

**UNDERSTANDING GENDERED LABOUR IN A ‘GLOBAL  
CITY’: A STUDY OF WOMEN SHOP-FLOOR  
EMPLOYEES IN A SHOPPING MALL IN HYDERABAD**

*A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**in**

**SOCIOLOGY**

**by**

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**[12SSPH11]**



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### **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the research embodied in the present thesis entitled, **“Gendered Labour in a ‘Global City’: A Study of Women Shop-floor Employees in a Shopping Mall in Hyderabad”** is carried out under the supervision of **Prof. Aparna Rayaprol**, Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is an original work of mine and to the best of my knowledge no part of this thesis has been submitted for the award of any research degree or diploma at any university. I also declare that this is a bonafide research work which is free from plagiarism. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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This is to certify that the thesis “**Understanding Gendered Labour in a ‘Global City’: A Study of Women Shop-floor Employees in a Shopping Mall in Hyderabad**” submitted by Ipsita Pradhan bearing registration number **12SSPH11** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, in the School of Social Sciences is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance

This thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other university or institution for award of any degree or diploma.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

*It is around 9 am. As on one gate, bikers and car-drivers wait impatiently for the security guard to open the mall gate for the first movie-show of the day, quietly some others, mostly women walk towards the adjacent gate. With phones in their hands and ear-phones plugged into their ears, with bag-packs these women walk towards the other gate of the mall which leads them to their work place- the Mosaic mall. Dressed mostly in comfortable Indo-western jeans and t-shirts/ kurtis or chudidaars with kurtis, young women get ready to start their work-day just as some others get ready to watch a movie.*

The focus in this thesis is on these women, whose entry to the mall is through the adjacent gate. The gate which allows entry only by the production of a valid identity-card. The gate which opens to a work-place and not a place of consumption or recreation. Is the mall as spectacular through the second gate as is promised to be in the commercial hoardings just outside the mall? These women, the retail shop-floor employees, commonly called as customer service assistants occupy the shopping mall in exchange of their labour. What then, is the nature of the labour? What is the nature of the space<sup>1</sup> in which their labour takes place? Does it have meaning only in the physical structure of the mall or does it have a story to tell in the larger context of capitalist globalization, gendered labour and the city? In attempting to answer the above the questions, the thesis aims to look at the marginalities, inclusions and exclusions that are ramifications of the space in which this labour is performed. This thesis is a study of the way in which the

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term space when I refer to processes and meanings in the physical site, while I use the term place to refer to the structure of the mall.

shopping mall is layered sociologically and presents a different side to the people who work in them.

In this introductory chapter, I discuss the theoretical frames in which the thesis can be located in. Broadly the intersectionality framework and the critique of neoliberal capitalist urban spaces guide the analysis. As we shall see in the methodology chapter, the theory of intersectionality grounds the idea that all women do not have similar experiences. Even when working in the retail space, their experiences are separated by their class, caste, nature of labour, the brands they work for and their socio-economic background. The next broader theme of the critique of neoliberal capitalist urban spaces, specifically the spaces of consumption as spaces of labour, directs the way in which my thesis looks the city space and the nature of shopping malls, where different forms of exclusions and inequalities interact and produce newer patterns which are specific to neoliberal spaces, aggravated by the inherent principle to capitalism which is to produce inequalities.

The first theoretical lens therefore comes from sociology's long engagement with the urban, from a political economy perspective. The global city in the twenty first century is the site where globalization, which has implications for consumption, labour and gender issues, is manifested structurally through shopping malls, amusement parks, fast-food chains or specially created technological parks. The expansion of cultures of consumption calls for an understanding of the new forms of labour. Taking gender as the axis, in the larger spatial context of the city, I try to understand the relationship and between gender and new forms of labour. The relationship between gender and labour and the specific ways in which emotional and aesthetic labour in the service sector, takes

place is one of the next focal points of the thesis. These frameworks, although laid out neatly, are in fact intricately bound up with each other and produce new patterns as a result of their intertwined nature.

## THE CITY

Harvey (2010) calls for the “freedom to make and remake ourselves and our cities” which is “one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights” (18). According to Harvey, capitalism and urbanization go together. Capitalism transforms the cities for its own benefit by ‘*rapid urbanization*’ (18) and this includes shopping malls, housing estates etc. As a result, the majority of people do not have control over this process precisely because of their economic situations, thus explaining the emergence of slums in the cities and other urban discontents. Urbanization is controlled by a few, by those who control the capital. Why does this happen? Capitalism, to grow needs the surplus to be invested and re-invested in areas which will give even more profit and of course housing for the poor or school and hospitals for the under-privileged cannot produce the kind of profit capitalism needs to keep itself afloat. Therefore, capitalists take up those projects which will give them profits with rapid turnovers like shopping malls, international schools, expensive hotels, just to name a few. These projects change the appearance of the city, make it more appealing to the rich and less accessible to the poor, who are in this process of urbanization are further pushed to the peripheries and efforts are taken to make them less and less visible. In New Delhi, during the Commonwealth games in 2010, the street vendors were driven off the streets because they did not fit the image of a world-class city which was hosting the games. The ‘spectacle’ cannot be picture-perfect with slum dwellers and that is why, as Harvey tells us the map of Mumbai does not show the slums. In this condition where the control of

the city is in the hands of a few, ‘...ideals of urban identity, citizenship and belonging’ (26) become difficult. The victims of “‘creative destruction’” (27) are always the poor.

