

only if he/she reports having worked atleast sometime in the reference period and by this criterion unpaid workers and persons engaged in domestic work are deemed unproductive and categorised as 'non-workers'. Since bulk of the unpaid/domestic work is performed by women, the Census figures of women's work participation rate is an inadequate indicator of their true productive role. According to the 1981 Census, about 55 per cent of the 'non-workers' among women are engaged in housework and they should be ideally considered in the enumeration of women's work.

The National Sample Survey (NSS), which is another source of labour force data, in its 32nd Round, for the first time attempted an enquiry about women engaged in 'household' duties. Data was collected on participation by respondents in various activities which raised the percentage of work participation of women.¹ However, even this exercise maintains a distinction between 'domestic duties only' and 'other activities', implicitly assuming that domestic duties are non-economic.

Besides the issue of treating housework as productive, some economists in this country have argued in favour of computing the money value of housework and for its inclusion in national product. This is because omission of this sphere of activity leads to downward bias in GNP statistics which can be substantial. The bias could be particularly severe for a country like India, where sizeable production in real terms occurs within households and is also time consuming in nature. In the industrially advanced countries, in contrast, housework does not require much time input. This is partly the result of mechanisation of some categories of housework and partly the emergence of specialized industries such as food processing as a result of which food preparation has become much less demanding in time. In view of this difference, we believe that the value of home production in India is likely to be much more compared to the developed countries.

Estimating the money value of household services has implications for other issues also. For instance, analysis of income distribution across households should take into account the value of domestic work since the goods and services that a family consumes consist in large measures of commodities produce at home. If this value of home production differs more or less between individual households than does their market income, then a measure of income distribution that considers only the latter is insufficient. Even in tax collection, imposing a tax on market incomes but not on the income generated by housework results in narrowing the tax base and unequal treatment of people who may otherwise be equally placed. (Musgrave, 1956). Evaluating housework in monetary terms has legal implications in the context of divorce settlements where it has been pointed out that account should be taken of the contributions "in the form of money, service,