
0- 1000	-	6 (3.82)	-	6 (3.43)	-	6 (3)
1001-2000	1 (10)	27 (17.20)	3 (37.5)	31 (17.71)	5 (20)	36 (18)
2001-3000	1 (10)	7 (4.46)	-	8 (4.57)	9 (36)	17 (8.5)
3001-4000	2 (20)	25 (15.92)	-	27 (15.43)	7 (28)	34 (17)
4001-5000	-	37 (23.57)	3 (37.5)	40 (22.86)	1 (4)	41 (20.5)
5001-6000	5 (50)	20 (12.74)	-	25 (14.29)	3 (12)	28 (14)
6001-7000	1 (10)	9 (5.73)	2 (25)	12 (6.86)	-	12 (6)
7000 above	-	26 (16.56)	-	26 (14.86)	-	26 (13)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

X= 4150

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that out of 200 women domestic workers. Over one fifth have family income up to Rs.2000.per month. That of 200 women domestic workers over one fourth (29.5%) have family income up to Rs.3000/-per month , over a half (51.5%) have in the income bracket of Rs.3001-6000 and the rest (19%) have above Rs. 6000/-.Thus , family income of most of the workers (81%) is up to Rs.6000/- per month.

Among Hindu Women Domestic Workers, Scheduled Caste families' income is higher than General Castes and Other Backward Castes. On the other hand, Muslim women domestic workers family income is lower than that of Hindu women domestic workers' family income. Its average comes to be Rs.4150/- per month.

Thus, it can be said that the most of the respondents are from Scheduled Castes; and the average age of the respondents is 30 years. The economic compulsion is the main reason for taking up the job as domestic worker. Poverty and lack of interests in study has pushed them into the labour market and are happy to earn a meager income to the family. The widows and divorcees have to shoulder the responsibility of looking after their families single-handed. To earn their living and to look after their children they have joined this sector. Due to widowhood the women have to play the dual role of father and mother and take up the family responsibility. Under age marriage is rampant among the Scheduled Caste and Muslim workers. Since this section of the society is uneducated and poor, parents generally give them in marriage at very tender age to get rid of their liability. By the time they reach the legal age of marriage they are already the mothers of one or two children. At a very young age they have become widows and life long live widowhood in the society. In the absence of a male member it becomes very difficult to carry on and live a life. Most of the illiterate workers are found in General Castes, SCs and Muslims and most of the literate workers are found in Other Backward Castes. The nuclear family is the predominant type among these workers. Muslim women domestic workers family income is lower than that of Hindu women domestic workers' family income. Its average comes to be Rs.4150/- per month.

II

THE LIVING CONDITIONS

This section comprises the house type, type of house ownership, living accommodation, house rent paid, sanitary conditions, expenditure on food, drinking water source, electricity connection etc. These are as follows:

House Types

Types of house they live in can indicate the economic and living standard of the women domestic workers. The following table therefore shows the housing types of women domestic workers:

Table 4.9
House Types among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of House	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Half brick, half bamboo wall mud plaster& tin roof					1 (4)	1 (0.5%)
Bamboo and mud walls with tin roof	8 (80)	139 (88.54)	8 (100)	155 (88.57)	20 (80)	175 (87.5%)
Bamboo with polythine roof	2 (20)	18 (11.46)	-	20 (11.43)	4 (16)	24 (12)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that over three fourths (78%) of the respondents live in half brick wall bamboo & mud plaster type of house, 12% of the respondents live in bamboo and mud walls with tin roof house and the rest are living in half bamboo with polythine roof.

Thus, most of the women domestic workers live in kachcha houses for reason of low cost. The housing condition is so poor that they suffer during the

floods, rainy season and also during the severe winter and easily become sick. Due to the low economic condition they are not in position to build or repair the existing house and avail better facilities. While discussing about their housing condition there is so much sorrow and resentment among the respondents which can only be seen and felt while gathering information. They were sounding bitter about the condition in which they live and the type of houses they daily clean, sweep and do the household work in the employer's house. It will remain as a mere dream to improve the condition of their house, living rooms, surroundings, drainage and environment as a whole. Who will work for our uplift? This their frequently asked question. They express their concern, worry and anger at the indifferent attitude of the local civic bodies, Government etc. towards them.