Similarly, according to Lefebvre (1991) the capitalist age is based on the idea of reproduction of space. Just as there is a mass production of commodities, there is a mass production of spaces. These spaces, which are social spaces, have ingrained ways of thought and action and also serve as an important tool of power and hegemony. The Lefebvrian conceptualization of space rests on a triad: representation of space, representational space and spatial practice. The representation of space as conceived planners and architects who perceived space as the lived space. Thus, there is a mental, physical and social meaning of space. It also leads to an important point that the same space can be understood differently, by different categories of people depending on one’s location within the space. The Lefebvrian space, to quote Gottdiener (1994):

“...represents a multiplicity of socio-material concerns. Space is a physical location, a piece of real estate, and simultaneously an existential freedom and a mental expression. Space is both the geographical site of action and the social possibility for engaging in action. That is, on an individual level, for example, it not only represents the location where events take place (the container function) but also signifies the social permission to engage in these events (the social order function).” (123)

According to the other major urban theorist Castells (2002), in the earlier stages of capitalism, the city was the focus of production, reproduction and distribution. But with the advent of advanced capitalism, which leads to the formation of the Information Society, the city is no longer what it signified. Information and Communication

Technology as a productive force has reorganized and revolutionized capitalism. Place is no longer important. In this stage, both space and time are transformed. Under the influence of information technology, not cities but command and control centers are important which control the network of firms globally. These command and control centers are located in global cities but the centers may change and thus they are not stable. The space of flows constitutes the elites, who use information and communication technology whereas the space of places is composed of people. The characteristics of this new society are: a) it is based on ICT, b) it has command and control centers through hubs and nodes, by which it is connected to the network society, c) emergence of a dual society. This dual society is composed of network society and place constituting people outside the network society. In the 'dual' city where the non-elite migrant workers served the elite who work in the hi-technology and knowledge-based industries. The new knowledge system is the knowledge of technology as practised by the engineers and the scientists. Research and development also surround around this knowledge base within the economy. For Castells, city is not a product, but a process that enables networking and growth.

Zukin (1995) shows that the sites of 'urban cultures' which appear to be accessible to all and made for public consumption are not really free of power and discrimination. Through her study on the restaurants and market places in American cities like New York and museum in Massachusetts, Zukin tries to dig out a facet of reality which gets lost in the admiration for museums, parks, restaurants and other 'cultural sites' which are so often taken for granted by some of us. She shows that the sites of 'urban culture' which appear to be accessible to all and made for public consumption are not really free of power and discrimination. The symbolic economy of the city is ridden with an

overwhelming discrimination. The empirical examples that Zukin gives us, of museums, restaurants and shopping places are the places that we see and experience in our day to day lives and also see others experiencing the same. But what is important is that what we experience and see others experiencing is largely controlled by those who have access to power. The rise in the number of jobs for security guards is an example of how surveillance of public places gets very crucial in the city. In this process of surveillance free space is actually diminishing. This principle of exclusion creates the image of the other, be it a person who stands outside the automatic teller machines and whose intentions should be doubted [because he stands with a paper-cup] (43) or a salesman/woman or a waitress whose capability to access certain goods and services is lesser than a White middle-class individual. Zukin describes how this principle of exclusion is accompanied by homogenization, often aimed at generating revenues. Her analysis of the Disney world shows how tourist sites are created by multimedia corporations. To put it in Zukin's words "...the need to be together, to be entertained, has created a mass market for high-quality consumer goods in high-status consumption spaces." (59). Zukin also looks at the restaurant industry as an important part of urban culture. As we enter deeper into this apparently familiar territory Zukin confronts us with another stark reality in this sector. The restaurant industry is a preferred livelihood and it is interesting to examine who gets employed there. Zukin shows us that there is a discrepancy between the front and the back regions of the restaurants: "With the exception of high-status chefs, the division of labour in restaurants along ethnic and national lines generally parallels the division into front and back regions with higher social status in the front and lower social status in the back." (157). Moving up the ladder in the restaurant hierarchy is very difficult for someone who does not have knowledge of English. The condition of immigrant groups is thus not the same as others. Thus New

York which is a preferred city for those migrants wanting to earn money does not give them either stability or mobility or even sufficient money. Here again we see the principle of exclusion working, albeit in a different way, thereby controlling who can and who cannot afford to be mobile and who can and who cannot have unions to demand for rights even though the restaurants depend on immigrants for the labour force. Shopping malls, for example, present in probably every city, are not just sites of buying and selling. There is much more to them. Zukin tells us that these shopping spaces connect people to society. From standardized shopping malls Zukin takes us to neighborhood shopping streets where the act of buying and selling is underlined with a personal touch and intimacy. Some of the shopping streets also make the people feel 'belonged' because of their race or ethnicity or religion. What Zukin also does in this chapter is making us aware of the differences in legitimacy and visibility among different sites of shopping- indoor flea markets, shopping malls or neighborhood shopping streets. The act of shopping is also affected by the principles of exclusion and homogenization. Homogenization as the sheer number of malls, selling standardized stuff, that mark the city and exclusion because not everybody has access to them, certain shopping places are meant for people belonging to a particular social class. They are often racially segregated apart from the social class.

