



REFLECTIONS, PROCESSES, COLLABORATIONS:
**ISST COURSE on
WOMEN AND WORK**
MAKING IT COUNT

FIRST ITERATION, 2021 (ONLINE)

A PROCESS DOCUMENT



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ISST COURSE on WOMEN AND WORK MAKING IT COUNT



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FOREWORD

Soon after I joined ISST in early 2021, the team behind developing the curriculum around women and work walked me through the course framework. The idea of course, they said, was born when they were discussing various ideas to celebrate 40 years of ISST. It was an endeavour to draw upon the vast repository of research studies and papers that the organisation had undertaken and convert it to an offering for practitioners, young researchers and policy makers. In other words it was about converting key learnings and insights from the mostly India based and to some extent south Asia based studies into an accessible form by developing a curriculum around women and work.

It was evident from the presentation and the conversation that the course was about building a perspective on a theme that is critical to all those who work with women, whether from a health, education, livelihood or a safety and security perspective. It had to therefore speak to and speak from multiple positions.

The task was not simple as it was unlike developing a training program by putting together mere sessions & modules on a theme. The idea here was to extract the key concepts from the extensive research at hand, and then convey these concepts in a coherent manner through a training course/program. And finally, the pedagogy had to be developed to transact the curriculum. This was like entering an unknown terrain for the research team at ISST consisting of Monika Banerjee, Gurpreet Kaur, Shiney Chakravarty, Ashmeet Kaur, Monika Sharma and Ahana Chakrabarti. With support from their mentors, Ratna Sudarshan and Rajib Nandi, they took up the challenge, the entire process of which is highlighted in this document.

Dipta Bhog, a feminist who has extensive experience in developing learning materials for women and girls from a gender transformative lens was invited to steer the team on this journey. Together they spent hours discussing, reading to develop a coherent framework. Along the way Paromita Chakravarti, Nilanjana Sengupta, S. Anandhi, Sushma Iyengar, Ellina Samantroy, Dipa Sinha, Anwasha Ghosh, Mubashira Zaidi, Risha Ramachandran joined this journey and anchored specific modules.

Like all projects that were initiated in 2020, this project too had to adapt to the new reality created by the COVID-19 pandemic. A course which was planned as a face-to-face course had to be reimaged as an online course, which had its own benefits and limitations. The team never gave up.

The financial support for this project came from a grant by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the encouragement of their program officers, Yamini Atmavilas and Subhalakshmi Nandi supported the team.

In the end this course emerged as an offering that introduced a fresh lens to understand women and work in a very South Asian context. It brings together the socio-political and

historical perspective, the highly contextual reality of caste, ethnicity, class and religion while examining the work women do. It brings to light how the state has engaged with the work of women which remains informal and invisible.

I invite you to go through this document as it will give you a glimpse of the journey, the learning that the team traversed over nearly two years as they cooked and brewed the content of a unique course Women and Work – Making it Count.

Dr. Jahnvi Andharia

Director and Research Fellow

ISST

Oct 2022

A PRoLoguE

When the online course on women and work ended in December of 2021, some of us in the team took a week-long break, to catch a breath, to hold ourselves together, before we could come back to 'documenting' the whole process. However, the exhaustion persisted and there was resistance to coming back. There was a struggle that one was experiencing and an overwhelming feeling that would not leave us. It is only as we write this, we realise that it was the labouring of doing and conceptualising this curriculum, in an intense way that kept this struggle and emotions alive. It was also because a process of unlearning and un-doing had begun, of our assumptions, categories in the midst of building and then transacting this curriculum. This un-doing has been exhausting labour and here we had conceptualised, transacted and now documenting this course on women and work. It was this process of labouring with all its emotional labour and relating to all aspects of the course (whether it be content, materials, pedagogy, people etc.), that made this process feminist. It was in the doing of this labour that many of us understood the value of feminist processes, of the significance of labour and work itself, as central to our everyday lives and understanding it as an important perspective of seeing/doing things, of labouring together and of learning and un-learning at every step. It is these processes that we attempt to write in this documentation report, documenting the labour of the team, struggles felt, of little joys and of perspectives gained and created.

In that sense, a documentation that is feminist, presses for the need to write about difficulties, challenges, and to definitely write about labour. The labour that is of emotions, of bodies, of ideas and of working together. This documentation then is an effort towards writing about, not only the processes related to the what, how and why, but is also geared towards opening up the struggle of working together with so much emotional energy. It is important to tell this story so as to write, share and make sense of this 'experience' of struggle, of creating knowledge and perspective together. For instance, when we were working on the curriculum, there would be days when we would not understand where all of it was going, with so much reading, reviewing and writing and then sometimes one good discussion especially when we would try to frame things together, would help us see meaning in all of it. These were difficult struggles but also joys that helped us put things together and they feel important to be shared so as to talk about processes like these, for similar future endeavours.

"Documentation is a feminist project; a life project" (Ahmed, 2017:26). Ahmed underlines and emphasizes the need of documenting, recording, writing of- experiences, histories, memories, processes so as to carry on the project of knowledge building and creating an archive of feminist memory. A knowledge building perspective that keeps evolving and is documented in this very nature of developing. For instance, when the team began working on this, it was primarily empirical research experiences at ISST that we were able to cull out and bring to the table especially about marginal and sectoral women workers invisibilized in the economy at large. It was slowly that we began to look at broad conceptual frameworks and placed ISST research work within that trajectory, hence

building on the knowledge that was available with us and creating, evolving a broader framework/perspective on women and work. These were important processes that helped the team to think about women's work from both a macro and a micro perspective and helped in framing of the curriculum.

This documentation is also an attempt to register the politicising of the process of building this curriculum. That is to say that the processes of arriving at the curriculum framework and pedagogy, the feminist concepts and histories on women's work that were brought together, understanding the gaps in the discourse on work and economy were all significant parts of knowledge building. Further, the processes of collaboration with different people across sectors and gaining from their experiences added to this process of knowledge building. **This has been an attempt to carry forward the feminist, political history, to bring critical ideas together, build knowledge and meaning making processes.**

Further, it was also an attempt in the course that made us reflect on, who is it that this knowledge is being catered to and targeted at. Because the course was conceptualised and transacted mostly in English, there is of course only a certain class of people who know the language, and could be reached out to. However, the attempt in framing the course has been to create more access to ideas, concepts and knowledge in an accessible, easier and practical way, so that the imagination of using this perspective on women's work remains alive. Moreover, the idea has also been to push boundaries through this perspective, even though in a limited manner, so that the impact is felt both personally as well as professionally in the lives of the participants. **The attempt therefore has been to walk the readers through the struggles, experiences and processes so that the learning, thinking and writing can be a "meeting place" (Livholts, 2012) of ideas and possibilities.** In that sense, the pedagogy of the course in its attempt to create access and accessibility, marked the political nature of the course and therefore knowledge creation was also seen as an evolving and emerging process during the period of transaction of the course.

This document then, is a telling of a story of a curriculum on women and work, by an organisation that has worked on women's work for more than 40 years. It is the writing and reflection of this journey, that carries the possibility of thinking about work, labour, care, woman, aspirations etc. This writing carries the desire to be able to reach out, share and communicate attempts of crafting and transacting a curriculum that underwent a process of churning and translating research into a story that could be told.

What makes it different, is the attention that the work gave to processes, stories, learnings and in a way contributing to feminist histories, as also feminist processes and feminist writing. It was also in this process that we tried to bridge gaps, taught each other what we know and do not know, learning and unlearning our assumptions. In that sense, the process of building, transacting and writing about this curriculum, has been both an attempt of understanding women's work and the woman worker as well as creating live histories of embodying this understanding in our everyday lives. Therein lies the actual essence or meaning of a feminist pedagogical practice- where stories are not just being remembered and shared but also created at the same time.

Laying out pROCESS(ES)

This document is divided into 3 parts– the first part is about laying out the processes. This section will open up the details of our engagements, struggles, challenges, to reach at the process of being able to transact the curriculum. The second part will talk about the actual content around women and work, what got transacted, how were the connections being made across the modules etc. The attempt in this section is to capture the pedagogical transaction in a live, evolving manner. The third part brings together hopes, reflections, gaps that were felt and participant anecdotes in the mutual sharing space that we created during the transaction of the course. This part also shares a glossary of ideas, concepts that have been significant to women and work but at the same time have also evolved with the discussions during the course. It presents ideas across key themes that have been fundamental in grounding the concepts throughout the curriculum.

The broad outline of the curriculum was based on the aspect of the invisibilization of women's work not in the economy alone but also within the social and political structures. The emphasis has been to establish how the interconnection between these structures play a crucial role in defining the invisibility of women's work. At the same time the attempt has been to underline this interconnected nature of women's work which has been largely absent in a gender discourse that centres around, especially in the recent years around violence, livelihoods or a declining female workforce participation rate, for instance. Therefore, the effort has been to bring women's work as a significant perspective in the development work with women and to think about change at a deeper and broader level. Further, recognising the identity of a woman worker and its linkages with other aspects of her life has been the motivation for this course. The building of this interconnected perspective then has been about, how woman's work is related to violence at home, to the invisibilizing and absence of respect, dignity of her labour both within the household as well as by structures of state and market, and to also how policies and global market shifts affect women's work, their identities and lives in the minutest way. The curriculum building process as an exercise has therefore been an interesting work that ISST built upon carrying forward the history of creating perspectives, collaborations and categories.

ISST carries the legacy of launching and bringing feminist histories into policy spaces, into statistical tables, into conceptual language, specifically around women's work. ISST has built a large body of research specifically focusing on bringing more visibility to women's work and build accountability in the way work and the worker are understood, perceived and counted.

While in the early decades the organization focused on bringing women's work of economic value to the forefront, in the recent years, the focus has been more on emphasizing the need to take into account the unpaid care work that women perform and to bring in the argument that all women work irrespective of their involvement in paid employment.

Through its research and collaborative work with other organizations, ISST has played an important role in bringing significant shifts in debates and discourses around the idea of work and what gets counted as work. It has made specific contribution in terms of making gender discrimination visible in the country's accounting system and in putting more thrust on counting and valuing women's work in economic assessments. Through its qualitative research, it has been able to build rich narratives of challenges that women face due to inadequate work spaces and lack of support in managing double burden of work.

However, in the process of building the curriculum, we were aware that this curriculum would have to move beyond the research that ISST has been part of and built over the years on women's work. Because if we were to build a perspective, the scope and landscape had to be much broader and go deeper. So, then the history of feminist struggles on recognising women's work, inevitably became a part of our design and thinking. The idea was to build the importance of 'work' and 'labour' in everything that we do and what exclusions happen because and otherwise of it.

This section is an attempt to lay out the trajectory of the struggles of the last two years. This means writing about the challenges of bringing together feminist conceptualisations on work along with the everyday lives of women's labour, especially through research and evidence through ISST's studies. It also meant to remember feminist histories on recognising women's work and labour and what gaps existed even as we moved through these histories. The section will then try to write through these conversations that kept happening as we attempted to reach at a broader idea of women's work and labour, that is inherent, embedded in everything that we do, apart from being invisibilized and undervalued. The section is also an effort to write through the various processes and aspects of building a curriculum like this– brainstorming on key ideas, building a framework/perspective, creating resources/repository for pedagogical materials, collaboration stories, struggles, failures and learnings.

To underline the challenge of writing something that has been exhausting, complex and evolving, Sara Ahmed (2017) helps us in introducing the idea of a “sweaty concept”, which “might come out of a bodily experience of trying. The task is to stay with the difficulty, to keep exploring and exposing this difficulty. We need not eliminate the effort or labour from the writing.” (ibid. p.13). In that sense, Ahmed's emphasis on not hiding or eliminating the struggle from writing remains crucial when writing about the processes in this documentation. It helps us validate our (embodied) struggles and the nature of writing that ensues through this labour.

BRAINSTORMING IDEAS AND CREATING RESOURCES

Sometime in the middle of 2019, a small team of researchers at ISST started to work along with an external consultant (Dipta Bhog) towards developing a curriculum on women and work that could engage with ISST's research work and attempt to contribute to the overall discourse on gender and labour. This was a thought that was brewing within ISST for quite some time now and with ISST's 40th year closer to the date, this felt an apt time to begin a process like this. Dipta Bhog, who has had an expertise in designing, curating and transacting curriculums, was brought on board only for this purpose. However, it was primarily the team at ISST that came together in doing all the leg work, bringing people together, building a team that could motivate each other in participating in such a learning and transformative process.

Further, it was ISST's attempt to mark its 40th year of contributing to the feminist discourse on women's work and labour. ISST has been centrally involved in researching, advocating and conceptualizing women's work and making it count, visible in policies and programmes mindful of women's identities and locations. It was therefore to continue this process of creating resources for feminist knowledge and pedagogy, the thought of building a curriculum was imagined.

Beginnings

Our beginnings often used to be one meeting after another, taking down notes of the meeting minutes¹ and the ideas of what a curriculum could look like. The meetings initially often felt vague, ambitious, trying to make a point but where was it going to go, kept the anxieties alive. How were we supposed to convert the huge base of ISST's research on women's work and many other feminists work on the same into a material that is simple yet critical, conceptual yet grounded in the contemporary reality. This was a task that we couldn't even fathom in the beginning. Dipta who helped us sift through this struggle, kept alive the question of 'what would be critical key ideas, when we think of women's work'. And from here began our journey of examining material that was ISST's research studies, books, articles, government reports etc., all of which involved empirical studies or conceptualisations around various aspects on visibilizing women's work in different kinds of sectors (both urban and rural). Further because we also needed to build a framework within which the ideas would fit, a critical search of key historical feminist ideas also began. The struggle initially definitely posed a resistance of ourselves to engage with so much literature, without knowing its definite goal used to be quite frustrating. However, Dipta's insistence that all this will feed into our understanding of how we would like to frame the broad perspective, somehow kept the team going. In that sense, the beginnings were really about un-learning our assumption that we somewhat knew about women's work². However, our knowledge was actually disjunct pieces of what women's work is. But how would we bring these pieces together on care, on female labour force participation, on absence of

¹ The minutes of these meetings really helped us in later stages and also for this documentation, as it was a record of our discussions, brainstorming ideas, concepts, agreements, disagreements and questions that we raised etc.