Living Accommodation

Number of rooms tells the living accommodation of women domestic workers and further reveals the status of their socio-economic conditions. It is shown in the following table:

Table 4.10
Living Accommodation among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

No. of Rooms	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
One	9 (90)	113 (71.97)	4 (50)	126 (72)	17 (68)	143 (71.5)
Two	1 (10)	39 (24.84)	2 (25)	42 (24)	5 (20)	47 (23.5)
Three	-	5 (3.19)	2 (25)	7 (4)	3 (12)	10 (5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that of the 200 women domestic workers nearly three fourths (71.5%) have only one room for living. nearly one fourths (23.5%) have two living rooms and very few (5%) have three rooms.

Thus, most of them have only one living room. This segment of the society undergoes lots of problems in the absence of proper living rooms, sanitation, water, electricity and all the facilities which is availed by others in the society. It is of great concern and worry as to how to manage when their children grow up and those who have already grown up. They, particularly the girl children do not have any privacy.

Ownership of House

Ownership of house gives one a sense of satisfaction and contentment as a major facility in life is availed. Owning a house also gives one social status and describes ones living standard. It is really a pathetic condition of the women domestic workers that most of them do not own a house and live in rented houses. The following table shows the house ownership among women domestic workers:

Table 4.11
House Ownership Types among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in parentheses)

Type of House Ownership	Number of Families					Total
	Hindu			Total	Muslim	
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Own	--	72 (45.86)	2 (25)	74 (42.29)	9 (36)	83 (41.5)
Rented	10 (100)	85 (54.14)	6 (75)	101 (57.71)	16(64)	117 (58.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table describes that 58.5% of the women domestic workers families live in rented houses and the rest (41.5) live in their own houses.

All the General Castes, over half of the SCs, three fourths of the OBCs and nearly two thirds of the Muslim respondents live in rented houses.

These women domestic workers pay the rent from the monthly income of the family.

Monthly House Rent Expenditure

The expenditure of the house depends on the size and other facilities available. The following table exhibits house rent expenditure of women domestic workers:

Table 4.12
Monthly House Rent Expenditure among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

House Rent Expenditure (in Rs.)	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
200	-	8 (9.41)	-	8 (7.92)	4 (25)	12 (10.26)
300	2 (20)	8 (9.41)	2 (33.33)	12 (11.88)	8 (50)	20 (17.09)
400	5 (50)	52 (61.18)	3 (50)	60 (59.41)	2 (12.5)	62 (52.99)
500	3 (30)	17 (20)	1 (16.67)	21 (20.79)	2 (12.5)	23 (19.66)
Total	10 (100)	85 (100)	6 (100)	101 (100)	16 (100)	117 (100)

X= 382.05

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that nearly three fourths (72.65%) of the respondents' families spend Rs.400-500 as house rent, 17.09% spend Rs. 300. and 10.26 spend Rs.200 per month on house rent. Monthly average house rent paid by them is Rs.382.05/-

Thus, most of the families spend Rs.200/- to Rs. 400/- on house rent from their monthly income. The house rent spent from the meager income that the women domestic workers receive monthly reduce them further to poverty and misery. It is not worth paying if one sees the condition of the house surroundings, the filth, bad smell, dirt everywhere. Some of the houses are so shanty that tall persons find it difficult to enter. During the rainy season it is so unhygienic and difficult to walk on the pavement or the narrow path on which they walk day in and day out. Besides, this, they have to spend on health and medicines from time to time. Types of their house will give idea of the life they live.

Food Expenditure

Good and nutrient food consumption depends on family income. One's capacity to spend on food determine their living and socio-economic standard. The following table shows the women domestic workers' food expenditure:

Table 4.13
Monthly Food Expenditure among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Expenditure - Group (in Rs.)	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Below 500	-	6 (3.82)	-	6 (3.82)	5 (20)	11 (5.5)
500-1000	-	-	-	-	3 (12)	3 (1.5)
1001-2000	1 (10)	27 (17.20)	-	28 (16)	7 (28)	35 (17.5)
2001-3000	3 (30)	6 (3.82)	2 (25)	11 (6.29)	3 (12)	14 (7)
3001-4000	2 (20)	25 (15.92)	5 (62.5)	32 (18.29)	4 (16)	36 (18)
40001-5000	1 (10)	37 (23.57)	-	38 (21.71)	3 (12)	41 (20.5)
5001-6000	3 (30)	56 (35.67)	1 (12.5)	60 (34.29)	-	60 (30)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

X= 3675

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

From the table it is learnt that about one third (32.5%) of the respondents 'family expenditure is up to Rs.3000/- and that of the rest is in the bracket of Rs.3000/-6000 per month. Nearly three fourths of the Muslim, one fourth-each – of the OBC and SC and two fifths of the General Castes respondents' families has expenditure up to R.3000/- per month. Their average expenditure is Rs.3675/- (approximately) per month. The average income indicates that almost all of their family income is spent on food alone, leaving a little scope for meeting other necessities of life. Ultimately it demonstrates poor life conditions.