Urbanization in India is a complicated phenomenon. The complications are drawn from the fact that urbanization is a result of entry of capitalism in India, which can further be studied in terms of pre and post-independence of the country from the colonial rule. Across the various states of India, the development of urbanization and emergence of cities has been a result of the interaction of various factors like political agenda, regional

actors, cultural and regional variations in attitudes, to name a few (Patel, 2006). Urbanization has been a gradual process in India.

To study the effects of urbanization and hence changes in the spatial nature and organisation of the city, in the earlier century, studies on cities in India focused mostly on slum formation, poverty, rural-urban continuum, to name a few themes. Rao et. al (1991) state that the urban centres usually have to deal with the influx of migrants from nearby towns to for employment in the huge informal sector. This often leads to escalation of poverty and slum formation without basic amenities, in the urban centres. This is evident in the increasing polarization of incomes and lifestyles amongst the urban poor, stemming from lack of access to basic resources. The problem of poverty in the urban areas is linked to the problem of poverty in the rural areas. Rao and Rao (1990) in their study of the growth of a slum in Vijayawada reject the notion of a culture of poverty responsible for the continuance of the slum. It is rather the interrelationship between caste relations, incentives offered for urban development programmes and socio-economic conditions of the slum dwellers. Desai and Pillai (1970) in their landmark study of a slum in Bombay, found heterogeneity amongst the residents of the slum. They describe various reasons as to why people move into slums- unemployment, lack of space in the city, and conflicts with relatives. However, once they move in, they are not interested in moving out of the slums because they have already acquired ownership in the slums. Slums, as seen in Rao and Rao's (1990) study, usually have similar lack of access to basic resources like toilets, drinking water or electricity.

However, in the past two decades, the studies on cities have changed drastically to understand city not merely as a geographical base but rather as processes: labour

processes, culture, infrastructure, consumption patterns, class (for example- Mathur 2014, Saavala 2012, Brosius 2010) etc. The cities are complex spaces where it is not just a tussle between the haves and the have nots but over the several layers that exist. Srivastava (2015) asserts that a city cannot be studied as a totality. It is rather more fruitful to understand a city through its processes manifested in the spatialities and temporalities. It is pertinent now to understand a city in terms of its relationships with various processes that occur simultaneously in a city. It is through understanding these processes, be it through transportation, emergence of shopping malls, changing nature of public parks etc. that the nature of any city can be attempted to be studied. In the times of neoliberal capitalist globalization, the exclusionary nature of the city becomes one of its stark realities. Nair (2005) complicates the nature of this exclusion by emphasizing political, economic and cultural histories and contexts of the formations of global cities, which are broadly painted as aping the Western cities and their growth, by looking at Bangalore. She uses the Lefebvrian framework to understand varied meanings attached to spaces to lay out the colonial and post-independence city of Bangalore that has witnessed massive growth on its way of forming global connections. Nair, points out that this agenda has not been devoid of resistance. Giving the example of the urban poor in Bangalore, who had a significant presence in Bangalore, often indulged in politics of caste, class and language to resist their spaces from coming under the spatial reconfigurations to build a global image of the city, marginalizing the already marginalized. Since 1980s, Nair claims that the authorities have made it difficult for the urban poor to protest which involves occupying public spaces, thereby claiming their right to parks and other common areas. Therefore, not only the conceived spaces are exclusionary, any effort to negotiate with those created exclusions are met with State authorized deprivations.

Giving the example of Cyberabad a high-tech space in Hyderabad, Massey (2008) explains that the display of wealth in large buildings with uninterrupted power and water supply, where the rest of the city suffers due to lack of these facilities is an indication of how cities are planned. In certain regions within the city, their exclusivity is carved out by provision of basic facilities round the clock, along with provisions of better infrastructure like schools, swimming pools and better roads. The other interesting aspect of this is the creation of a whole range of job opportunities for people with a different range of skills. It is important to understand the background of Hyderabad before it became Cyberabad.

### **HYDERABAD: ‘THE GLOBAL CITY’**

Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah, of the Qutub Shahi dynasty founded the city of Hyderabad, on the banks of the river Musi, around 400 years ago. It was named after his wife, Queen Hyder Mahal, and was largely inspired by Iranian architects. Hyderabad, has had more influence from the Deccan region rather than the Telugu culture of Andhra Pradesh (Jimo, 2017). Although at the time of Independence, the Nizam of Hyderabad, chose to join neither India nor Pakistan, in 1948, Hyderabad state was integrated into India. Its twin Secunderabad, was the area given to the British cantonment and military quarters. In 1956, Hyderabad became the capital of Andhra Pradesh and gradually because of its opportunities and resources, migrants from surrounding regions started coming to Hyderabad.