² Therefore, many of our in-house meetings at ISST involved brainstorming and unpacking basic, key ideas on work, labour, women's work, trying to trace a trajectory of work. This helped in making sense of what a framework of a course could look like, as we also tried to place ourselves in the shoes of the participants.

women workers in skill-based jobs, space etc. was a task that kept evolving and became somewhat clearer only towards the end. This was also because ISST's work highlighted the invisibility of the woman worker in counting of data, in surveys, and in recognizing their work as 'work'. It was decided that the

The attempt was to reach an understanding of the Indian woman worker, especially drawing from the empirical research experiences at ISST.

curriculum should be categorically targeted to those organizations, practitioners, researchers who directly engage with women or are involved in organizing and working for their rights. This was because 'woman' has been a significant historical, political category in feminist research, debates and activism to build feminist concepts and also largely in ISST's research. At the same time there was an understanding that woman is not a homogenous category and therefore it was important to make sense of the various dimensions of women's lives by unpacking lives of different women in different locations. This curriculum building process thus, made an effort to:

- a) constantly make inter-connections between the economic, the social and the political, so that the issue of women and work does not remain to be understood conceptually as an economic issue alone but rather how the historical-social-political environment affect women's work and labour. And therefore, then conceptual frameworks of patriarchy, caste, sexuality become important guiding tools to make these interconnections.
- b) bridge the divide between theory and practice, research and action, and teaching (research) material and training (action) material as opposed to attempts of merely doing research and action in separate spaces with no connections, dialogue or learning in between.
- c) bring in strong reflections around debates on feminist pedagogy and practice through engagement in this process itself. The fact that ISST as a premier feminist research institute has attempted to build a curriculum using its own research as well as the larger body of knowledge on women's work, shows how it is an attempt to move towards a feminist pedagogical practice.

Processes around thinking, framing and transacting

How does one start building a curriculum which specifically talks of work that women do? Why is it important? What aspects it must cater to? Who will it interest? How do we transact it? These were some of the questions that we grappled with as we embarked on to this uncertain journey. As researchers we had often built conceptual frameworks for research studies to highlight and build evidence on issues of women's economic empowerment. But up till now, we had not really imagined our work in terms of a pedagogical tool that could help in transacting concepts necessary to contextually understand the challenges of everyday life of an Indian woman. Most of our initial and then consequent meetings were marked by not just brainstorming of key ideas about content and design but also doing a collective reading and sharing exercise of learning and understanding historical, conceptual and feminist ideas together. This was also important to do so as to build critical and accessible framework on women and work that could be transacted.

We knew that the curriculum must showcase the multiplicity of work that women do and the continuum of paid and unpaid work that they are constantly managing. However, it was equally important to showcase the gendered division of labour that invisibilizes women's work through a historical context.

This took us to feminist histories, questioning social and political structures that invisibilize women's work and labour. Moreover, all of ISST's studies had shown us the various dimensions of the invisibility of women's work. So "invisibility" of women's work became an important conduit in the thinking and designing of the curriculum even as we historicised the location of women's labour in the broader struggle in economy.

We also understood that the curriculum must take into account the growing concern around low female labour force participation in India and the larger debates around how work is accounted for. But were not sure how this could be discussed without talking about the changing nature of the state vis-à-vis the changing idea of the market and how they end up defining work and labour. So, the questions that we began asking were something of this nature that made us reach to the role of state and market in relation to women's work:

 What are women doing?

 What is (un)counted as women's work?

 When is she recognized as a worker?

 When is she included in the work force?

Grappling with these questions, forced us to go beyond what we had set out to do. While the curriculum was to focus on the nuances of the world of women's work; we had to first transact the very idea of 'work'. What is work? What is man's work and what is a woman's work? What aspects concretize this division? Is it the nature of the work, or is it its purpose or the space from where the work is done? While the study of economics tells us that work is any activity which produces goods and services that have a value in the market; for the purpose of this curriculum, we decided to move beyond this definition so as to encompass the socio, political and historical factors that play a crucial role in designating value to some activities and not all. Some discussions that ensued to reach here were of the following nature.



Some of our initial brainstorming sessions

We realised that as a starting point, first, we need to understand what is considered as work and what is the relationship between work, gender³ and economy. Literature indicated that work should be understood from the point of place where it is being done and so, space attributes not only an important role in defining work but also in understanding the gendered division of work. In other words, space is related with productive and reproductive work and men came to be generally involved in productive work which has an exchange value and can be sold in the market. But women are mostly engaged in reproductive work which is considered to have only use-value for consumption and are related with maintenance. It then signified that while men are considered as producers, women are recognised as consumers as they do not produce anything new. Similarly, work is related with producing something new which has some market value while labour is typically considered as a maintenance activity and so no value is attached with it. So, a clear binary between

productive and reproductive work and between labour and work seemed to be emerging as we read the literature closely. Also, market was an important conduit in the valuation of the 'productivity' of work and the consequent invisibilizing of women's work. Further technology, neo-liberalisation, state-market-data nexus, came to be understood as playing a significant role in how women's work and exploitation of it is understood and is changing. In these discussions we were trying to build a framework- a strategic location of women in the economy. The attempt was to reach a 'perspective' on women and work that is carefully blended with information as well as participants experiences to reach multiple perspectives perhaps. In that sense, there were concepts and ideas that also got left behind, for instance we were not able to include the idea of education, skilling and how it shapes the idea of women's work, with accessibility of education, skills, which is changing with increasing use of technology. However, the attempt was to remain mindful of such exclusions as everything could not have been covered, but we continued to work at this framing and tried to keep making the inter-linkages mentioned above.

³ Even though as we started, we thought of talking through 'gender' and not just women's work, but slowly we realised that the ambit of gender would open up many more questions that we as a team did not have the wherewithal to address to. We wanted to keep the focus as women's work and the woman worker and not even expand it to the 'economy' at large which we had again started off with.

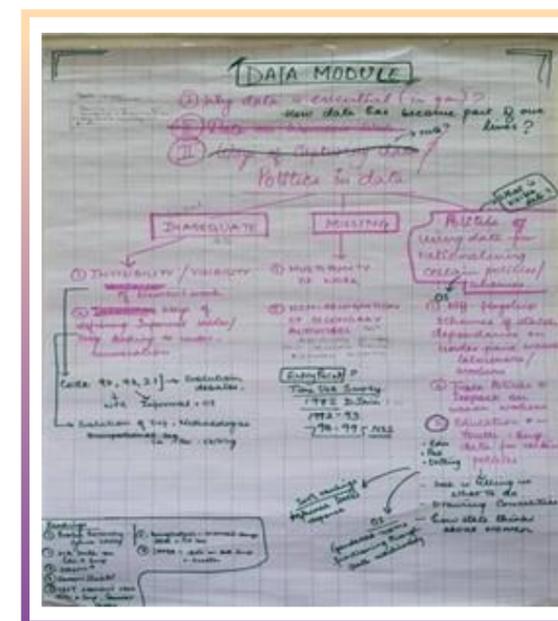
However, it was only through doing the first round of iteration that we realised that the question of 'identity' needed to be opened up as we continue to talk about work. We needed to talk about the identities across the gender spectrum and how exclusions are made when we imagine work and livelihood possibilities for people who do not fall in the categories of either men or women. In that sense how fundamental it is to link the question of work with 'identity'.

Arriving at and problematizing 'definitions'

In understanding the micro context, we began with the definition of what is work, whom we consider as workers and what are the categories of work. We started with the question of what kinds of work women are doing, including all types of work productive (which are economic of nature) and non-productive (which are non-economic). We wanted to highlight the dilemma and the politics of not counting non-economic activities as 'work', to show the linkages between how data on work gets gathered and who regulates that. It was significant to understand how women's work is perceived, recorded and therefore counted. Hence, the course framing was envisioned to build a perspective around these concerns, issues and the larger politics that govern the understanding and knowledge around women and work.

This churning with data and the categories of data came much closer to home, as we kept discussing about the multiplicity of women's work, even within our own lives.

There were long discussions and debates within the team of what gets counted and uncounted as women's work, how it is important to understand how these categories of counting get created, how patriarchal structures in nexus with state and market play a role in the perception of what gets counted as 'work'. This also found resonances in our lives and also in our participant reflections, because self-perception and value of one's work is also strongly attached to whether and what of, women's work gets counted or not. This again underlined the political and feminist processes of arriving at ideas and their significance as a team. In the transaction of these ideas then, the attempt remained to create access to our reflections and learnings and create space for collective reflections with the larger group of participants.



Setting up the unit on 'Politics of Data'

Debunking categories

We decided not to begin with the binaries of paid and unpaid work rather we should critique the existing logic of defining some work like fetching water as allied work and other activities like childcare as unpaid work. So, we didn't want to start from the existing categories of work rather attend to the story behind each category. We wanted to understand structures like class, caste, skill, technology, location, religion, patriarchy, state policies, globalisation, trade policy and wanted to comprehend how these included and excluded certain types of work as 'work'. It was decided in our meetings that within this broader framework we needed to prioritize few concepts like patriarchy, production and reproduction debate, class, caste and how these affect women's work especially in the particular context of South Asia. This is also because patriarchy, class and caste are embedded in our culture and all of these are unique in South Asia, so we needed to look at them historically and how they continue to affect lives of women workers. Patriarchy and caste are critically related to the idea of labour and work as they play an important role in recognising someone's work as work or non-work. For instance, the life of a domestic worker who belongs to Bihar and is able to escape caste-based work in an urban space like Delhi by hiding her caste, but continues to struggle with a difficult employer who doesn't pay on time and a husband who spends his day in alcohol and doesn't contribute anything for running the household. These are situations that are real and continue to paint the landscape of women's work. It was therefore thought to begin with the building blocks of patriarchy, caste etc. to unpack these lived realities of women's work and also create a deep understanding of relationship of structures with women's work. Further, the attempt was also to understand how modern state and its linkages with market, has named, defined work and appropriated from these structures in the modern, contemporary way. Also, the idea of women's body as resource and the link between women's bodies and their labour i.e. of embodied labour were thought to be important, in the way the structural ideas govern the understanding of women's work. These ideas will be further opened up in the sections below, in how they got transacted and opened up in the sessions.

Moreover, the idea was also to continue to think about how ISST as an organisation has contributed to the feminist critique and in understanding the history of women's work was going to be a significant conduit. This pointed to a reflection on the feminist pedagogy that ISST as a feminist space exercised from the very beginning, even as we collected material from ISST's research to be transacted for the curriculum.

“The research (at ISST) brought out the women's productive roles, methodology and the statistical assumptions of 'uncounting' women's productive labour. It was because of this research that Devaki Jain initiated at ISST, that the code 93 was added in NSSO, to be kept for household work and allied activities. ISST's aim has been to understand development of women through a 'worm's eye view', as Devaki Jain has put it, i.e., from the bottom (ground) to up” (Ratna Sudarshan – as recorded in the discussion minutes of the initial meetings).



This process of debunking categories happened at every stage to emphasize and recognise feminist histories, build a critique of these categories and at the same time find meanings of these in our everyday lives. The idea behind doing this was to continue the feminist processes of politicising this work in creating and relating to knowledge for ourselves as well as for the audience. In other words, how do we begin to think beyond data, categories and make meaning of them in a critical, inter-connected manner, in our everyday lives has been an attempt in this course. To critically relate to the understanding of care as a concept, linked to care as work emerging from caste, class and patriarchal realities and its absence in data, and find the invisibility (or visibility) of care work within our homes, is just one instance of how this trajectory was attempted in the course.

From the economic to the socio-political

This need to move away from just an economic view of work to a more wholistic approach was further reinforced as one realized that issues of women have always been dealt with in binaries albeit limiting⁴. While one strand of it talks of issues linked to livelihood and economic empowerment of women, the other has focused on issues of her marginalization due to social vulnerabilities. And yet one knows that they are all connected. It therefore seemed pertinent that the curriculum adopts an approach which visualizes women's work not only from the realm of the economic but also that of the social and the political.

Also, since most conventional data gathering and policy making processes of the state and multilateral global institutions ignore the 'social' and 'political' context in which market economies function, it appeared important to highlight the interlinkages between the economy and the gendered nature of women's domestic work/labour and their formal participation in the wage market (Bhog 2020). It was critical that we bring together the embedded nature of the economic, social and political in the lives of women and build a perspective that allows those who are at the frontline of change to make these connections and imagine interventions that speak to the multiple dimensions of women's lives (ibid.).

The aim therefore was to develop a course that covers different categories of women workers and unpacks how both practice and reflections from the field have enabled a vocabulary to emerge, that seeks to uncover the nature of women's work and labour. The idea was to push participants to build perspective and provide them conceptual tools so that they are able to comprehend and critically analyse the social, political and policy dimensions of debates surrounding the issues of women, labour and work.

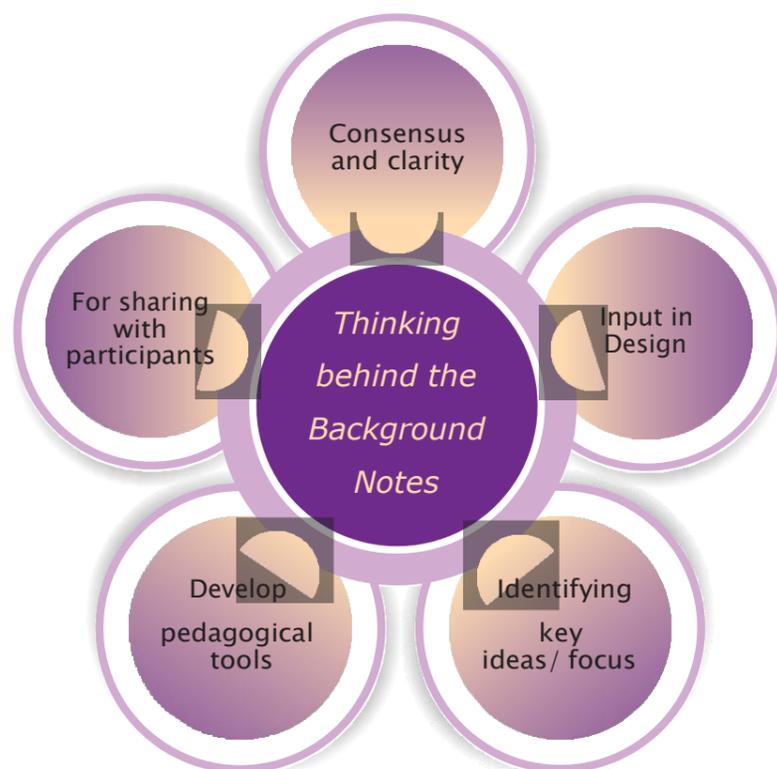
⁴ Will talk more about this in the next section, as these were also learnings that we arrived at as we spoke to different and key people/feminists in the sector.