Thus, they cannot even afford to take good meal with proper nutrients. Malnutrition and under nourishment leaves them with no energy to work. Very easily they get sick. Their children also succumb to illness very quickly and easily because their food lacks proper vitamins, and proteins. Like other economic expenditure, house ownership pattern also highlights economic condition of the families.

Sources of Drinking Water

Water is a key component in determining the qualities of our lives. Today people are concerned about the quality of the water they drink. Although water covers more than 70% of the earth, only 1% of the earth's water is available for drinking. Yet, our society continues to contaminate this precious tap; it comes into contact with many different substances, including organic and inorganic matters, chemicals, and other contaminants. Many public water systems treat water with Chlorine to destroy disease producing contaminants that may be present in the water. Although disinfection is an important step in the treatment of potable water, the taste and odour chlorine is objectionable. And, the disinfectants that are used to prevent disease can create by products which may pose significant health risks. Today, drinking water treatment at the point of use is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. Consumers are taking matters into their own hands and are now determining the quality of the water they and their families will drink by installing a drinking water system that will give them

clean, refreshing, and healthier water. Clean, pure and good drinking water is essential for healthy living. The following table shows the sources of drinking water among women domestic workers:

Table 4.14
Sources of Drinking Water among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Water Sources	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
P.H.E Supply	6 (30)	110 (70.06)	2 (25)	118 (67.43)	18 (72)	136 (68)
Tube well	-	14 (8.91)	-	14 (8)	1 (4)	15 (7.5)
Well	-	3 (1.91)	-	3 (1.71)	-	3 (1.5)
River	4 (40)	17 (10.83)	4 (50)	25 (14.29)	4 (16)	29 (14.5)
Pond	-	13 (8.28)	2 (25)	15 (8.57)	2 (8)	17 (8.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that the women domestic workers collected their water from various sources, viz. P.H.E. supply, tube well, Public well, river and pond.

Of them, over two thirds (68%) use P.H.E. supply water and rest use water from river (14.5%), pond (8%), tube well (7.5%) or well (1.5%). As they live in slum pockets where they do not have their own sources of water, they have to collect it from P. H. E. supplied water at public water taps.

Types of Fuel

Like electrical appliances, a type of fuel is also the important indicator of socio-economic condition of every household. So, the following table shows the status of types of fuel among the women domestic workers in Silchar town:

Table 4.15

Types of Fuel among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Fuel	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Gas Stove	1 (10)	13 (8.28)	1 (12.5)	15 (8.57)	--	15 (7.5)
Firewood, cow -dung, kerosene, Stove	9 (90)	144 (91.72)	7 (87.5)	160 (91.43)	25 (100)	185 (92.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that 92.5% of the women domestic workers families use firewood /cow dung/ kerosene for cooking and very few use gas stove.

Thus, most of the families use firewood than gas stove for cooking. Due to their poor economic conditions they can't afford to use gas stove. Whenever there is shortage in supply even those use gas stove make use of fire wood or cow dung or kerosene stove. In summer and winter they use cow dung, it is difficult to preserve it for rainy season as they do not have sufficient space inside their living place.

Sanitation Condition

Inadequate sanitation is a major cause of disease world-wide and improving sanitation is known to have a significant beneficial impact on health both in households and across communities. The word 'sanitation' also refers to the maintenance of hygienic conditions, through services such as garbage

collection and wastewater disposal. So, the following table gives the sanitation conditions of the women domestic workers in Silchar town:

Table 4.16
Sanitation Conditions among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Latrine	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Pacca Latrine	-	1 (0.64)	1 (12.5)	2 (1.14)	1 (4)	3 (1.5)
Kachcha Latrine	7 (70)	102 (64.97)	5 (62.5)	114 (65.14)	18 (72)	132 (66)
Open Defecation	3 (30)	54 (34.39)	2 (25)	59 (33.71)	6 (24)	65 (32.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that two thirds (66%) of women domestic workers have kachcha latrines facilities, only a scanty number (1.5%) has pacca latrine and the rest (32.5%) do not have any latrine and defecation in open space.