However, in the schizophrenia of this new emerging city, evident in the hyper-visibility of structural changes in the cityscape, Ratna Naidu’s (1990) work shows us a different

historical landscape. She studied the walled city of Hyderabad, to understand the roots and varied dimensions of congestion in a part of the city which is rarely visible in the discourse around Cyber city, software technology and the employment opportunity it produces and the culture of consumption. Naidu states that the unlike in the Western context, the connotations of the inner city in the Indian context is very different. Most of the development in the urban areas of the country are in special spatial zones, rather than the walled parts of the city, which is true for Hyderabad as well. After the mass out-migration of the Muslim elites post 1948, many of the places in the walled city were bought by the Marwaris. As communal tensions arose, this stopped post 1982. Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes continued to inhabit the margins of the walled city. With time although the physical walls of the old city of Hyderabad has disappeared, the association of the old city with backwardness has strengthened. One of the major causes of congestion in the walled city is the fact that that the growing density of population is not supported by a change in the infrastructure. This is manifested in the lack of social and physical infrastructures, of adequate facilities within households and even lack of adequate space for circulation of inhabitants. Given these structural problems and perceptions associated with the walled city, inequalities are formed within the city in different areas.

With rising population, and the consequent demand for amenities, vacant land got converted into buildings. It was in 1975 that the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority was formed to look after the city planning of Hyderabad. As we will see in the next chapter, in the discussion on the field site of this study, since the mid 1990s, Chandrababu Naidu, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh endeavoured to change

the landscape of the southwestern part of the city, resulting in the formation and growth of Cyberabad, through various State supported capitalistic measures.

Continuing with the lens of exclusion, it is not like the southwestern part of the city is wholly developed, with world class facilities for all the inhabitants. Ramachandraiah et. al (2008) referring to high-tech spaces created in cities around the world, since the 1970s, state that these high-tech spaces, based on knowledge economy cannot be merely understood as provider of information and technology services, through employment of cheaper labour as compared to their Western counterparts, but also as a marker of space. This space has to present itself as elite, distinguishing itself from “*less prestigious land uses*” (25). It is made possible through international schools, shopping malls, smooth roads along with abundance of water and power supply, even in cities of the global south where water and electricity are still a luxury for the majority of the population. There is thus a particular content and a form for global cities, which often result in producing inequalities of various kinds.

Ramachandraiah and Prasad (2008), taking the example of Cyberabad<sup>2</sup>, discuss the high-tech spaces of Hyderabad around the themes of spaces of control, of exclusion and of hope. As we have seen in the above literature, the planning of global cities is based on the principle of exclusion where the majority of population is deprived of the necessities like good infrastructure, well networked transportation, supply of water and of electricity, at least in the cities of the third world. There is no doubt that with the larger role of global finance in the planning of the city, the spaces thus created are neither

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<sup>2</sup> The spatial history of the Cyberabad region of Hyderabad is presented in the next chapter.

egalitarian in nature nor representative of the history of Hyderabad. This is evident in the complexes and the parks built for the appearance of the city with global importance. The buildings, parks, jobs in the software sector also implies that there are people who see the city as a space of opportunities and of hopes for a better future. It cannot be denied that the software industry in fact did lead to jobs in the service sector, not only in the primary sector, but also in the different associated spheres like in security, house-keeping, care-taking etc. what Sassen (1998) would call as devalorised labour. Though the number of migrants into the city in search of jobs or for jobs in the software industry has significantly increased, Ramachandraiah and Prasad (2008) assert that there is no real engagement of these migrants with the older city. Many of the migrants are in the age group of 25-35 years, who probably have no idea of the city beyond the Cyberabad region. In this situation then, the scope of the city to become a space of hope, is inherently limited in nature. It becomes a destination for work and possibly upward social mobility.

In her study of middle-classes, Saavala (2012) states that Hyderabad a city is representative of the contradictions in globalization. On one hand it has become a hub of Information and Technology industries, along with the various allied services, while on the other there is existence of drought, illiteracy and poverty. She asserts that there is a growing polarisation in the economic classes of people between the emergent middle classes and the majority of others who are poverty stricken. The emergence of the middle-classness is displayed in the consumption practices of shopping malls, eating in restaurants, usage of smart mobile phones, and homes in gated communities. The emerging middle-class have rural land-owning connections but rapidly migrate to Hyderabad to be a part of the global city. The spaces within the city, for example Cyberabad as opposed to the old city, are redefined as markers of social class and

identities. Chacko (2007) further asserts that the projection of Hyderabad as a global city, with connectivity around the world, is structurally manifested in the physical space of the city. As a result, a large share of funding has gone to improving its infrastructure in roads, technology parks, residential enclaves, in the northwest region of the city, around Madhapur, Gachibowli, Nanakramguda as compared to other regions in the city.