Pedagogical materials

The brainstorming sessions that used to be spaced out and sometimes clueless in the beginning, became more consolidated and concrete as we progressed during the two years and started seeing the finishing line as the online transaction of the course. The nature of these discussions also shifted from thinking about what would be the critical feminist concepts and histories of women's work to what would be the modes and pedagogies of transacting these concepts. Pedagogy became an important point of work, especially after a framework of transacting the material was roughly prepared. We also started interacting with other key/core faculty who would help us in the transaction of the course and would also believe in its vision of creating this perspective.

Pedagogy(feminist) then seemed to be imagined at the level of conceptualisation (how we reached at the framework), at the level of transactions (what materials would be used to make the course relatable, accessible and critical) and also at the level of collaboration with other people (who, how and what experiences of other people were brought in to transact the course).

A key aspect of the pedagogy at the stage of conceptualising framework was the writing of the background notes. Once the framework was more or less set, the team and the external faculty persons started working on specific background notes for the sessions involved. The idea behind this was to bring in core, critical ideas for each of these sessions and help make inter-linkages with the larger idea of women and work. It was not a literature review but a bringing together and weaving of ideas, in a simpler, crisp and critical manner. The bringing together of the background notes also helped in giving way to finding materials for transaction of these ideas. This again was an attempt to create 'access' of materials, resources and transaction of the same.



⁵ Writing and working through several drafts of the background notes that some of us were working on, carried quite a bit of struggle, frustration, tiredness. These notes were also not something that we knew how they should look like. The guideline was to centre the note on just key critical ideas. It did take in many drafts and revisions to reach to these notes. However now that we have them, they are an important resource material.

As the above chart shows, this involved the way in which the background notes were conceptualised and attempted to be put together. The idea of it was to create clarity around concepts and ideas, something that focuses on critical key ideas and inputs in the planning/design of specific sessions and works as pedagogical materials to be shared with the participants. In that sense, like stated above, these notes weren't necessarily session designs alone or conceptual readings, however, they were a bringing together of concepts, ideas, experiences of key modules that got transacted.

In terms of collecting pedagogical materials, we did an extensive exercise of collecting films, interviews, pop culture representations of women's work in advertisements, images, podcasts, newspaper articles etc. We also conducted a few interviews with senior feminists to help us understand the nuances of women's work both historically and in contemporary times, as the section below would elaborate upon. This exercise has now given us a huge repository of pedagogical resources that ISST can use in not just doing further iterations of this course in different formats but also use this material in many ways to reach out, train, create change, build and evolve the perspective on women's work.

LEARNINGS FROM THE SECTOR

As we contemplated and worked on the design, pedagogy and material for the curriculum, we also wanted to understand the 'need' of the sector. This was to further build on the content and design of the curriculum and to also understand more closely the gaps through the perspective that we wanted to build through the course. We spoke to some key people in the development sector who have been part of intervention-based organisations (working on gender, sexuality, health, livelihoods etc.), labour unions, donor organizations, skill building and advocacy networks and also individuals who have been around in the sector for some time.

What clearly came across was the fact that the idea of work and labour was central and needed to be addressed through the different interventions being made in the sector.

Articulating the need and gaps

Something that clearly got articulated was the need to understand and have a language to articulate the women's work and participation in the economy. The need for a broad and inter-connected narrative that goes beyond the generalized assumption that women's economic participation serves good for their empowerment, needed to be revisited. Also, the idea of gender and women's work still continues to be understood very peripherally and that there was a need for a multi-pronged approach when specifically working with women and young girls. This was especially true for people who worked closely with young adolescents, for the need to build a perspective on gender, work and labour that cannot just be a programming addition but something that helps in building agency. Further there was also an expression of the need to critically look at empowerment and contemporary aspirations, correlating and getting articulated within the capitalist, patriarchal and heteronormative structures. This underlined our idea too of making the inter-linkages between the socio-political structures with the economic sense of empowerment, as crucial in understanding women's work.

There was also an articulation of the need to create and prioritize gender equity within the larger context that is de-prioritizing it, in the current political climate and more so when there is a disaster. The need to create awareness that this framework on gender equity, which includes rights, work, labour, health, livelihoods etc. is very much interconnected with work that is done, for instance on women's health. "Work

“There is a need to look at this disjunct, which may seem empowering at a micro level but at a macro level there is clearly a tension and needs to be thought through. Therefore, there is an area one should talk about; people's personal ambitions and how it intersects with the broader inequities we work on which are sexist and homophobic” (Excerpt from an interview).



is such a predominant reality of our lives that people do not realize its centrality; do not see how it constructs our lives” (Excerpt from an interview).

Further, there was a thinking on how do we understand impact and what is it really connected to? For instance, thinking about work done on livelihood and impact together, both for men and women, can give us a broader understanding of bringing change in marginalized lives. It was also shared that how it depends on the organization's vision, context and skills, how they would like to expand their scope in livelihood activities and link it for instance to creche facilities, maternity benefits etc. This becomes possible when the broader picture of women's work (both statistically as well as conceptually) is made clearer to make these connections both at the level of vision as well as in programmes, and both in states and pan India. This clarity and skill of understanding the macro picture can help in actually thinking about impact at the micro level. Therefore, there is a need to bring the macro and micro picture together. However, the funders are also an important conduit who control the understanding of impact. It connects to what many spoke about as the link between what are funder's expectations and how the interventions end up getting oriented on the basis of the funder's demands. This basically limits the scope of any expansive and long term inter-connected work that individuals and organisations would like to do. For instance, the work on sexual health may talk or give information about work and labour and its connections with sexual/reproductive health, but it will not be something that will be showcased or presented as 'outputs' in a training on sexual/reproductive health, as the funder needs targeted outputs etc. And therefore, the need for bringing the funding organizations on board for such a kind of learning and perspective building, was articulated as an urgent need.

Finally, there was also a sharing of the need of understanding the experiences of women's lives and work in their everyday realities and to make the connection between the household and workspace. To understand the multifaceted aspects of the lives of women workers and how it is critical for the

“Often there is no connection made between household labor and labor at the workplace and organizations either tend to work on labor rights/livelihoods or on social norms” (Excerpt from an interview).



development sector, practitioners have a sense of the social aspect even as they tread along the economic realm of women's lives.

COVID and online transaction

This course wasn't planned as an online course from the beginning, but as we all know the pandemic and much uncertainty around it happened. We were pushed back to many months of work that we had already put in and the transaction of the course needed a reboot. The fear was that with such uncertainty and crisis, who and where would we find an interest for such a course. This was actually when we started speaking to many people from the sector, so as to get a sense of the needs in the contemporary uncertain reality and also to validate the way we were thinking about this.

As we spoke to people, COVID had heightened fissures that were already existing and many organisations were changing strategies so as to attend to the current demand of providing food, work, livelihoods etc. It was actually reassuring to then hear that a course like this, on building an inter-connected perspective on women's work was very much the need, in times of deepening divides, gaps and insecurities.

It was shared that COVID and the pandemic became the breeding grounds for ensuing a discussion on women's work, livelihoods, and the invisibility of their labour. The concept of 'work from home' that got popular for a certain class of people, became a question of survival for a number of informal women workers. Further with COVID, many intervention-based organisations shifted to providing and working for livelihood opportunities and therefore the course seemed to plug in the need to understand and make connections of women's lives, work and the inequalities that persisted in the pandemic.

Even though this was reassuring, it also meant that we had to plan the module sessions and the pedagogical materials that would have to be transacted virtually. The virtual space was something that even though had immediately become active as the pandemic hit us, with rampant online courses, work from home schedules, it was still a space occupied on the screen with many limitations. The imagination

Our imagination to transact a perspective building course carried the flavour of live interactions, evolving ideas and relationship building. This had to be shifted to an online mode, with limited attention spans, exhaustion and a grief of the pandemic that somewhere all of us were carrying.

of online transactions, also got developed through the suggestions we received in our interactions with people in the sector. Most suggestions carried the emphasis on the materials we were going to use, so as to connect it to the everyday and personal gendered (embodied) experiences of labouring. Basically, the idea that even though the mode may go online, it is important to realise that the connecting and relating are crucial elements for teaching and building perspectives, helped us sail through this transition. Further

different modes and tools of transacting, with blended learning, to make connections between learnings and relevance in the contemporary world came in as important suggestions. We also interacted with peers and experts in the sector who have been doing online courses as their strategy and interventions with young people, to actually understand what works and what doesn't, what rules to follow and what works the best. However, we also knew that because of our limits in the virtual space and technology, we could only do this much, but these interactions and suggestions really helped in boosting us up.

Understanding the target group

When we initially began understanding what our target audience would be, the following list came out: civil society, students, faculty members, youth researchers, organizations working at the grassroots, advocacy organizations, trainers, senior/mid-level people in the organizations, funding agencies/UN agencies, research organizations, union representatives, block level officials. This was a long exhaustive list of people the team at ISST thought should be targeted. This was also a pre-pandemic situation.

Broadly the idea was to create the vocabulary around women and work in this audience so as to understand the significance of this perspective, to address the gaps between programmatic roles, donor driven agendas and academic jargon devoid of ground realities.

It was also realized that the target group could be development sector professionals at different stages in the organization, depending on the accessibility of language, as the language was primarily going to be English. There were also suggestions from our interactions, that field workers of partner organizations may also benefit to create a deeper sense and awareness of the community in order to challenge the existing structures and stereotypes. Further people belonging to the donor community were thought to definitely benefit from a course like this. As funders arranged and provided for funds, their priorities and demands became significant in driving the work and projects, and therefore became crucial that they be included in the narrative of building this macro-interconnected perspective. However, there was also an awareness that the funding and donor agencies were difficult to reach out to and get on board. But all this also changed and got modified, as we shifted

gears to an online mode and to a realisation that we could engage only this much in an online space. So even though we had a wide range of participants who joined the course, it became limited because of language and the accessibility of the online resource. We could not reach to many field-based and implementation organisations because of the course being online. The target audience also became slightly specific as we reached close to the iteration of the course— about being conversant in English, being able to read short articles and being able to participate with other participants in the language, have some experience in gender, development and livelihoods and have a stable internet connection. In that sense, the online space, the experience of the pandemic and the language did limit the possibilities of widening our audience.

It was important to engage them at various stages so as to create and transact the interconnected nature of the reality of engaging with women's lives. At the same time, it was important to build and communicate this as a long-term priority.

However, the attempt continued to create an inclusive, safe space even within these limits, with wide scope for experimentation, sharing of experiences, creating access to resources and learning together. The hope is to continue to think about these, learn from our experience and create wider possibilities and landscape in the future iterations.

COLLABORATION

One of the key aspects of development of this curriculum has been the collaborations that ISST was able to forge throughout the process of its framing as well as its iteration.

From core planning to designing and from reviewing the content to actual facilitation, several people, senior practitioners, researchers, academicians, activists, joined the process at various junctures and played a crucial role in shaping its content and facilitating its execution.

Within the core team, apart from ISST researchers, Dipta Bhog, the founding member of Nirantar and Paromita Chakraborty, Professor, Jadavpur University played significant roles not only in conceptualizing the different modules of the curriculum and building their connections but also in selection of participants, planning the execution of each unit and helping in dealing with day to day challenges that arose while the transaction of the curriculum was on.

Since, development of a curriculum required specific skills necessary for transforming research material into tightly packed modules, Dipta, for her years of experience in creating and conducting curriculums was brought in at the nasal stage itself. It was felt that external expertise was required for guiding the team through the process. Working with her was an interesting experience for the team for while she was well versed with the process of designing curriculum, she had never worked or studied the domain of work through a gendered lens. She would always say, 'if you can explain it to me, you can explain it to anyone!' and would push us to break our existing knowledge to the minutest of details and present it in the form of background notes that would bring together different concepts and ideas in simple lucid form. Thus, what started initially as more of a discussion around what the curriculum should focus on and what not, slowly helped us unpack the whole gamut of issues that surround and kind of shapes and also locates women's work. This involved questioning, discussing debating, learning and also unlearning a wide spectrum of social, economic, political and historical aspects that are important to look at specifically when one is trying to see the relation that women hold with work.

Paromita joined the core team after a year when the concept note was ready and we were clear that in order to build a comprehensive curriculum, why women do what they do—would have to be looked at from the standpoint of the household, the state as well as the market. Paromita was asked to specifically look at the issue of sexuality and sexwork in terms of embodied labour and connect it to the larger framework of patriarchy, caste, kinship and carework. She supported the team in bringing these ideas together to form what became the foundational block of the course.

Nilanjana Sengupta, who was working as a Technical Expert with ICRW was also invited by the ISST team to collaborate as a contributor and a key facilitator for the course. She was asked to specifically look at Capitalist Patriarchy from a historical point of view and bring in the feminist Marxist perspective around women and labour.

The other members of the core faculty team also included, Sushma Iyengar, founder of Kutch Mahila Vikas

Sangathan and Prof. S. Anandhi from Madras Institute of Development Studies. Sushma was roped in to specifically focus on the lives and livelihood issues of pastoral communities in order to explore ideas of work, labour, changing gender relations within a community which is largely absent in data or in public policy discourse. It was felt that focusing on the issues faced by the pastoral community would be useful to understand how changes in state working and policy agenda impacts lives of different communities.

With Prof S Anandhi the collaboration was at two levels. She not only provided crucial frameworks to understand State and the Market and helped in building the crux necessary to locate and assess women's work; but also reviewed the entire material that was developed for all the sessions of the curriculum. Her critical feedback helped the team to build connections between each session as well as sharpen the arguments that the curriculum aimed to present.

Apart from these external experts, members of the ISST research team were also called upon to cover several sessions. Ratna Sudarshan, ISST's former Director facilitated the session on data politics, while Mubashira Zaidi and Monika Banerjee facilitated the session on social reproduction and care work. Since majority of ISST's work has been on understanding the nuances and challenges related to different informal sector work, several other members of the team were also invited to take sessions on respective sectors. These included, Jahnvi Andharia who moderated the session on women farmers, Anwasha Ghosh and Risha Ramachandran took session on gig economy and Gurpreet Kaur and Ashmeet Kaur facilitated the session on home-based workers.