Thus, most of the families have kachcha latrines and about one third use open place for defecation and for nature's call. Though the sense of health and hygiene is known to them, they do not have any good public toilets or latrines in the slums and they can't even afford to pay for it. This shows lack of responsibility from the part of the Government. Government is supposed to work for the lowest strata of the society by undertaking certain measures and implementing the policies that they make.

Types of Bathroom

To bathe and to wash the entire households and the people of their localities go to the river or a pond or they use open place for bathing in the

absence of kachcha and pacca bathrooms. The following table shows the types of bathroom among the respondents:

Table 4.17
Types of Bathroom Condition among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Type of Bathroom	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Kachcha Bathroom	8 (80)	86 (54.78)	5 (62.5)	99 (56.57)	17 (68)	116 (58)
No Bathroom	2 (20)	71 (45.22)	3 (37.5)	76 (43.43)	8 (32)	84 (42)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that of 200 women domestic workers families, about three fifths (58%) have kachcha bathroom and the rest (42%) do not. Those who do not have bath room facilities take bath in the river or they bathe in open place. They do not have any choice but to accept the situation and go through all the problems and difficulties, deprivation and poverty. They feel that no one understands them and their living condition. They who clean the big and spacious bathrooms of the well –to-do families have no bathrooms to take bath. This is indeed a sorry state of life among the women domestic workers.

Electricity Facility

Electricity is the modern facility availed even in the remotest villages. But it is a sad state of the people living in the Silchar municipality slum pockets. They are denied of these modern facilities due to the poverty situation they are living in. Very few of the slum dwellers have light facility in their houses. The following table is showing the electricity condition of the domestic workers:

Table 4.18
Electricity Facility among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Status of Electricity Facility	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Have	4 (40)	39 (24.84)	6 (75)	49 (28)	5 (20)	54 (27)
Don't have	6 (60)	118 (75.16)	2 (25)	126 (72)	20 (80)	146 (73)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that of 200 women domestic workers' families 27% have electricity facility and the rest (73%) do not. Due to their poor economic condition they could not take electricity light connection. It is an indication that the growth of urbanization, modernization globalization etc has brought in a lot of change in the life style of the people but the common people go deprived of the facilities. They continue to grope in darkness and poverty and live a miserable life in an unhygienic surrounding. Even though they live in urban slums of Silchar town, one can boldly say that their living condition is far inferior to that of the rural poor. The basic amenities of life are not accessible to them and they live as destitute.

When we look at the use pattern of electricity in their houses it further throws light on their poor social conditions. The following table is showing the electricity uses of the domestic workers:

Table 4.19
Electric Uses among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Electrical Apparatuses	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Only Light	3 (75)	35 (89.74)	-	38 (77.55)	3 (60)	41 (75.93)
Light and Fan	1 (25)	4 (10.26)	6 (100)	11 (22.45)	2 (40)	13 (24.07)
Total	4 (100)	39 (100)	6 (100)	49 (100)	5 (100)	54 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The data show that out of 54 electric connection holders' three fourths (75.93%) have only one light: three fourths of the General Caste, four fifths of the SC and three fifths of the Muslim workers' families has only light, while the rest have, both light and fan in their houses. Of the 13 families who have two electrical connection majority or almost all the families of Hindu OBC category have both the uses.

Thus, less than half of them have electricity facility and they also cannot afford to use it for more than light or/and fan.

Mobile Phone

Use of mobile phone gives social recognition to the users and it has become universally essential among all individuals. So, the following table shows the mobile users among women domestic workers:

Table 4.20
Mobile Users among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category
(Percentage in Parentheses)

Status of Mobile Set	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Have	1 (10)	19 (12.10)	1 (12.5)	21 (12)	1 (4)	22 (11)
Don't Have	9 (90)	138 (87.90)	7 (87.5)	154 (88)	24 (96)	178 (89)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The above table shows that of 200 respondents over one tenth (11%) of the women domestic women workers/family members have mobile sets and the rest do not. Among the mobile users, it is the Hindu workers who own a mobile and none among the Muslims.