Exemplifying another kind of inequality, Sam (2012) examines stratified spaces in the context of globalization. These hierarchized spaces are a consequence of *globalization* and *grobalisation*. Sam defines globalization “*as a set of transplanetary processes involving people, objects, places and information.*” (1) and grobalisation as “*the imperialistic imposition by nation-states, organisations and the like on various geographic areas, involving the transnational expansion of common codes and practices.*” (2). She uses the metaphor of layering so as to indicate hierarchized and unequal space and thus “*a layered city involves multiple layers of actors who occupy and, in a way, share the same space.*” (2). Globalization and grobalisation produce layered city and thereby, according to Sam, arise three important questions: a) Who is included or excluded from the global? b) Who is/are the actor/ set of actors who enforce such an exclusion and c) how is such an exclusion achieved in spatial terms? In answering these questions, she shows that while one category of people is considered global, another category of people, who contribute equally significantly to the processes of globalization is not seen as part of the global as it does not fit the image of a global city. Through her study this distinction between the two categories is shown in spatial terms. Her field site was Hitec City which was created in Hyderabad as a knowledge hub with infrastructure that could cater to a global world with access to global network and global finance. To further understand spatial exclusion, she uses Goffman’s concept of

*“non-person: a person who is simultaneously included and excluded from a setting”* because of inferior social status. (6). She further distinguishes two kinds of non-persons in the context of globalization: a) Internal Global non-person- these are the people who have access to global work but not global consumption, for example, a cab driver employed with an MNC, b) Precarious Global non-person- these are the people who have no access to either global work or global consumption. The non-persons are relegated to the background because they don't fit the global image of a developed, modernised society. The access to the segregated space is determined whether one is a global person or a global non person. She categorises global persons into those people who are employed in higher positions with the MNCs and fit the global image very well. They are not bound to a place and travel globally. Hitec City can be thought of as one coherent unit but has multiple over-lapping spatial layers. The topmost layer is visible as a spectacle and accessible by the global persons, the layer below constitutes the global non persons and this layer is the least visible, and the third layer is where all three set of actors interact.

The literature in the sociology of the city thus emphasizes the exclusionary nature of the city as well as the city as a space of hope. These exclusions are exercised on the physical landscape as well as the people who occupy these spaces in different capacities. The study of retail shop-floor employees tries to understand where they are located in the exclusive global city of Hyderabad. Most studies have focused on labourers occupying the high-tech city spaces in the capacity of call centre employees or software engineers (for example, Arabandi 2016, Patel 2010, Upadhya 2016). However, my study focusses on the women shop-floor employees who are labourers in the shopping mall, located in a high-tech space of Hyderabad. The thesis tries to address a gap that has emerged in the

literature on cities by focusing only on one kind of service provider. The shop-floor employee is important because she is also a service provider although in a very different capacity. However, as Srivastava (2015) has noted, all the processes in the city are inter related, the shopping mall developed essentially for the elite employees of the high-tech space, the shop-floor employee engages in a labour designed specifically to serve the customers, who are often of a higher class than hers. The labour is towards providing a product that is part of the cultures of consumption in the 21<sup>st</sup> century city.

### **CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION**

In the era of hyper consumer culture, social identities of people are marked by the goods that they consume. However, the basic nature of consumption is that it is exclusionary in the way it is designed by capitalism (Mathur, 2014). In a study on gendered labour in a global city, consumption and its various manifestations become important to understand the context in which the labour takes place. The literature on the cultures of consumption, provides the next theoretical framework for the thesis.

One of the most defining moments of the Indian economy has been the opening up of the Indian market to private enterprises in 1991 by the Manmohan Singh finance policies. Since these changes in the economic policies in the 1990s, there has been an influx of various consumer goods from different parts of the world. The consumption of various goods has become a marker of one's class and an aspiration towards moving up the class hierarchy. The opening up of the economy coupled with people usage of consumer goods as marker of middle-classness led to the production and growth of various other sites of consumption- the shopping malls, multiplexes, restaurants serving food from around the world, spas, chains of gymnasiums, credit card facilities, ease of loans to name a few.

The media with aggressive advertising and promotion of the culture of consumption further escalated the need to embrace the new culture as if it was the only way forward to a new 'modern' society (Brosius, 2010). Srivastava (2015) says that consumption, although is a transnational phenomenon, its effects can be seen locally. He asserts that changes in consumption patterns also has effects on the space in which it operates. Giving the example of opening up of Big Bazaar which is a low-price departmental store, Srivastava is suggestive of a decline in the consumption practices associated with the neighborhood grocery shop. What he reiterates is that a process in the city, is inherently related to other simultaneous processes.

Although, it is well documented in academic literature (Bauman 2005, Mathur 2014 for example) that consumption has become the most important economic activity, the exclusionary character is visible both in the capacity of the buyer to afford as well as in the designing of the sites of consumption. The capacity to afford is displayed in the shopping malls in the urban context where malls have become "privately owned public spaces" (Phadke et.al, 2011). Voyce (2007) calls them social fortresses which are exclusionary in nature. It is evident in the physical structure of any shopping mall that tries to distinguish the middle class or the elite consumer, who is willing to spend from those who cannot afford to spend. Voyce asserts that the benefits of neoliberalism do not reach the poor, thereby creating and widening the inequalities in a society that embraces capitalism. Consumption and its various sites globally have given rise to phenomenon such as Macdonaldization (Ritzer, 2004) which create the phenomenon of *nothing-* of people, places and things which signifies a homogeneity in terms of experiences and visuals. For Ritzer, the concept of nothing is indicative of a lack of substance, a lack of

heterogeneity, that is represented in the global uniformity in patterns of labour and consumption.