Several other experts, academicians as well as practitioners, were also brought into this collaboration in different avatars in order to strengthen the pedagogical thread of the course. While some were roped in to take special sessions on specific subsections – Prof Ellina Samantray on Time Use Study, Prof Dipa Sinha on Women in Public Employment; other were invited to participate in panel discussions to bring in different perspectives on certain issues – Prof Uma Chakravarty and Prof Surapalli on Women and Caste, Sejal Dand and Rakhi Sehgal on experiences of women collectives and labour movements, Elizabeth Khumallambam on challenges in collectivizing domestic workers, Seema Kulkarni on women farmers, Ayesha Dutta, Malavika Narayan and Sonakshi Agarwal on home-based workers and Dhanalakshmi, Sunita, Abha Chaturvedi (ASHA workers) and Banaani Deka on Women in Public Employment.

The ISST team also collaborated with eminent feminist scholars, Prof Gita Sen and Prof Mary E. John to bring in a historical overview on feminist interventions in 70s and 80s in relation to bringing more visibility to women's work. Their interviews were recorded and used as pedagogical material in relevant sections of the curriculum.

Each of these collaborations required frequent exchange of emails, phone calls, several rounds of discussion, debates and brainstorming. Even though the process was exhausting and overwhelming at times especially considering the covid context within which we all were working; the process of knowledge sharing, thrashing of ideas, process of learning and unlearning created a sense of belonging, of togetherness, of ownership, and a sense of sisterhood that somehow kept us stimulated till the end.

Each of these collaborations contributed several layers and meanings to what we now understand as women's work. The ISST team will remain forever indebted to all the eminent scholars and practitioners who joined us and made this journey an extraordinary experience!

ARRIVING AT CURRICULUM ON WOMEN AND WORK

More than a year-long journey and exhaustive intellectual labour culminated into what came to be known as a 10-week long online course on Women and Work: 'Making it Count'. The construct and design of the curriculum channelled into showcasing different elements and entry-points into the discourse on women and work.

Some of the extremely crucial questions about the relevance of women's labour and work pin-pointed by ISST's research include, the need to recognise the value of women's paid and unpaid labour and system's failure to accommodate women's economic needs into the social and political framework of our society. This curriculum has provided a way of telling that story to others.

Through our journey, we wanted to *continue the process of creating resources for feminist knowledge and pedagogy through learning, un-learning and co-learning.*

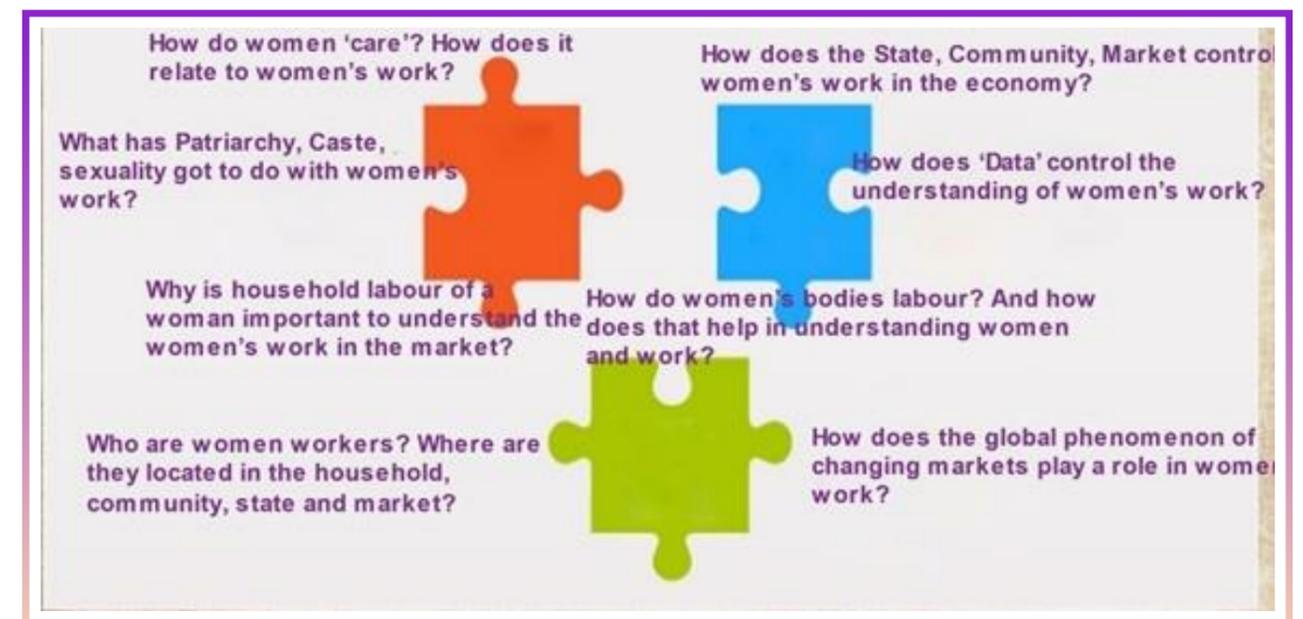
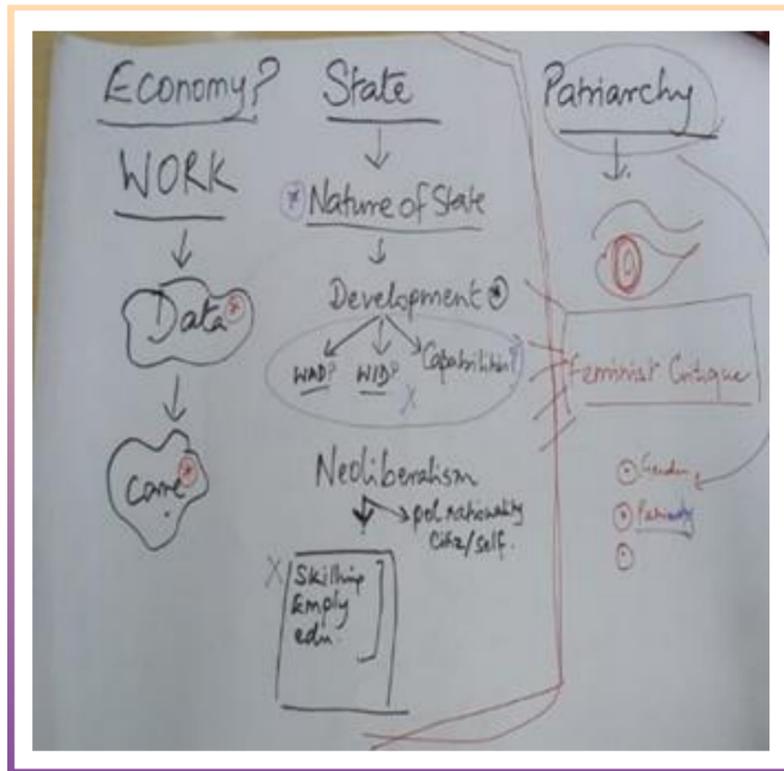


Figure 1 Some questions and thoughts around work, labour and structures around which team deliberated...

The starting point of this journey were questions, a lot many questions!!! Together, we pondered, debated, and disagreed over various notions of 'what is woman's work' to what is 'work'? Are we looking at those areas where women are 'visible' doing work or those where women are made 'invisible' while working? Our quest for inquiry was both!

We were in agreement that there exist multiple meanings of 'work' (paid and unpaid) which we need to bring together which can talk about the centrality of work in women's lives. The process of un-layering led to critical viewing of various economic, political and social structures which play a crucial role in shaping their lives.

In our preparation to build a coherent design/framework we undertook extensive literature review. We tried to bring forth how, when and where woman is understood or looked as a worker in a world around us. We started our research and examination from three macro structures namely, patriarchy, state and



market reflecting social, political and economic dimensions respectively. We looked deeper into, how an understanding of women's work is framed and exists? What role do these structures play in relation with each other to bring out women workers, their identity and concerns?

We tried, building on the embedded understanding and construction of women in the system of patriarchy which influence the way state and market formulate policies around the concept of 'work'. The welfare model of the post-independent Indian state completely altered its contours to fit in the neo-liberal agenda which further influenced gender and labour policies. Along the same lines, we could see the workings of neo-liberal policies which have created multiple spaces of work for men and women

Figure 2: Looking through social, political and economic structure to arrive at the understanding of women's work

without challenging the gendered nature of work which is discussed in the sections ahead.

Based on such understanding, the curriculum set out to show the nuances. Our approach towards this course was to *unfold the perspective* through which the meaning of women's work and its relationship with socio-political and economic structures could be looked at historically in connection with each other.

The process and the struggle of building a framework for the course and content selection has been stirring. Course designing was meant to invoke the sense of questioning. As the imagination of this course was geared towards building a perspective which enables the thinking process towards understanding the relationship of 'women' and 'work' in a continuum. In that regard, the course had a rather atypical approach to look at the critical nature of feminist, labour and development discourse in one frame to understand women's work coming from their unique locations such as caste, class and sexuality.

For participants, our focus was to impart them with a lens that strengthens their ability to process, critique and analyse what they see, hear and read around them and to reflect on the work that they are engaged in their personal and professional lives. For this the deliberation process for developing this course involved bringing insights not only from our research and field experiences but also our own lived realities and life-choices. Hence, the final design for the framework took shape from our own everyday reality built through patriarchy, state and markets.

Thus, towards building the curriculum, retrospection became the starting point!

The first point of planning of the modules was to look back in history and cull out some important historical ventures which have played a role in shaping the discourse around women's work in India. We started by looking at women's secondary status in public and private life. Patriarchy became our touchstone to examine the role of family, caste-class, sexuality in women's lives.

We looked through some of the important historical texts such as Women's Role in Planned Economy, Towards Equality, Shram Shakti report, which gave us a sense of women's social, political and economic situation.

From the patriarchy we moved to explore other political and economic dimensions as we examined the shift of the 1990's through which neo-liberal policies were mandated. The structural adjustment policies altered the economic policies which brought out the state and market nexus. This brought out how the state shifted from a welfare model to suit the needs of neo-liberal policies which tapped on the gender relations and shaped the discourse of women's labour in the informal sector.

The impetus and objective of this course was to speak about these three dimensions from how history has shaped the present-day dialogue, policies and broader understanding on women's labour and work and see the interconnections.

Below, is an image from the last session which focussed on bringing together all the three dimensions and coherently showing connection and interdependence.

+ Module 1 Building the Scaffolding: It connects patriarchy, caste and sexuality with how deeply it impacts our imagination or definition of work in women's lives. What are the threads that connect nursing with sex work or then with surrogacy? As feminists have we been able to really address issues of respectability, choice or define what dignified work is in the context of women's bodies?

+ Module 2 The State and its Women or Women and the State: It uses Data and Pastoralism as sites of study to highlight the power of the 'State' in shaping lives, livelihoods and in categorizing communities that transforms the gender division of labour. The multiple ways in which the State works, in tandem with the family to extract their labour or limit women's contributions. How feminist economists have engaged with the state to claim visibility and rights?

+ Module 3 The Brave New world of Global Markets: Addresses neoliberal ideas, how they infuse gendered work and culture. The GIG economy as the emergent mode of organizing work; connections with home based work; public sector employment as a way to construct new rationales or new patriarchies? As local ties up with global, what aspects of organizing, worker's agency build a collective voice? How are labour movements and women's efforts to organise in new sites of work, access social security taking shape and form?

Figure 3: This is how the outline of three modules came out

This image is a depiction of how we told the story of women's work in a labyrinth!

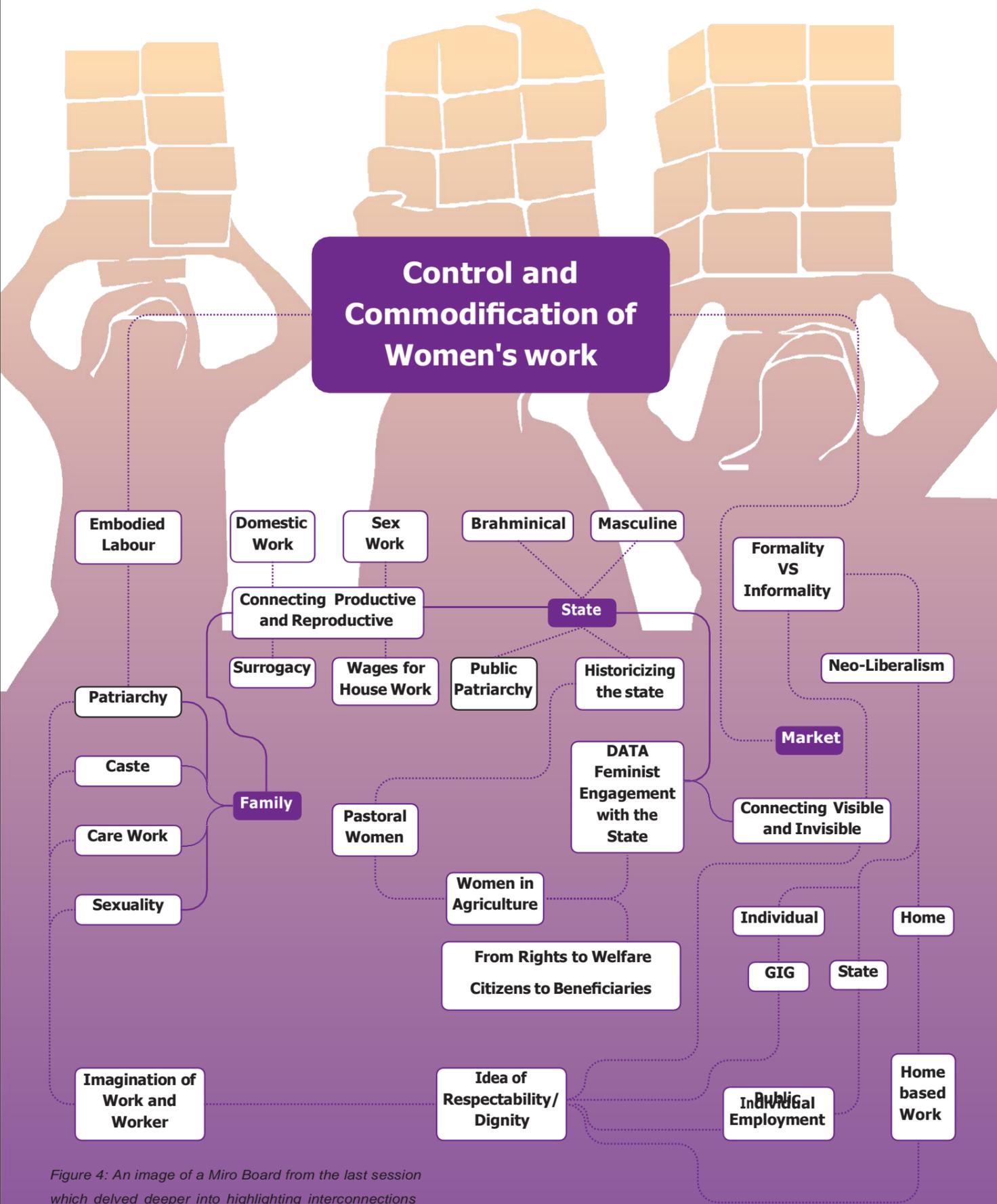


Figure 4: An image of a Miro Board from the last session which delved deeper into highlighting interconnections

Through this curriculum, we have tried to deconstruct the idea of women's labour which is premised naturally on love, affection, care and nurturing roles and show the constant preoccupation of state and families with women's reproductive labour which makes questioning systemic inequality difficult. While patriarchy largely saw women confined to the private sphere and in reproductive roles, it was interesting to bring out the nuances of caste and sexuality which impacts women's productive labour and creates the idea of respectability and dignity. Women's engagement in care labour and economy be it in the form of domestic worker, sex worker brought out the important dimension of their embodied labour and the relationship of women's sexuality and caste to their paid and unpaid job.