The respondents said that the mobile is mostly used by their children and they used it to listen songs, play games and seldom used to talk to their relatives and friends. They said that they make use of it to inform their employers when they were unable to go in time for work due to some emergent situation or to inform their employers of their absence from work on a particular day. What is most surprising is that even though they are illiterate who do not know to read and write, yet, they are experts in handling mobile which shows that they have mobile education enough and they know to use it better than many educated people.

Television Set

Possession of the modern electronic gadgets reveals the socio-economic status of the women domestic workers. Television set is one amongst them. The following table shows the status of television set among women domestic workers:

Table 4.21

Status of Television Set among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parentheses)

Status of Television Set	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Have	2 (20)	11 (7.01)	3 (37.5)	16 (9.14)	1 (9.14)	17 (8.5)
Don't Have	8 (80)	146 (92.99)	5 (62.5)	159 (90.86)	24 (96)	183 (91.5)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table reveals that of 200 respondents only 8.5% of the women domestic workers have their own television sets and the rest do not. The reason being not having T.V. set is non-availability of electricity, low income and poor economic condition.

Those who own the T.V. set said that it is a means of recreation at the end of the day's heavy work. They just relax and are happy to watch TV serials. It is a source of entertainment to the neighbors as well as to themselves. It is interesting to note that sometimes the respondents exchange their views and narrate to the neighbours/ friends the stories of the serial while they are on their way to the work place or while returning from the work and sometimes in the evening they sit outside their houses and chat about it. This is mostly found among the middle aged and young women domestic workers while men folk do not take interest in this type of talk or conversation.

Besides, there is only one family in Kanakpur which owns a radio. They generally listen daily news, film songs, sports news etc. It is the love for music, sports news etc which prompted them to buy a radio. As informed by the mother she bought it for the son since she couldn't afford to buy a TV set for him while her son loves music and sports. It is not that she earns more but to make her son happy. She feels happy to see neighboring children and older ones coming together and enjoying and relaxing and having fun and recreation in the evening.

Briefly, most of them live in kachcha houses for reason of low cost and have only one living room. It is really a pathetic condition of the women domestic workers that most of them do not own a house and live in rented houses. The house rent spent from the meager income that the women domestic workers receive monthly reduce them further to poverty and misery. Malnutrition and under nourishment leaves them with no energy to work. As they live in slum pockets they do not have their own sources of water. Very few of the slum dwellers have light facility in their houses. Due to their poor economic conditions they can't afford to use gas stove, most of the families have kachcha latrines & kachcha bathroom therefore use open place for defecation and for nature's call. Only 8.5% of the women domestic workers have their own television sets and the rest do not .All these further reveal the status of their socio-economic conditions. This segment of the society undergoes lots of problems in the absence of proper living rooms, sanitation, water, electricity and all the facilities which is availed by others in the society.

III

PROBLEMS FACED BY MAIDS AT HOME

Family problems, including rural and male unemployment, disputes at home, ill treatment and loss of parents have resulted in their leaving the house to work as domestics. It is also not unusual to find domestic workers who are single parents, widowed or separated from their husbands or those with alcoholic husbands are compelled to work for the survival of their children. Natural calamities and conflict situation such as insurgency are also factors forcing them to migrate because of displacement and loss of livelihood and the lack of rehabilitation programmes. As well, their debts due to falling crops also drive them to domestic work. On the other hand the demand of cheap labour in the growing market economies has caused many women and children to seek employment in the cities and urban areas. The urbanization, the break-up of traditional joint family system, and the increased demand for domestic workers from middle-class women who are taking up jobs outside the home also contribute to more poor women and girls migrating from rural villages to cities

and urban areas in search of domestic work (CWA News Letter,2004). The glamour of city life and the raising consumerism also lure them to domestic work. The lack of access to education, especially among young girls, and false image of security and a stable environment at the employer's home are factors that entice them to domestic work. The increasing development and urbanization of certain industries in India have also led to unemployment of workers in certain sectors. In Silchar town, most of these women have drunkard husbands. Some of them suffer very much due to the violent attitude of their husbands. However, most of them watch TV to forget stress and strains of their daily life. Their problems at home are discussed below in detail:

1. The Double Burden of Work

Most of the women after returning home repeat the same work, as there is no helping hand to reduce their burden of work. However, a very few respondents reported that their daughters-in-law or mothers help them in household-work. By their helping hand or no hand at home the women workers are distributed in the following table:

Table 4.22
Helping or No Hand at Home among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Helping or No Hand at Home	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
	10	157	8	175	25	200
Those who repeat the same work at home	8 (80)	132 (84.08)	6 (75)	146 (83.43)	16 (64)	162 (81)
daughters-in-law or mothers help	2 (20)	25 (15.92)	2 (25)	29 (16.57)	9 (36)	38 (19)
Total	10 (100)	157 (100)	8 (100)	175 (100)	25 (100)	200 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

Of the total, 162 women domestic workers repeat the same work in their homes since there is no female member in the house to do all the household chores. All the widows, divorcees, and 4 out of 23 unmarried WDWs, and 112 out of 131 married WDWs, have no- one to help them out in their homes.