One of the examples of this creation of homogeneity in the domain of consumption is the creation of spectacles to enable consumption. The spectacle in this study is the shopping mall. As Thrift (2012) has pointed out, capitalism thrives on the creation of atmospherics that further create value in the process of consumption. The concepts of Atmospherics (ibid.) or Spectacle in the Debordian sense (Debord, 2005) help explain the necessity of an ambience to enable the consumption that capitalism desires. These are erected with the help of large hoardings, events, bright lights, loud music to name a few. Often in the literature on the shopping mall as a place of consumption, the people who create this spectacle through their labour in different capacities- shop floor executives, help desk operator, janitors, security agents are invisibilized in the way only hyper consumption by middle class or elites are focused on. This study, taking the case of women shop-floor employees tries to take a step to fill the gap in understanding what goes on to create a world-class<sup>3</sup> shopping experience for example. This thesis is an attempt to go beyond the curtains to understand how the stage is set to enable consumption.

The gendered nature of the city is another important aspect of the thesis and to show that women's experiences in their work place and the nature of the work they are engaged in depends or is related to larger spatial context of the global city. Shilpa Phadke et. al (2011) provide an insight into difference in perception that women have of cities in

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<sup>3</sup> Most of the shopping malls claim that they give world class shopping experiences which might have connotations in the number of brands a mall houses, the restaurants present and various other facilities like cinema, spa etc.

which they live. They start the book with giving the example of Mumbai, which is usually thought of as a safe city for women. ‘‘*Safety refers to individual concerns, fears, and anxieties with regard to potential violence, physical and psychological, which involve a negotiation with these risks.*’’ (Phadke, 2005: 44). Yet it is not the reality as faced by women in this city because they do not have unrestricted access to the city and at any given time, there are a few of them as compared to men. Women still have to justify their presence on the street at night. The book also talks about the people who are thought of as unbelongers in the city, like those of the slum dwellers, thereby showing a hierarchized city where certain people are not wanted and very often these people are assumed to be criminals. Phadke et.al want to break the stereotypical image of a potential molester or a criminal and says that the presence of someone who fits the image of a molester cannot provide the rationale to limit the access of women, yet most of the times it does. Taking the case of middle-class women, they point out that women to demand and deserve respectability cannot go to certain places like a bar as women are symbols of tradition and women going to a bar stains the image of a traditional woman as it involves transgression. Talking about the new spaces of consumption like malls and coffee shops, the authors assert that these spaces cannot be called as public but private because only a few people can have unlimited access to it. Exemplifying the nature of these new spaces of consumption, they point out that saleswomen in malls are well dressed and often speak to their customers in English. Yet this does not transform their situations at home because given the long hours of work, they are put on a questionable terrain. Moreover, wearing knee-length skirts at work place is also an issue of contention. We know that the category of women is not homogeneous and, in this book, she tries to understand the access that different women from different backgrounds like religion, class, physical ability have to the city, thereby urging for an approach of study which

takes into account the differences among women. To assert their rights to public spaces, women must loiter in the streets and this act of loitering, according to Phadke et.al, can give women their claim to the city even though most women work in the city but have little time for leisure or loitering.

In her work '*Space, Place and Gender*' (1994), Massey talks about gender, space and place being mutually constitutive. She gives the example of Durham in England of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Durham, a predominantly coal-mining area had neat divisions between men and women as far as work was concerned. Men were the bread winners and women were the domestic labourers and women were completely excluded from the male spheres of politics and economy. Mining also resulted in enormous domestic burden for the wife. Paid jobs for women were very few in those days. However, in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century more and more women took up jobs outside their homes as the men had lost theirs and these new gendered divisions of labour outraged the men. Women also provided cheap, semi-skilled labour thereby getting jobs easily. Regional policies that were created at that time also favored women for their flexibility and acceptance of part-time jobs. Through this example Massey says that an understanding of regional policies through the axis of gender gives it a different texture. Space, and in this case, economic space, was tied with gender relations. For Massey, space is not something which is void but lends substance to the material objects in it, for example, sewing machines at home or at workshops have different meanings. She shows that both space and place are gendered and affected by the societies that they are constituent of. This thesis sharpens the argument of the gendered city by locating it in the larger literature on labour.

## **GENDER AND LABOUR**

The central feminist argument in the theorization of the relationship between gender(s) and labour is that the false dichotomy between the public and the private spheres should be abandoned to produce a more democratic public space where women are not associated only with the domestic and intimate work. Pateman (1983) critiques this dichotomy between the public and the private spheres and traces the conceptualization of the hierarchy between the two distinct spheres to liberalism<sup>4</sup>. Liberalism in its distinction between the public and the private and the consequent political power and paternal power, ascribes women to the private sphere, under the paternal authority, making them ineligible to deserve the ideals of equality and freedom of liberalism. This is where the feminist critique of liberalism becomes important to question its inherent biological essentialism regarding women's *innate* qualities.