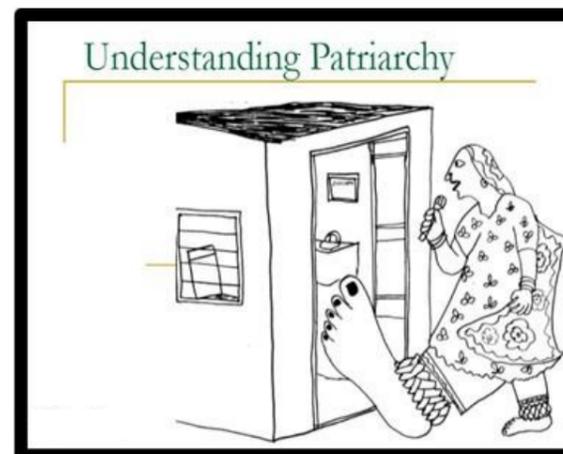
The structures we spoke about through-out such as patriarchy, state and market walk hand in hand. Familialism spans out from patriarchy and is reflected into state and capitalism. In that sense, in this curriculum these structures became important to be highlighted critically which invisibilizes women in work. For example, problematizing the understanding of informal women workers why domestic workers don't count as workers which is especially important in covid time. Why did they find it hard to be recognised? We looked at laws, attempts, imaginations of domestic work which are all caste and class ridden.

Since, economic dimension is not an absolute given, we looked through social and political movements and explored economic trends which discerned how women's work is continuously dispositioned to the secondary status, looked as supplementary, informal and invisible. Building connections through policy shifts we saw how the discourse on women's work was linked to the markets. The coming in of globalization created new forms of working marked with digitization, casualisation which benefited the global market but gendered roles remained unchanged. Thus, we saw how markets used the embedded gendered understanding to create gendered spaces of work where women remained tied to care provisioning in public and private both.

Therefore, highlighting the invisibility, devaluation and lack of recognition which women as 'workers' faces has been the quest of this course.

LOOKING INTO HISTORY

The story of women's work cannot be told without introspecting and re-looking back into history. History has a role to play in the way women's work is 'imagined' and 'perceived' in family and therefore a critical exploration of systems of social structures and hierarchies is required to understand 'why' it has been such. Thus, an examination of the development and history of patriarchy as means to understand women's ways of navigating through the social, political and economic structures became essential to open a discussion on work.



The exploration into history has revealed the control over women's body and denial of access and resources to women, conducted by feminist historians which has influenced and constructed the discourse of gender and labour.

As defined by Gerda Lerner, Patriarchy can be summed up as the 'manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general.' It is the system which has mightily kept women below the

Figure 5: The session by Dipta Bhog on Understanding patriarchy helped to open up the discourse on gender and sexuality to foreground that how systems shape women's work and why it becomes difficult to visualise women's work beyond productive and reproductive

hierarchy though unequal division of the resources. Patriarchal ideology reverberates, men are superior; exercises control over women's lives pertaining to reproductive labour, production capacity, sexuality, mobility, economic resources and socio-cultural and political resources. The global feminist resistance over 300 years old has been credited with exposing inequalities, demanding for the change and carving a space for women's collective voice.

Through this course, our team brought out those aspects of the feminist movement which insisted upon questioning the dominant social traditions that influences women and work debate. These interventions helped to trace historical concepts of kinships and notions of paternalism which has built the understanding around how families and communities are formed and what makes them gendered and unequal.

The public and long-standing presence of feminist collective voice, resistance and movement globally has generated a lens through which one sees the process of modernity and the other social institutions. It also helps to **generate a vocabulary which articulates the discriminatory and exclusionary nature of our structures.** The well-known slogan of the second-wave feminism, **'personal is political'** helped bring out the familial politics of the gender, the role of kinship networks, caste and communities in maintaining the control over women's bodies, sexuality and labour which is known as **paternalistic domination.**

*"Tell us Marx, who is a worker, who isn't
New industrial workers with monthly wages
Are they the only ones who work?
Slum life is the Industrial Age's gift
To the worker's housewife
She draws water, mops floors, cooks food
After the daily grind, at night
She beats her son and weeps
She too is not a worker!
Then tell us Marx, what is work?"*

Figure 6: A part of the poem- Tell us Marx by Mallika Sengupta, female feminist poet



Figure 7: The debate on wages on housework which deepened the critical understanding women's work within household

Reproductive work performed by women inside the households, they pointed out, did the critical job of subsidizing capital by providing free of cost cleaning, cooking and caring, all of which were necessary for the daily reproduction of labour power (the capacity to work). Without these unpaid care services performed by women in the household, the capitalists would have to pay higher wages pushing up the costs and reducing the profits. Therefore, feminist economists have located care economy at the center of gender and labour analysis.

Women's reproductive labour has been one of the important resources for patriarchy and capitalism. For instance, the tradition of water wives in Maharashtra where men have multiple marriages in order to bring



Figure 8: A still from Water Wives by Cover Asia Press

in more hands for accessing the water resource which is a major scarcity in that area. This brought out the connections of women's unpaid care labour in the institutions such as marriage and family.

The understanding of women's reproductive work in the family was further seen embedded in public domain which presumes women to be naturally inclined to care provisions. Using the notions of gendered familialism, we tried to outline how public/policy discourse around care roles perceives women to be capable of care provision and

does not take into account any merit or focus on skilling for women.

It has been argued that care relations are forged on the emotional connection and interpersonal relationships but also unequally distributed between men and women. Using the prisoner of love framework on care developed by Paula England (2005), we see how care is a mix of labour and love both. Feminist have addressed the exhaustive nature of emotional and physical labour in the provision of care and also the negative implication in the absence of any care. However, the essentialist understanding of women's primacy in the care roles creates devaluation of women's work within the household and in the market. This influences the wages of those employed in the care job such as nursing, health worker, teachers etc. where work performed by women workers is care oriented and perceived as an ideal to be inculcated than a necessary service required.

Existing between the continuum of paid and unpaid labour we looked at domestic work in India which engages a large population of women in the informal sector and looked at the paid aspect of the work. Studies (Neetha and Palriwala 2011; NSSO 2009-2010) have brought forward and analysed the multiplicity and range of activities, location/space/setting of work along with caste-class location one builds the understanding and nature of women's work. What is interesting to note is that the employment, conditions of work, wages, and leave are all informally decided in domestic work which makes it difficult to create a uniform model wage rate, work conditions for all workers. Further, a lot is decided on the basis of personal relations that the worker is able to develop with the employer and her own negotiation abilities. Some of these tensions, of being recognised as workers in the formal economy and entitlement to social security and wage work became crucial reasons under which women were organised.

These challenges have been addressed by the efforts to collectivise and organise women. For instance, the recent struggle of Aaganwadi workers to be recognised as 'workers' and right to wage. Over the last couple of decades organizations working with domestic workers in India have increased such as Parichiti, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, National Platform for Domestic Workers, Domestic Workers Rights Campaign etc. These networks established at national and local level are working towards bringing identity and also adding value to work. However, collectivizing or being organised under a union has not been easy. Participation in union activities, migrant status, unpaid work of the women worker have been some of the challenges disables women to demand and organise. But what was unique to notice, was disparity and divergence in women's movement and labourers' movement which could not adopt an intersectional perspective in speaking for women workers from both ends.

Curriculum looked at the multiple sites of care work and the different ways in which care labour was being performed by women. While care was essential it was also gendered and further created inequality between the sexes.

INTERLINKAGES WITH CASTE AND SEXUALITY

The nexus of patriarchy and capitalism till date remain the most exclusive theorization of women's oppression globally. However, peculiar to the Indian context, the existence of caste is phenomenal to understand gender relations. The concept of caste thrives on brahmanical notions of purity and pollution amongst social communities maintained through marriage and identified through occupations. Therefore, control over women's productive and reproductive labour is central to maintaining the system. This system of stratification is unique to South Asia and has permeated spaces in other religion in the region be it Islam, Christianity or Sikhism.

Caste and sexuality are intrinsically tied to each other in exerting control over women's bodies and labour. Curriculum was aimed to showcase what challenges continue to exist and inform the discourse of work. We looked, how the understanding work and labour was different for Dalit women from upper caste women. Patriarchy constructs different ideals, morals and value system within upper caste and Dalit women. The emphasis is categorically on the notions of honour, shame and respectability which then shapes the idea of labour and work in terms of choosing and not choosing to do certain kinds of occupations.

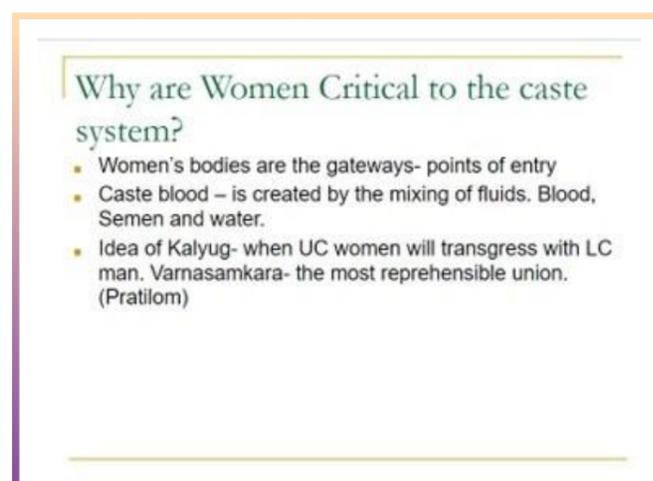


Figure 9: An exploration into caste system and women's subjugation in terms of their bodies and labour

The oppressive nature of caste looks at lower caste women as sexually available objects and humiliation of Dalit women has been called out by Dalit activist and Dalit women's movement which makes the historical analysis of sex work necessary. Prominent Dalit scholars such as Namdeo Dhasal and Baburao Bagul have examined the sex work in ancient traditions - devdasi, jogtins etc. as a tool for the oppression of Dalit women in their literary works. However, a different perspective on the complex connections of caste, sexuality, gender and women's work is provided by the case of colonial Bengal where the first women to flock to the East India Company's newly established city, Calcutta, to join its sex trade were Kulin (high ranking within a particular caste) Brahmin widows. They sought to escape the impossible regimes of fasting, strict celibacy and austerity prescribed for upper caste widows by migrating to the city. The issues of sex as work, and of agency and choice, however limited, becomes evident in their decision to leave their rural families and its caste customs to forge a different life for themselves. (Paromita Chakraborty, Background Note on Sex Work, 2021).

Curriculum tapped on this complexity of looking at the politics of gender, caste and sexuality through sex work. In this regard, the establishment of Durbar Mahila Samnyay Committee (DMSC) which was an important body to organise sex workers came into existence in 1995 was explored. DMSC attempted to organise sex-workers for their rights, recognition and respect through in establishing micro credit programmes for women in sex work, schools for the children of sex workers, in providing financial services from banks. Pertaining to women and work, DMSC voiced sex workers demand for identifying sex work as productive paid work not reproductive unpaid work.

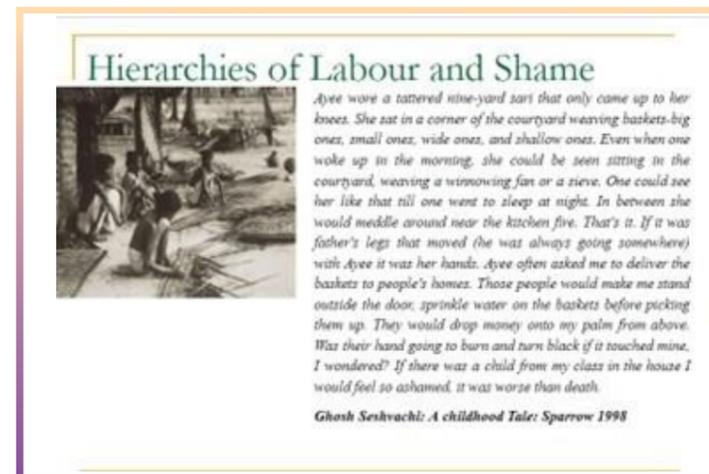


Figure 10: Caste as a system of stratification directly influences notions of dignity and shame

specialised services with social utilities which requires range of skills such as companionship, psychotherapy, entertainment, performance, attending to affective needs of clients. In the Indian context, intersections of caste and sexuality are important constituents of patriarchy which have been theorised by the feminist scholars and open up a dialogue with state in the demand for rights and recognition.