Majority (81%) of the women domestic workers do their own work while others have their mothers or mother-in-laws to see to the family affairs.

2. The Women as Bread Winners

Most (88.5%) of the women, i.e., 177 out of the total of 200 women are the bread winners for their families. This brings a lot of stress on these women who have no or very less economic or other support from their kith and kin. The problems of earning further mount up for the widows and divorcees. The following table shows the distribution of the family's bread winner-women by their marital status, religion and caste:

Table 4.23
Women Domestic Workers as Bread Winners by Marital Status, Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Bread winners	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Married	4 (44.45)	108 (76.06)	4 (57.14)	116 (73.42)	15 (78.95)	131 (74.01)
Widow	4 (44.45)	28 (19.72)	2 (28.57)	34 (21.52)	3 (15.79)	37 (20.90)
Divorcee	1 (11)	6 (4.22)	1 (14.29)	8 (5.06)	1 (5.26)	9 (5.09)
Total	9 (100)	142 (100)	7 (100)	158 (100)	19 (100)	177 (100)
Hindu						158 (89.27)
Muslim						19 (10.73)
General						9 (5.70)
SCs						142 (89.87)
OBCs						7 (4.43)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

The table shows that of 158 married workers, about three-fourth (74.01%) are living married life (live with the husband), of them 20.90% are widows and 5.09% are divorcees; the family depends on them, for their survival. The widows and divorcees are sole bread winners of the family and they have no other income to support their families. From among Muslims workers, above three fourth (78.95%), are married, 15.79% are widows and 5.26% are divorcees.

So, the economic compulsion is the main reason for taking up the job as domestic worker.

3. The Problem of Husband's Liquor Addiction

Of the 200 women 131 have husbands alive as well as living with them. Of them a good majority (63.5%), i.e., 127 women have husbands addicted to liquor. Their distribution is shown in the following table:

Table 4.24
Liquor-addicted husbands among Women Domestic Workers by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Liquor Consumption by Husband	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Do not consume liquor	2 (50)	-	-	2 (1.73)	2 (13.34)	4 (3.05)
Consume liquor	2 (50)	108 (100)	4 (100)	114 (98.27)	13 (86.64)	127 (96.95)
Total	4 (100)	108 (100)	4 (100)	116 (100)	15 (100)	131 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

Of the 131 married women domestic workers, 127 of them reported that their husbands drink/consume a lot of liquor and do not shoulder the family responsibility. Most of (96.95%) the women have drunken husbands. As a result family responsibility rests upon these women to bear the entire family burden. They give birth to the children, rear them up feed them and provide them with all the necessities of life. They earn by working as domestic workers, and see to the smooth running of the family affairs. At the end of the days heavy work they long for some peaceful, happy time with the children and husband, on the contrary they receive verbal abuses, physical abuses like beatings, (mental & physical torture) from their husbands. Good family atmosphere is denied to the children, they watch, hear, and some time become victims along with their mother.

4. The Problem of Torture by Husbands

Of the 127 women who have liquor-addicted husbands 38 (30%) face severe problem in family as their husbands drink as well as torture them. It is shown in the following table:

Table 4.25
Women Domestic Workers Receiving Torture from Their liquor-addicted Husbands by Religion and Caste Category

(Percentage in Parenthesis)

Status of Liquor Consumption & Wife Torture	Hindu			Total	Muslim	Grand Total
	General	SCs	OBCs			
Consume Liquor yet do not torture	-	81 (75)	2 (50)	83 (72.81)	6 (46.15)	89 (70.08)
Consume liquor as well as torture	2 (100)	27 (25)	2 (50)	31 (27.19)	7 (53.85)	38 (29.92)
Total	2 (100)	108 (100)	4 (100)	114 (100)	13 (100)	127 (100)

Source: Field Survey Conducted from 1 July 2011 to 3 March 2012.