The assumption that women are naturally inferior to men as compared to men is critiqued by anthropological arguments and radical feminist arguments. Anthropological arguments, by Ortner (1974), state that women are closer to nature while men are products of culture, and this is a pan cultural fact. Nature is looked down upon by culture and needs to be controlled by culture. Pateman questions the assumptions behind these arguments because they fail to account for difference across societies and within societies over a period of time. Radical feminist arguments (Pateman 1983), opine that the hierarchical relationship between nature and culture, private and public and men and

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<sup>4</sup> Liberalism as a political ideology is based on ideals of liberty, equality and justice for all in the society. The champions of liberalism, Locke, for example, uphold equality for all in the society because that is when actual political power can function. In the absence of freedom, equality and justice, political power will wilt. However, Locke makes a distinction between political power and paternal power. Paternal power is the power that fathers have over their children in the private sphere and the presence of political power cannot negate paternal power. It is in the private sphere that the father is the authority over younger men and all women.

women is the consequence of the process of procreation. Because women can and do procreate, women are held closer to nature, while men control or rather ascribe themselves to control culture. Firestone states that the way to end exploitation can be through introduction of artificial reproduction where women can be freed from the burden of procreation, which is the root cause of their subjugation. For Pateman, this argument reduces the social conceptions of man and woman to essentialist notions of male and female. It also falls prey to the patriarchal assumption that women are given a secondary status by nature itself.

Although Pateman is drawn towards a utopian reality, where there is no distinction between the private and the public spheres, yet she recognizes the existing reality where there are clearly marked territories of the two spheres. It is this marking of territories that often renders women's labour within the household as invisible. Women's labour is largely invisible owing to the belief that it does not contribute monetarily to the economy and the consequent trivialization of housework (Oakley,1974). Pateman hopes for an acknowledgement of the linkages between the two spheres and going beyond what is assumed to be the rightful domain of each of the sexes. One way of going in this direction is the availability of men in the private spheres of home and kitchen, while at the same time women becoming more and more visible in the public sphere of paid employment, for example, and at the same time not being over burdened by the responsibilities of cooking and caring. Both the spheres should be seen as a continuum, rather than as opposites, which makes the distinct categories as belonging to both men and women and refrains from making any one category as the exclusive domain of either men or women.

A second strand of thought concerning the relationship between gender and work has been brought into notice since 1960s with the rise of the second wave of feminism which talked about the inequalities at home and at work place, based on gender. Betty Friedan's work '*The Feminine Mystique*' (1963) was the pioneer in raising radical voices for women's empowerment, when it talked about the unknown problem that women faced being at home and that problem was shared among many American women. It was the problem of feminine fulfilment which required one to be devoted completely to the home, husband and children, thereby losing one's individuality. In a more contemporary urban Indian scenario, Menon (2012) highlights how women in the family are expected to take up the domestic responsibilities of the household, for example cooking and cleaning. They are meant to do that as if it is naturally ordained and love and care for all the members of the family should be the prerogative of the women; it is irrelevant whether they do or do not work outside the home. Domestic work is invisibilized to an extent that it seems to be a non-work. Menon very clearly states that the domestic work that women do is an integral part of the economy and at no cost can that be ignored or not accounted for as the economy would collapse completely if there were no domestic labour.

Contemporary studies on gender and labour have shown how women negotiate the continuum of public and the private spheres and the meanings associated with them. McDowell's (1997) study in the banking sector demonstrated the presence of unequal pay for equal work, with women earning lesser than men and bleak prospects of promotion. Acker's (1990) study show work places are gendered in the way the rules are formulated, the conversations that employees and employers have, basically the very nature of the workplace is gendered and unequal in the way it is organized. Patel's (2010)

study of call centre employees showed how women employed with call centers dealt with the different meanings attached to their unusual working hours. Increased education and ability to earn did not change the gendered roles in their domestic lives. Offering a different picture, Arabandi (2016) says that there is a need to understand how women's realities have changed following the changes in attitudes women's empowerment, their education and their ability to get up the corporate ladder. This often lends agency to women who then use it to negotiate in matters related to marriages, professional decisions and finances. Arabandi's study is on an upper class of urban women and therefore the reality may not be the same for numerous other women who, because of their class often find the terms of negotiation difficult.

Low paying jobs are often taken up by women because of sheer need of wages, lack of bargaining power and professional or educational qualifications. Feminization of labour, refers to broad processes that enable participation of more and more women in the work force, engaging in activities which are low paid. The basis of feminization is that certain jobs require less or no skills or particular kind of skills, for which women are thought to be suitable. This also has implications towards the low bargaining power of women workers. The term feminization does not only denote women employees, but rather refers to specific kinds of work which are lowly paid or assumed to be inferior because mostly women take up the jobs. Even men are engaged in these kinds of jobs such as cleaning and caregiving and paid less. Feminization of the labour force is a consequence of the changing labour markets with globalization, off shore factories, migration and other changes in the workplace. For Standing (1999):

“Feminization arises because available employment and labour options tend increasingly to characterize activities associated, rightly or wrongly, with women and because the pattern of employment tends to result in an increasing proportion of women occupying the jobs... the characteristics include the type of contract, the form of remuneration, the extent and forms of security provided and the access to skill” (583)

Standing (1999) enlists a number of reasons for the development of feminization of labour namely the growth in international trade, investment in countries with very low cost of labour as well as lack of strong labour unions, technological innovations leading to innovations in the manufacturing process of goods and so on. Similarly, the implications have been manifold, namely, informalization of employment, leading to less secured jobs with low wages. Gottfried (2006) observes that feminization of labour and occupation segregation based on sex, globally, is a result of both demand and supply of certain job practices. Arguments based on employee- demand of employers are usually directed at the latter’s gender-based selection criteria. Women employees with similar qualification as their male counterparts received lower wages and less promotions. On the supply side, women also preferred to be in certain jobs because of their additional responsibilities of home, which again results in pay gap between them and others. Gottfried also refers to Bergmann’s ‘crowding thesis’ to explain that even when women tried to enter traditionally male occupations, they faced discrimination in the selection procedure leading to over-crowding of women in traditionally female-typed jobs.