INTERTWINING GENDER AND STATE

The session on caste furthered our exploration to look at the State which was a representation of a public sphere/space and the understanding it carried around the notions of womanhood. The dialogue on gender and state opened up with a discussion on post-colonial national policies and programmes on gender in order to understand women. The curriculum tried to outline the gendered and patriarchal understanding of the state in formulating policies which affected and treated men and women differently. The idea of womanhood is rooted in a patriarchal framework which was echoed by the state. These ideas could be drawn out from the national-level campaigns, policies and legislations around women, the welfare and development programmes for women and even in public commentaries which curriculum made a point to discuss. These examples, helped to derive the point that despite the formal equal citizenship granted by Independent India, women continue to be perceived primarily as unpaid caregivers and mothers and home-makers but not as workers in the same way that men are.

Feminists have called the attention to the fact that much of the labour policies have worked against the interest of the women workers denying them right to livelihood and dignity of labour. To illustrate this, one can look at those countries where state and religious bodies collaborate to formulate legislations which then end up safeguarding the patriarchal interests of majoritarian communities against the interests of women.

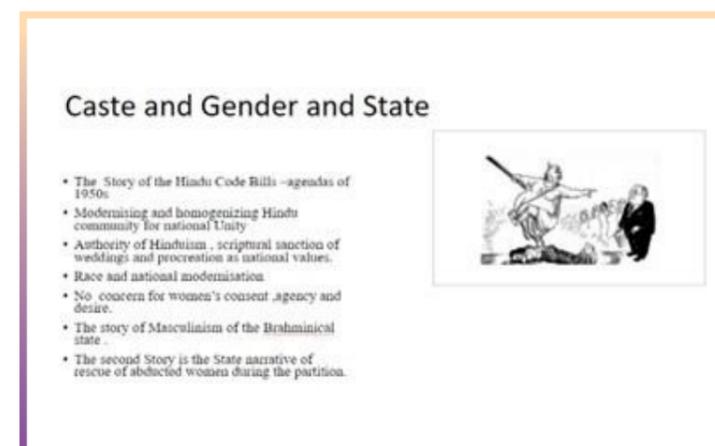


Figure 11: The idea of state is also embedded in Caste system and inequality

However, in democratic countries like India state is more nonchalantly seen as a welfare state which offers several possibilities for women to negotiate sexual division of labour and recentre women's development (through gender mainstreaming) but still fails to challenge the gendered ideas.



Figure 12: An image from Twitter, showing how State maintains familialism

Wendy Brown for instance has argued that the State is masculinist in so far as the State power is "an expression of male predominance in public life and male dominance generally".
Wendy Brown, States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity (1995)



Figure 13 A small snippet delving into inter-relationship of state and history of women's movement

Curriculum looked at this notion critically and challenges them using the feminist and labor lens. One, it examined the role of women's movement in bringing the attention of the state closer to the needs of women for example demanding safety, protection, access to public infrastructure including participation in public life. Two, it looked at feminist scholarship which has highlighted and analyzed the patriarchal character and power dimensions in the state. It looked at the ideas developed by feminist such as Wendy Brown that welfare state is masculinist in nature and, it renders enormous

economic power over vulnerable women by arbitrarily setting terms for their livelihood. It makes them always dependent on State provisions of welfare and not on their income or skills or on quality of life that they are constitutionally entitled to.

So, by looking at these two strands which make the state's presence 'necessary' as much as it is 'exclusionary', the curriculum looked at the women in the pastoral community who are constantly in battle with the state for the assertion of their identity, representation and inclusion.

Pastoral community represents the traits which weakens the very basis on which the state is built. The need for uniform identities, stable locations, and material well-being are a few things state needs from its population to sustain itself and on the contrary pastoral community is not part of this bargain owing to their nomadic traits. They are difficult to be administered by the state which as a result devoid them of any benefits which state has to offer.



Figure 14: The concept of the State has rested on the imagination of Nation as a home, Home as Mother, Nation as Motherland

Their culture of movement and migrations resists assimilation into settled societies, and thrives on an organized rejection of property rights that define settled societies. Their lives or economy is not centred around a property, or a defined territory. Instead, it is premised on their ability to adapt, change, move, and habit multiple 'homes'. Their identity, therefore, often constitutes a cultural exception within concepts of the nation state.
(Sushma, Background Note)

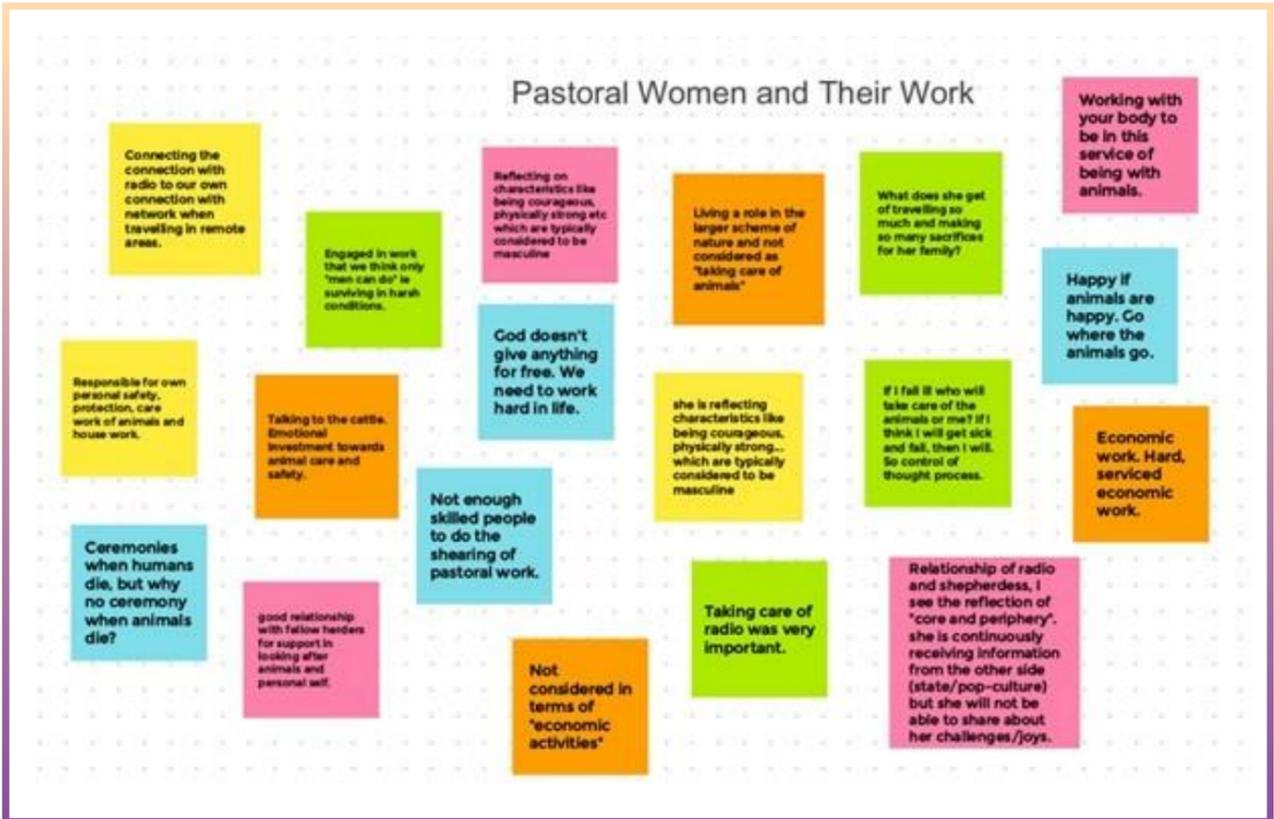


Figure 15: From the session on Pastoralism which was trying to construct the understanding on the work of pastoral women and state!

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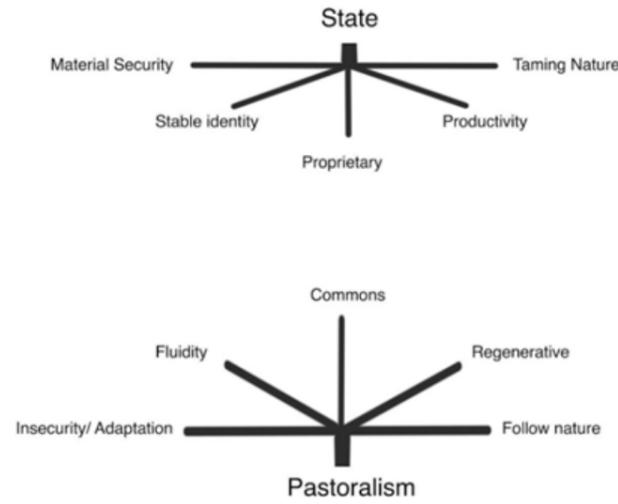


Figure 16: An image from the session on Pastoral women, looking into conflict between the interests of state and pastoral community

POLITICS OF DATA



Figure 17: A painting by a boy from Kerala, showing his mother working which looks at dismissal data on women workforce participation owing to their reproductive labour

For example, we looked at how data is interpreted and analysed in bringing value and visibility in women's lives especially when there is a steady decline in the women workforce participation rates in India. The decline is attributed to multiple factors such as mismeasurement of women's work, lack of demand for jobs in occupations and industries suitable for women or the supply side effect which depicts that with an increase in household income, women, especially in poorer families, withdraw from arduous work' (Shiney Chakraborty, Background Note, 2021). However, what remains crucial is to examine those aspects and areas of lives in which women are engaged. ILO has reported in 2018 that 'globally, women perform 76.2 per cent of total hours of unpaid care work, more than three times as much as men. In Asia and the Pacific, this rises to 80 per cent⁶.' So, the declining rate of women's workforce participation and simultaneous rise of women's primary and predominant role in unpaid care activities has an interesting story of women's nature of work which the curriculum tried to tell.

One of the key areas on which feminist economist have focussed is to create a comprehensive outlook in reading figures and data on women. ISST's own four-decade long journey in highlighting women's livelihood challenges is testimony to this fact. The curriculum attempted to highlight the invisible nature of women's work.

Recognised work data:

- India records the lowest women's workforce participation rates (WPR) in the world and additionally, official employment and unemployment surveys highlight a decline over the period 1983 to 2018-19. There has been much discussion on the evidence from National Sample Survey Organisations (NSSO) large sample surveys on employment, on the significant decline in women's WPR and various explanations have been offered for this decline up to 2011-12, like:
 - Poor measurement and invisibilization of women's work,
 - lack of demand for jobs in occupations and industries suitable for women, and
 - supply side effect, which argues that an increase in household income, women, especially from poorer families, withdraw from arduous work. The withdrawal effect can also be observed among well educated women from middle class families.
 - increased participation in education (for younger age groups)
 - shift to more women engaging in unpaid household work which includes household chores such as cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping, caring for the elderly and children. (S Chakraborty)

Figure 19: Understanding data from feminist economist lens

The discussions in the session helped to highlight (mis)counting women's work, brought forward the feminist methodological approach to look at data, creating a framework to construct questionnaires for national-level surveys through TUS were some key elements in the curriculum which highlighted the politics of data which makes women's work invisible.

Seeking part time work

- The sense of being responsible for the household work
- Inclination towards acquiring a regular part-time basis if work was available within the household.
- Over time 1993-94 to 2011-12, their preference for regular part time job within the household premises increased further confirming that women feel they continue to be responsible for housework.
- Perception of self and others limiting women's work choices along with domestic work burden.

Figure 20: Trends of women in paid occupations

This session brought forward the feminist methodological lens in reading data and trends to enrich our understanding of systemic inequality which women face when it comes to making choice in work!

Such as, explaining the trends in women's employment which are shifting towards looking for avenues for part-time work. This trend comes more from the struggle of balancing the paid and unpaid activities which women perform than lack of income opportunities or skill sets.

The need to look at economics and data from a feminist lens was an important exercise to build structural understanding on the existing numbers of women workers. What gets counted as 'work' and who gets counted as 'worker' was an important inquiry which is shaped by social structures such as patriarchy, family, caste; political structures such as State and economic structures such as Markets. It then opened into exploring the nexus of state and market to understand women's work.

LOCATING WOMEN WORKERS IN GLOBAL MARKETS

Looking back to the decade of the 90's, some of the important economic processes and subsequent shift in the economic policies helps us to draw an understanding of the relationship between state and markets in the lives of women. The adoption of structural adjustment policies stimulated the growth of the free and private market, diminishing state scrutiny and regulation from the economic policies. As a consequence, funds were heavily cut down from the public sector such as health, education and economic welfare programmes. The significant rise of new markets paved the way to new sectors such as media, computers, internet, retailing and so on. This was a global phenomenon known as Neoliberalism but as a process it unfolded

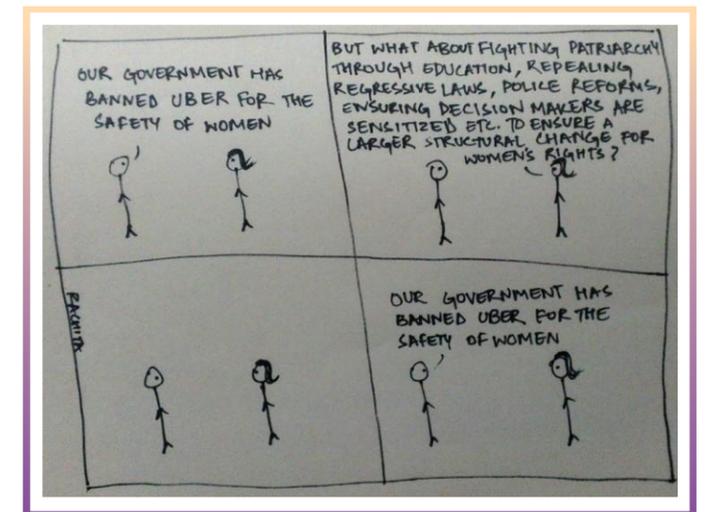


Figure 21: An image used during the session to critically looking at how state policies imagine and frame legislations for women!!!

differently in the South Asian Context owing to unique class variance and socio-cultural peculiarities such as Caste system. Neo-Liberal policies are materialised and sustained through the state apparatus.

⁶ https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/news/WCMS_633284/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20report%2C%20Globally,times%20as%20much%20as%20men.&text=A%202017%20ILO%2D%20Gallup%20report,workforce%2C%20and%20that%20men%20agree.