Of the total 131 married women domestic workers, 127 respondent's husbands consume alcohol. Nearly 30% of them torture their wives after consuming the excessive amount of alcohol. 70.08% of them consume liquor but they behave somewhat in a moderate way (as reported by the children and respondents themselves). These women who are tortured (physically & mentally) live a life of misery, humiliation, shame because when their husbands drink they lose their senses and create a public scene where all the women and children in & around the slum pockets watch and are observant. They said that they are fed up with their married life and curse their fate.

5. The Problem of Health and Treatment

Though they usually go to Government hospitals, some of them prefer to get treatment from private practitioners as they quickly dispose of. Hence, their

expenditure increases when health deteriorates. Due to time constraints they look for easy way out but its outcome is resource drain. They take short cuts to get cured but it results in loss of money and health.

Thus, majority of the women domestic workers do their own work at home, while others have their mothers or mother-in-laws to see to the family affairs. The widows and divorcees are sole bread winners of the family and they have no other income to support their families. So, the economic compulsion is the main reason for taking up the job as domestic worker. Most of the married women's husbands drink/consume a lot of liquor and do not shoulder the family responsibility. As a result family responsibility rests upon these women to bear the entire family burden. At the end of the day's heavy work they are denied of peaceful family atmosphere. They said that they are fed up with their married life and curse their fate.

Briefly, the process of mobilizing domestic workers is complex and long term. To begin with, this would involve empowering domestic workers. This is possible only when the right to form collectives is granted. The understanding of collective bargaining power can bring about this change as there has to be a sense of solidarity among them to challenge ill treatment or unfair wages. The collectives in the form of unions or organizations will, in turn, work towards demanding and implementing legislations. The onus thus lies on the state to protect domestic workers by law and enable them to join and form associations and unions. These rights must be publicized and supported by the state by ensuring that employers are aware of their workers' rights. In conclusion, one can assert that rules and laws that recognize domestic workers as workers in homes, and that regulate their working conditions and pay, as well as the agents who mediate the worker-employer relationship, could have a fundamental impact on the conditions of work across the informal sector and the nature of social policy in India as well as on the valuation of women's work and the gendered divisions in work, marriage, and the family. Thus, emerging economic and society changes in Indian societies will push greater number of women from upper class and middle class into organized labour and as a result of which there will be a greater demand for women domestic workers to look after the elderly, household chores, child care etc. Thus the socio-economic phenomena of women domestic

labour and its social implications will continue to draw the attention of the researchers to study their life and problems.

Briefly, the socio-economic conditions of the women domestic workers, in Silchar town are as follows:

1. The women domestic workers are both the Hindu and the Muslim. However, most of them are from the Hindu community.
2. The women domestic workers come from all the Caste categories; namely, General Castes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes. However, most of them are from the SCs. This means that the poor, discriminated and deprived groups provide a major source of this labour.
3. Under-age marriage is rampant among the Scheduled Caste and Muslim workers. Since this section of the society is uneducated and poor, parents generally give them in marriage at very tender age to get rid of their liability. By the time they reach the legally recognised age of marriage they are already mothers of one or two children. Therefore, poverty along with illiteracy needs to be addressed.
4. Widowhood has driven the young mothers into this unorganised sector to earn for family members' survival. Due to widowhood the women have to play the dual role of father and mother and take up the family responsibility.
5. Most of the workers are illiterate and even the literates have very low educational level. Most of the illiterate workers are found in General Castes, SCs and Muslim.
6. Nuclear family is the predominant type among these workers. It seems to be a general phenomenon in the region. However, it does contribute to problems of the women domestic workers in the sense that in most of the cases there is none to take care of their children while they are at work.
7. The average monthly family income among the workers is Rs 4150/-, i.e. Rs 138/- per day. Among the Hindu women domestic workers the Scheduled Caste families' income is higher than that the General Caste and Other Backward Classes families, which may be because of comparatively more SC women and children engaging in domestic or

other works. Muslim women domestic workers' family income is lower than that of Hindu women domestic workers' family income, perhaps, due to other perks in kind given to them in addition to wages.