Gender, work under neo-liberalism

- Neo-liberalism's reworking of economy and society in India is about management of populations by reworking gender order.
- Neoliberal policies have given rise to what critics call a '**feminisation**' of labour, accompanied by a deterioration of working conditions. Women's work in the informal sector .
- **Young women** have been reinvented as entrepreneurial subjects by governments, (as evident from their policies and strategies) and by the multinational political agencies (through their recommendations and proposals to various states) and transnational corporations (through their charitable campaigns).
- Sexism is part of the neo-liberal entrenchment of women labourers.
- Cuts in state benefits and State provisions such as housing, child care and health care have affected poor, lower caste and minority women.
- **Strengthening of Patriarchy** : the practice of neoliberalism draws upon, incorporates and reinforces existing patriarchal relationships of power and selectively re-emphasizes patriarchal social norms. For example , the widespread perception that women's work is only an addition to the household income leads to undervaluation of women's public employment where women 'voluntary' workers receive well below minimum wages and that has got institutionalized in many government programmes. (See ISSST unit on women in public employment).

Figure 22 Neo-liberalism and gender relations

However, the curriculum explored the gendered dimension and impact of neo-liberal policies on women. The withdrawal of state policies has played a key role in increasing the unpaid care burden of women by reducing the social expenditure on childcare, health, maternity benefit etc. but, it also opened new forms of work for women especially in the formal sector. We looked at some of the public/formal sector workers who are known as 'scheme workers' such as ASHA, Anganwadi workers, para teachers, mid-day meal workers who do not get recognition as 'workers' and are paid less than the minimum wage including many other challenges.

Underpaid and Overworked

- Frontline workers face many issues:
- Not considered employees
 - Pay sometimes less than even minimum wages
 - Poor infrastructure for the services they provide
 - Few career prospects
 - Large number of vacancies

Figure 23: Attributes of women's employment

In the last two decades in India, there has been a considerable amount of increase in home-based and self-employed category workers engaged in the informal and unorganised sector due to neo-liberal economy. Irrespective of generating employment opportunities it led to multiple challenges such as poor remuneration, absence of social security, health risks, increment of unpaid labour for women etc. The Curriculum opened up the debate by looking at various occupations in which women are working. It attempted to underline the meaning of work and wage for women which also intersects with their caste-class positioning in society.

For instance, public employment is attributed to better pay, security, social acceptance and fixed working hours. It is one of the most preferred choices of employment for both men and women. However, the session on women in public employment showed that the presence of women in this sector is not only low but also remains concentrated around limited occupations such as education, social work, and human health activities. Looking at scheme workers such as ASHA, Anganwadi workers who are in public employment, it reveals that the conditions of work are abysmally poor and there is no recognition of them as 'workers'.

Not recognised

We get the entire Rs. 7,500 only if we do all that. We are managing to meet this target these days as because of the new maternity benefit scheme of the government, people are preferring to go to the government hospital for delivery and pregnancy. Then we take them and meet our targets also.

- ASHA, Hyderabad

In front of the patient, 80% ANMs are disrespectful, saying that we get paid for this. As if the ANM s are not also paid for this work. For one PNC we get 250 rs for which we have to go to patients' houses 6-7 times,

- ASHA, Delhi

They'll tell me "what's your status, you are a social worker, stay within your limits". My own department people tell me that. Ok, if I am a social worker then you cannot call me to work even if I am sick – can't pull me up and say submit records...Only if my stomach is full, I can work, right

- ASHA, Delhi

3 DECEMBER 2021

Dipa Sinha

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Figure 24: Bringing in voices from the ground on informality in the formal sector

As one of the facilitators spoke:

“Looking at public employment is one way in which we have understood the intersections of patriarchy and neoliberalism; in the context of both of these how the state actually becomes the agency which exploits women's labour by using women to do work which is traditionally seen as to be women's domain. It could be an extension of women's unpaid labour which women do at home. So, it is very easy for state to say things like in the ICDS system or even certain policies like on mid-day meals, they often throw in line like we will take women because they can take care of children at house so she can do it for the community too, and then slowly somewhere the idea of volunteering will come in.”

HOME BASED WORK AND THE GENDERED INFORMALITY

• There is a peculiar nature of informality in home-based work- because of its deep level of invisibilization and **hidden** nature, any kind of formalization (in terms of any kind of social security benefits, or coverage under formal laws) escapes the cracks that home-based work allows for. In fact it is the very nature of home-based work at the site of home as a place of work that reinforces all kinds of stereotyping of the woman worker- that **the home-based worker is only a supplementary worker or a helper**. In fact, the home-based worker herself never identifies herself as a 'worker' but talks about her work as 'time-pass' (ISST Study 2017).

- Irregular payments, meagre income, no formal contract

Women in home-based work- cheap labour- meagre income- heavy workload- YET... no recognition of 'work'

"If we bring the work on our wish or if the children get it and we are unable to prepare the food in time due to the heavy workload, the men get very angry. They ask why we do this work if it is not fetching us any money. They say that we are unable to even cook in time or take care of the children due to the workload and then it is not even giving us any return - neither in terms of money nor in terms of timely payment" (ISST, 2018).

Figure 25: Looking at informality on Home-based work

face issues of identity and exclusion as workers relatively more than other informal sector workers. Home-based work is one of oldest forms of work which has provided employment through making rolling tobacco leaves, leather shoe making or handicrafts etc. However, with the coming of neo-liberal economic policies and global value-chains there has been a change in the forms of home-based working. The curriculum looked at this phenomena through a gendered lens and highlighted the effects of informality which continues to perceive women home-based workers as a supplementary worker.

While home-based work highlighted unique informality in women's work, the session on gig economy spoke about the casualisation of women workers in the digital platform economy which is on rise. This new industry has exacerbated neoliberalism's industrial relations to the point where a new term, the "Gig Economy", has arisen to describe what workers have now - "gigs" instead of jobs.

Locating women in gig economy

- Platforms are highly gendered
- The verticals that women prefer to work in also constitute only a small percentage of available jobs. Of the 21 lakhs plus jobs created in 2019, jobs in the beauty industry constitute only 1.17 percent whereas jobs in cleaning and schools constitute 11.88 percent and 2.33 percent respectively (BetterPlace, 2019)
- The limited representation of women in the gig economy is indicative of a larger trend in the Indian labour market
- Opportunities to earn gets curtailed owing to gender norms, restriction of mobility, unpaid care work responsibilities.
- 'Flexibility' in the gig economy does not significantly change women's primary position as caregivers, often affecting their ability to earn more or skill up.
- Digital divide and lack of opportunity in the gig economy - access to technology, skills and ownership of smart phones. The Mobile Gender Gap Report 2020 by GSM Association - the digital gender divide in India is 20% in ownership of mobile phones while the gender gap in access to the internet is even more alarming with a 50% gap (Rountree, 2020).

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmCUSSNDoy0>

Figure 26: Understanding Platform economy from women's lens

Looking through various sectors where women are engaged such as sex work, domestic work, gig-economy, home-based work and others have shown the complex reality of women and work which further deepens with the intersectionality of caste, class and sexuality. The ideas discussed in the curriculum were particularly important in bringing forth the modus operandi in which women are working. For women, the nature of work in the household and income-generating activities are subsumed in each other mirroring the value of their work.

Years of feminist struggle and long battles with state has won women piecemeal of recognition and identity but the idea of gendered inequality still remains unchallenged. Through this we attempted to engender an approach and a perspective which enables the reader to go beyond the theoretical framework and integrate the notion of women's labour with not just the economic process but also social and the political.

In ConcluSion: BRInGIng DIFFEREnT STORIES ToGETHER

Since the intent of this course was to bring forth critical perspectives around women's work, creating spaces for continuous reflection and engagement with the concepts appeared important. However, the course being in an online format held its own challenges. While each session used pedagogy which pushed for vibrant discussions and reflections on both personal and professional arenas, interaction between the participants beyond the sessions remained limited. It was also at times difficult to note if a particular session has been able to meet its said objectives.

In order to overcome these challenges, the ISST team tried to create several avenues through which participants could share their experiences and reflect on the learnings that each session was trying to convey.

All the participants and the ISST team members were added to a Whatsapp group. This helped in sharing information with all the participants at the same time but more importantly also gave the participants a platform to share their reflections and learnings. This group led to sharing a lot of news articles, videos, memes which were related in some way or the other with what had been transacted in the sessions. For example, after the session on Care work, many participants used that platform to share anecdotes from their own lives and after the Gig session, the platform was used to share current news on agitation by Gig workers.

Apart from the Whatsapp group, the ISST team also created a blog⁷ as a platform for participants to share their stories and reflections. There was no compulsion on any one but several participants used it to share experiences from their own personal and professional arenas and tried to reflect on them through the concepts delivered in the sessions. These reflections were on diverse aspects - links between work, movement and finding home; stories about imagining employment and child care facilities near home; reflections on bodies (ageing) and labouring; unrecognition of labour and absence of labour protection. There were also hopes and disappointments shared about the current state of affairs both at the state/policy level because of absence of laws and social protection for women workers and also within the households, personal spaces, relationships of continuing to face devaluing of women's work.

⁷ Link to the blog - <https://medium.com/@isstwomen.work/women-and-work-making-it-count-8191d0bb8409>

A Blog Entry..

Search For Home

Is it the sense of belongingness to an indeterminate horizon?
Is it the rootedness in a specific geographical location?
What is it that provides meaning to 'home'?
What gives 'home' a sense, an existence?
For some, home transcends the physicality of self,
For others, home gives the sense of identity,
 nested deep in its very presence...
 'Home' and its varied interpretations...
 finds a place in literary and cultural theory,
Its meaning is contested from varied perspectives in philosophy...
It echoes within the conceptualization of self to 'being-in the world'
 from Socratic ideas to its phenomenological sense...
Home and the associated 'belongingness' do exist in eternity...
 Where being gets tied to emotionality,
and home becoming a mental experience, a state of mind...
Where hidden potentialities and creative energies unfold,
Transforming it into a space of emotion and memory...
When by-lanes of memory encapsulates 'home'....
 In this search for home and its meaning...
 Millions are in the state of homelessness..
 Fleeing war, persecution and violence...
 Remaining in persistent hopelessness...
 Gathering up all courage to find some solace...
 Their undaunted spirit searches for a home...
 in an unending world, no place to call one's own...
Same goes for a woman who does not get a space of her own
 The search for a room to call her own...
 amidst the conflict of interests and claims...
 What one owns and what one doesn't...
 'Search' never ends....
 It continues...
 till body transforms into ashes...
 or gets subsumed by earth's patches...
 and gets to know that home is nowhere...
 The utmost satisfaction that lies in giving
 Making friends with the radio, taking care of that box
 Stories pouring in from it and
 the Shepherdess making peace with the emptiness...
 Long walks on snowy mountains or crossing hot deserts..
Is it the movement that creates the idea of 'home'?

Contributor: Tauseef Faitma teaches at the Centre for Women Studies, Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh.

The ISST team also created a comprehensive feedback mechanism through which participant feedback was collected at three levels – first, after each session through telephonic calls. ISST team members called randomly some of the participants on rotation basis after each session to understand and gather their views on the respective session, what they liked, what could have been done differently and what were their take-aways. Second, feedback was taken in written form from each participant after completion of an entire module to understand whether they were able to see the connectivity between all the sessions within the module. At third level, feedback was taken at the end of the course. This was more through an online session where feedback was taken on the entire course content and delivery. Even though the course was online, this mechanism gave us a chance to stay connected with our participants and also gave them a chance to ask questions and resolve confusions if any. ISST team also took regular feedback from each facilitator. One session of feedback was right after the session and another after the course had ended. This helped us in understanding the challenges that the facilitators faced in delivering the session in an online mode.

“My experience has been really good. I have not had any theoretical background and no experience in sociology so everything is new to me. I deal with it at work but no training on it. The two days are heavy but it's good. I like that it's interactive. So many different people come from different backgrounds– a good course for practitioners. Some terminologies are new, a resource on who are the people working on different topics– like caste, gender– a bibliography would be helpful.”

(Feedback from a participant taken through telephone call)

The insights that we received from the participants and the facilitators, helped us to measure our performance and bring in changes as and when possible. For example, after the third session we stopped dividing participants into groups for virtual group meetings, as both the participants and the facilitators felt that it was not helping in generating a good discussion as a lot of time was going in dividing the group and also due to technical issues, participants were constantly dropping out of groups which was hampering their ability to participate in a meaningful conversation.

The blog and the Whatsapp group are existing till date and correspondence continues.

“I am not good at cooking and I rarely enter the kitchen. My husband handles the cooking and I arrange other household work like calling the electrician, plumber etc. This is our arrangement and it is fine but recently when my

in-laws came to visit me, I would do many things for them— if food was not ready on time, I would cook for them and do things for them that I normally never did even at home. Once my husband asked me why I'm a different person with them. I didn't realise how much I changed in front of them and became different. I enter the kitchen to cook even when I don't like it. I just did it because I felt it's expected for me as a daughter-in-law and they will not respect me if I don't cook and portray that perfect "bahu". When my husband challenged my behaviour and approach I would fight with him, but after attending this course and understanding women's work it has changed my perspective and behaviour a lot".

(Feedback from a participant taken through telephone call)



This is just one of the anecdotes shared by the participants on reflecting about some of the insights that the course added to their lives.

We wanted to share this, so as to show how this journey has been a personal, reflective journey for most of us— the team as well as the participants who sailed along. We found connections and resonances in our everyday lives about labour being invisibilized, or realisations about unpaid care work or women's work also needed in the discourse around men and masculinities, for instance. The attempt with which we started, was to be able to create connects and relatedness in the lives and experiences of participants through concepts, histories and feminist ideas. It was an effort in creating this perspective on women's work as a living, accessible and relatable example that could be used in their professional and personal spaces.

The impetus with which the course began to link household, state and market; to make linkages with the social, political structures and the economy at large; to tie experiences with conceptual language and vocabulary and to mark the woman worker's identity as central to any work that happens on women empowerment, found reflections in some way or the other with the sharing of these stories. The team did an extensive back and forth to engage with participants, to receive feedback, reflections, inputs. We learnt along the way, accommodated and modified our ways of sharing and transacting the course. However, it was the trust and the space that got created in these 4 months that allowed the process of learning together. This journey and the reflections shared, are telling of the feminist and political processes that we began with and they have inspired us to create an ethical sharing and learning space. This curriculum in that sense has been a significant witness and creating of such a space, where a perspective on woman and work imagined, conceptualised through feminist histories and a feminist institution found home in the lives and stories of many others. We hope to continue, aspire and imagine these processes in future.

A GLOSSARY- OF IDEAS, CONCEPTS, STORIES

Curriculum on Women and Work was built on a vast canvas through various theories and contemporary milieu. While we weaved the story of women and work, various historical concepts and ideas emerged before us which were crucial to put down in order to enhance our understanding in this course. Some of the important terms are listed below

1. **Patriarchy:** is a system which manifests and institutionalises male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It is an ideology that supports and maintains male superiority and control over women through an unequal system of distribution. The understanding of patriarchy has been concretized by women's experience of power, dominance and subordination.
2. **Brahminical Patriarchy:** describes the dominance of upper caste men/ideology in shaping our worldview, that puts the superiority and hegemony of upper caste communities in gender and caste relations. Brahminical Patriarchy is a point of entrance to the Caste system. The control is secured through father, son, the state, its laws and religion etc. The consent is acquired and maintained through glorification of virtues.
3. **Public Patriarchy:** denotes shift in which patriarchal relations move from familial space to the public space. It is created by sustaining the ideology of gendered division of labour outside of the familial and household space.
4. **Capitalist Patriarchy:** brings out the dialectical relationship between capital and patriarchy which controls women's labour through gender wage gap and differentiated labour markets and perpetuation of women's unpaid work at home.
5. **Gendered division of Labour:** It refers to a system of gendered organization around work and occupational segregation between men and women.
6. **Public Private divide:** It is an ideological and spatial separation between the realm of politics, public institutions, markets which is defined as public with that of familial and domestic space of home which is private. Feminist economist have challenged this divide as it superimposes the male superiority in public and control over women's reproductive labour.
7. **Productive and Reproductive Work:** This has originated from feminist and labour discourses to talk about the organization of gender relations around the idea of work and labour. Productive refers to output-based labour leading to production of material assets whereas reproductive labour refers to non-remunerated activities which produce the labour force. The binary between productive and reproductive has been sharply criticised for viewing women's work as only 'reproductive'
8. **Social Reproduction Theory:** It shows how the production of goods and services and the production of life are part of one integrated process. Marxist Feminists have argued that if the formal economy is the production site for goods and services, the people who produce such things are themselves produced outside the ambit of the formal economy at very little cost for capital.
9. **Paid and Unpaid Work:** Work can be divided into paid and unpaid. Paid work refers to any kind of work done for monetary exchange while unpaid work refers to production of goods and services for consumption within a family/household. Feminist economist have highlighted women's engagement in unpaid roles at home and in paid labour force.

10. **Continuum of Unpaid and Paid Work:** It is used to describe the nature of women's work which is often seen overlapping the boundaries of productive and reproductive work. It argues that women's engagement in unpaid care roles within households are further subsumed into paid employment through their increased participation in care economy such as nursing, teaching, paid domestic work etc.
11. **Time Poverty:** It literally translates as shortage of time but in the context of gender and labour studies it refers to long working hours in labour market and household work. Globally women spend more hours in unpaid care work than men which makes them time pressed leaving little or no time for leisure and rest.
12. **Time Stretching:** For women lack of time often leads to time-stretching in which productive and reproductive work is fit in within 24 hours by squeezing sleeping time and working till late.
13. **Gendered Familialism:** is an ideology which shapes the public/policy discourse around care practices in India. It sees care work in relation to children as an exclusive and private responsibility of the family and within the family, that of women members of the household. It ignores any power dynamics or inequalities that may exist in familial relations as ordinary aspects of any social unit.
14. **Embodiment:** The idea of 'embodiment' helps to understand women's work and the woman worker through a specific gendered lens as well as in the labour(ing) of women's bodies. It is a notional understanding of 'work' that is done, performed and emoted by the 'body'
15. **State vs Sarkar:** The State is an entity – both institutional and symbolic – which influences and orders the day to day life of people through its various apparatuses. Whereas Sarkar or government instantiates the state by means of enforcing, protecting and bestowing the rights and duties on its subjects ranging from fundamental rights, human rights and security among others.
16. **Masculine State:** State can be masculine without pursuing the interests of 'men' openly or intentionally but through multiple dimensions of masculinity which are socially and historically constructed. Indian feminists have highlighted that the developmental ideals of the Nation-State were built on the reproductive control and forceful invasion of women's bodies through means of family and welfare.
17. **Feminization of Labour:** refers to women's increased participation in paid work as well as to the deterioration of working conditions in previously male jobs. It describes the changing nature of employment where irregular conditions -- once thought to be the hallmark of women's paid employment -- have become widespread for both sexes. In general, increasing numbers of women have been incorporated into paid employment under conditions inferior to men.
18. **Data Politics:** It refers to the careful examination and interpretation of data and figures using the gender-lens to highlight the gaps and invisibilization of women workers in the macro-economics. Data plays a huge role influencing the discourse of women and work.
19. **Formal and Informal employment:** Formal employment is the recognition of workers who are entitled to social security benefits provided by the employer in the public and private sector whereas workers in the informal sector are recognised as casual workers who are not protected by any social security act or labour laws.
20. **Informalisation of the Formal sector:** It has been seen that due to the impact of neo-liberal economic policies, the quality of employment in the public sector has been decreasing and the nature of employment is shifting towards contractual or informalisation. The social and economic benefits attached to the formal sector are now withering away which is making the distinction more blurred

than before. For instance, the conditions of work of scheme workers, who are engaged in the public sector but not identified as 'workers'.

21. **'Home' as a place of Work:** This idea problematizes the colonial distinction of home as reproductive sphere and locates workplace outside of home as productive sphere. It brings out the complexities of women workers when the location of paid-unpaid and reproductive-productive activities are carried within their homes.
22. **Platform Economy:** is the tendency for commerce to move towards and favour digital platform business models. Platforms are underlined computer systems that host services that allow consumers, entrepreneurs, businesses and the general public to connect, share or transact resources. For e.g., Amazon, Uber, Urban Clap etc.

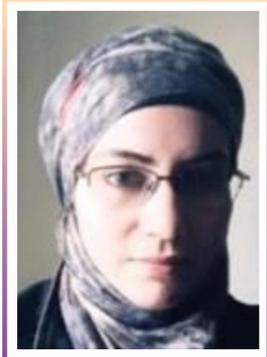
PARTICIPANTS PROFILE

There were in total, 113 applications from India, 1 from Pakistan, 2 from Bangladesh, 1 from Srilanka, and 2 from Nepal. We also received applications from other countries such as the US, UK, Iraq and countries from the African continent. We could not shortlist any applicants from these other countries as the course is embedded in the Indian context and would not have been suitable for them. Hence applications were only considered from Indian and South Asian applicants. In total 31 applicants were shortlisted of which, 28 were from India, 2 from Bangladesh and 1 from Nepal. 5 participants dropped out of the course due to personal reasons.

Sr. No.	Name of the Participant	Affiliation
1	Anushka Rose	Centre for Labour Research and Action
2	Waseem Akbar Baba	Delhi University
3	Nidhi Batra	Sehreeti Developmental Practices
4	Azmat Minhaz	Quest Alliance
5	Neeta Hardikar	ANANDI – Area Networking and Development Initiatives
6	Sapna Kedia	International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW)
7	Sonia Sharma	Mobile Creches
8	Shruti Singh	Rapid Rural Response to COVID-19 in India
9	Swati Shukla	Mobile Creches
10	Sonmani Choudhary	Centre for Catalyzing Change
11	Gunjan Bihari	Centre for Catalyzing Change
12	Elangbam Ashakiran Chanu	Jawaharlal Nehru University
13	Kanika	UNDP–Bangladesh
14	Deepanjali Shrestha	British Council
15	Tauseef Fatima	Aligarh Muslim University
16	Vijeta	Centre for Labour Research and Action
17	Rama Vedula	American–Jewish World Service (AJWS)

Sr. No.	Name of the Participant	Affiliation
18	Archana Dwivedi	Nirantar Trust
19	Suman Parmar	Nirantar Trust
20	Wangshinaro Yaden	Sakhi One Stop Centre
21	Jyotsna Lall	Aga Khan Foundation
22	Camellia Reja	Tata Institute of Social Science
23	Sumaiya Siddiqui	University of Dhaka
24	Amtul Waris	Indian Institute of Rice Research
25	Ruqayya Noorin	Noble Degree and PG college
26	Nitin Bisht	Indian Institute of Technology– Roorkee
27	Dr.Kancharla Valentina	Ambedkar University, Delhi
28	Geeta Sachin Oza	ANANDI
29	Baksheesh Sachar	IIT Bombay
30	Sheena Sachdeva	Independent Journalist
31	Suman Bharti	ANANDI

FacuLTy PRoFILE

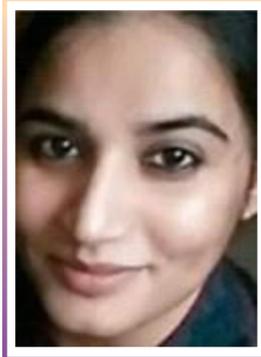
S. No	Name of the Faculty	Sessions undertaken
1		<p>Dipta Bhog, Head of Research, Innovation and Partnerships, Nirantar</p> <p>Dipta Bhog had worked extensively on gender and education for close to three decades. She has worked as a journalist and women's rights activist. Using feminist lens, she has extensively worked in the domain of curriculum building.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understanding Patriarchy · Caste in the context of gender and labour · Tying up sessions in Module 1 and 3
2		<p>Dr. Nilanjana Sengupta, Specialist, International Center for Research on Women</p> <p>Nilanjana has over 15 years of experience of working on issues of labour and livelihoods, poverty, financial inclusion, governance, women's collectives and violence through gender intersectional lens</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · History of women's work in the Indian context · Mapping feminist interventions
3		<p>Mubashira Zaidi, Research Fellow, ISST</p> <p>In her research capacity, Mubashira has contributed to research and analysis in the area of women's economic empowerment, women's work, struggle and women's claims making processes.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understanding the continuum of unpaid and paid carework

S. No	Name of the Faculty	Sessions undertaken
4		<p>Dr. Monika Banerjee, Research Fellow, ISST</p> <p>Monika has worked in the development sector in India and the UK. Her research work focuses on bringing the issue of women's unpaid care work in the realm of policy discourses.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understanding the continuum of unpaid and paid carework · Tying up session in Module 1 and 3
5		<p>Dr. Paromita Chakravarti, Professor, Jadavpur University, Calcutta</p> <p>Paromita teaches Renaissance drama, women's writing, sexuality and film studies. Her work focuses on education and sexuality. She has been involved in the issue of HIV control and prevention with the state and central government.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Caste, Gender and Sexwork · Tying up session in Module 1 and 3
6		<p>Sushma Iyengar, Social Activist and Founder, Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan</p> <p>She has led transformative action with marginalised communities in the area of gender justice, indigenous cultures, traditional livelihoods and has pioneered many grassroots initiatives.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Women in Pastoralism

S. No	Name of the Faculty	Sessions undertaken
7		<p>Ratna M. Sudarshan, Former Director ISST</p> <p>Ratna is a member of board of trustees and former Director of ISST. Her research work had primarily focussed on aspects of women's work, informal economy, education, employment amongst many more.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Visibility/Invisibility of women's work in official data · Unravelling the mystery of declining WPR
8		<p>Dr. Ellina Samantroy, Fellow, V.V. Giri National Labour Institute</p> <p>Ellina is working as a faculty at the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute. A trained sociologist, her interests are in the area of unpaid work, Time Use Studies, gender statistics.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Feminist intervention in terms of visiblizing women's work
9		<p>Dr. S. Anandhi, Professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai</p> <p>Anandhi specializes in the area of gender studies with a special focus on caste and social movements in colonial and post-colonial Tamil Nadu.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Framing the State and understanding its engagement with Women's work · Neoliberalism, Informality and Women's work

S. No	Name of the Faculty	Sessions undertaken
10		<p>Anweshaa Ghosh, Research Fellow, ISST</p> <p>Anweshaa is a qualitative researcher and has been working in the development sector for over 14 years. She has been leading several projects in South Asia around women's informal labour, domestic work, gig economy etc.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Women as gig workers
11		<p>Risha Ramachandra, Researcher, ISST</p> <p>Risha's work primarily focuses on digital economy, care work, informal workers and women in tourism from gender and rights perspective. She has also worked on developing a training curriculum on Psycho-social aspects of entrepreneurship under TISS.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Women as Gig Workers
12		<p>Dipa Sinha, Assistant Professor, Ambedkar University, Delhi</p> <p>Dipa has worked on issues related to food rights, nutrition and public health. She is actively involved with the Right to Food Campaign and written extensively on issues related to public policy, health and nutrition.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Women in Public Employment

PAnELIST PRoFILE

S. No	Name of the Faculty	Sessions undertaken
13		<p>Gurpreet Kaur, Researcher, ISST</p> <p>Gurpreet's interest lies in the areas of feminist research, gender and development, women's collectivization and the question of women's labour. She has worked closely with ethnographic and socially transformative methodologies to understand women's lives.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Women in Home-based work
14		<p>Ashmeet Kaur, Researcher, ISST</p> <p>Ashmeet is working with ISST under the project- 'Creating Momentum for Gender Transformative Programming and Advancing Gender'. She is interested in understanding and unpacking peculiarities of violence against women.</p> <p>Session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Women in Home-based work

Sr. No.	Name	Affiliation
1.	Dr. Jahnvi Andharia	Research Fellow and Director, ISST
2.	Prof. Mary E. John	Centre for Women and Development Studies
3.	Prof. Gita Sen	Professor and Director, Ramalingaswami Centre on Equity and Social Determinants of Health
4.	Prof. Uma Chakravarti	Indian historian and filmmaker
5.	Prof. Sujatha Surrepalli	Professor, Satavahana University, Telangana
6.	Seema Kulkarni	Member, National Facilitation Team of Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch (MAKAAM)
7.	Sejal Dand	Executive Director and Practice Lead at ANANDI
8.	Rakhi Sehgal	Vice President, Hero Honda Theka Mazdoor Sangathan
9.	Elizabeth Khumallambam	Founder, Member at Community for Social Change and Development
10.	Dhanalakshmi	ASHA Worker
11.	Sunita	ASHA Worker
12.	Abha Chaturvedi	ASHA Worker
13.	Banaani Deka	Project Officer, Public Services International
14.	Ayesha Datta	PhD Scholar, Buffalo University, USA
15.	Sonakshi Agarwal	Homenet South Asia
16.	Malvika Narayan	Project Associate, Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO)



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