8. Most of the women domestic workers' families live in rented houses and pay the rent from the monthly income of the family. The house rent spent from the meager income that the women domestic workers receive monthly reduced them further to poverty and misery.
9. Their average expenditure is Rs.3675/- per month. They cannot even afford to take good meal with proper nutrients. Malnutrition and under nourishment leaves them with no energy to work. Very easily they get sick. Their children also succumb to illness very quickly and easily because their food lacks, proper vitamins, and proteins.
10. Most of the women domestic workers live in kachcha houses for reason of low cost. The housing condition is so poor that they suffer during the floods, rainy season and also during the severe winter and easily become sick. Most of them have only one living room. This segment of the society undergoes lots of problems in absence of proper living rooms, sanitation, water, electricity and all the facilities which is availed by others in the society. They, particularly the girl children, do not have any privacy.
11. As they live in slum pockets where they do not have their own sources of water. Therefore, they have to collect it from P.H.E. supplied water at public water taps.
12. They do not have any good public toilets or latrines in the slums and they can't even afford to pay for it. About three fifths (58%) have kachcha bathroom and the rest (42%) do not. Those who do not have bath room facilities take bath in the river or they bathe in open place.
13. Due to their poor economic condition they could not take electricity light connection. It is an indication that the growth of urbanization, modernization globalization etc has brought in a lot of change in the life style of the people but the common people go deprived of the minimum facilities. Less than half of them have electricity facility and they also cannot afford to use it for more than light and fan.

14. Most of the families use firewood than gas stove for cooking. Due to their poor economic conditions they can't afford to use gas stove. Whenever there is shortage in supply of LPG, even those who use gas stove make use of fire wood or cow dung or kerosene stove.
15. Very few of the women domestic workers have their own television sets and the rest do not. The reason for not having TV set is non-availability of electricity, low income and poor economic conditions.
16. A very small section of the workers have mobile sets. Mobile is mostly used by their children to listen songs, play games and seldom to talk to their relatives and friends. The women respondents said that they make use of it to inform their employers when they are unable to go in time for work due to some emergent situation or to inform their employers of their absence from work on a particular day.
17. Most of the women after returning home repeat the same work as there is no helping hand to reduce their burden of work. However, a very few respondents reported that their daughters-in-law or mothers help them in household-work.
18. Most (88.5%) of the women, i.e., 177 out of the total of 200 women are the bread winners of their families. This brings a lot of stress on these women who have no or very less economic or other support from their kith and kin. The problems of earning further mount up for the widows and divorcees.
19. Most of (96.95%) the women have drunken husbands. As a result family responsibility rests upon these women to bear the entire family burden. They give birth to the children, rear them up feed them and provide them with all the necessities of life. They earn by working as domestic workers, and see to the smooth running of the family affairs. At the end of the days heavy work they long for some peaceful, happy time with the children and husband on the contrary they receive verbal abuses, physical abuses like beatings, (mental & physical torture) from their husbands. Good family atmosphere is denied to the children, they watch, hear, and some time become victims along with their mother.

20. Nearly 30% of respondents husbands them torture their wives after consuming the excessive amount of alcohol. These women who are tortured (physically & mentally) live a life of misery, humiliation, shame because when their husbands drink they lose their senses and create a public scene where all the women and children in & around the slum pockets watch and are observant. They said that they are fed up with their married life and curse their fate.
21. Though they usually go to Government hospitals, some of them prefer to get treatment from private practitioners as they quickly dispose of. Hence, their expenditure increases when health deteriorates. Due to time constraints they look for easy way out but its outcome is resource drain. They take short cuts to get cured but it results in loss of money and health.

To sum up, it can be said that the socio-economic condition of women domestic workers of Silchar town is of inferior status. Their social and economic condition is in such a bad shape that it calls for /needs immediate attention, so as to undertake certain developmental activities like supply water, cleanliness of the slums, teaching on health and hygiene, use of latrine, importance of school education. Most of these women have drunkard husbands. Some of them suffer very much due to the violent attitude of their husbands. However, most of them watch TV to forget stress and strains of their daily life. Apart from this most of the women are the bread winners of their families. The problems of earning further mount up for the widows and divorcees. Due to time constraints they look for easy way out but its outcome is resource drain. They take short cuts to get cured but it results in loss of money and health. It should be a matter of great concern to the Government and appropriate measures should be undertaken to elevate their situation so that this segment of the society can live a decent life. Failure to achieve this goal meant no growth and progress rather underdevelopment of India in the world economy and in terms of international standards. Therefore, care should be taken to address their issues.. They are indeed an invisible workforce, and live an invisible, silent, voiceless life both at the work place and in their own homes. Government and NGOs need to address their socio-economic condition and offer better future for them.

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