Feminization of labour is symptomatic of a larger system of exploitation which Sassen (1998) focusses on. She talks about globalization of labour flows, where the immigrant women are mostly engaged in servicing the elite who are engaged in controlling the

global flow of finances. In the discourse on globalization which usually focusses on accessibility of goods, cultures and establishment of networks, Sassen makes visible the devalorised labour that is essential for the global, capitalist and exclusionary system to function smoothly. This devalorised labour is mostly performed by poor women from the global south, often in harsh and exploitative work conditions. To further exemplify devalorisation, Mirchandani's work (2012) on call centre workers is a good instance. She shows how call centre workers are modern day workers with better working conditions and reasonably good pay packages. These were the new generation of jobs which required minimal qualifications yet provided good salaries, and very different from what the jobs had been earlier. However, given the work, which was usually during the night, as call centres mostly catered to the clients in the U.S, left the workers nowhere as they had been completely moved from time and space of their surroundings to a different zone, yet could not be totally in their clients' time and space zone. The study shows that this kind of employment produced racism, sometimes subtle and at others, violent. The form of racism usually involved abuses on calls, about pronunciation and diction. The employees were trained to be someone similar to the western client, yet it was a known fact that former were usually Indians and hence the abuses! The employees had to hide their identity all the time and had to try to neutralise their mother-tongue influence always. They had to speak with an American accent. There is an invisibilizing of the identity of the real call centre employee and leaves no respect for these employees even though they are there to assist the clients in their problems. Mirchandani states that abuses are directed against these workers because most of the times, western firms have their customer care executives located in India due to cheap labour and availability of infrastructure.

## SERVICE WORK

Another aspect of the relationship between gender and labour is evident in the ways emotional labour and aesthetic labour is emphasized in the newly emerging service sector. Emotional labour refers to the labour performed on one's emotion to produce desirable feelings in others, these others mostly refer to customers. Hochschild (1983) in her study of flight attendants coined the term to show how emotions which are so intimate can be used by the capitalist system for profit. Her Emotion Management perspective draws from earlier theories of emotion like the Organismic Theories of Emotion and the Interactive Theories of Emotion, yet significantly differs from both the above. The Organismic theory which draws from the works of Darwin and Freud (Hochschild 1979) focusses on the relation of emotion to biologically given instinct or impulse. Emotions means strips of experience and there is no conflict between one aspect of a self to another. It is a sudden automatic reflex syndrome. Social factors are not seen as an influence on the expression or the display of emotions. Emotions are capacities that already exist within people, they are just waiting to be triggered by an external factor or situation. On the other hand, the Interactive theories of emotion that draw from the works of Mead and Goffman (ibid.) emphasize how social factors permeate emotions. Social factors are responsible for how emotions are elicited. Social factors also guide the micro actions of labelling, interpreting and managing. Self is seen as an emotional manager according to the social situations that she is facing. The Emotion Management Perspective conceptualizes emotion as "*bodily cooperation with an image, a thought, a memory- a cooperation of which the individual is aware.*" (Hochschild 1979: 551, footnote:2).

Aesthetic labour on the other hand refers to the ways service providers are expected through the corporate dictate to appear a particular way that translates into more sales for them. Warhurst et. al (2000) in their study on the service sector in Glasgow found out that that employers are increasingly focusing on the appearance of the service providers rather than their technical knowledge. By dressing up or grooming themselves according to specified norms, the employees act as company representatives, responsible for making sales (Pettinger, 2005). Aesthetic labour is not merely found in the retail shop-floor but also in the field of glamour industry. Aesthetic labour or managing the body to look a way that is desirable is indicative of the larger forces at play at manufacturing what largely women's bodies should look like. While men are not completely free from the performance of aesthetic labour in these industries, for women the panopticons are always active. Body-management thus becomes one of the most important constituents of the aesthetic labour (Elias et.al 2017). Aesthetic labour is crucial to build and maintain the atmospherics of the sites of consumption which demand that serving bodies look desirable so as to enable the process of consumption. Both emotional and aesthetic labour are crucial in the functioning of maintaining of the service sector. Although a plethora of studies (Broadbridge 1991, Pettinger 2005 for example) have stressed on their importance, not much have been written about their importance specially in the Indian context. I use the concepts to show how women shop-floor employees engage in these forms of labour and use it to achieve their aspirations and have professional growth on the shop-floor.

With the opening up of Indian economy in the 1990s, with adoption of market principles of neoliberalism, the service sector boomed with jobs in the service economy- BPOs, salons, cinemas, international restaurant chains, which were intertwined with the

emergence and growth of the consumption culture, as mentioned above. The thesis is based on the organized retail sector in India which benefitted tremendously with the opening up of the Indian economy to foreign finance. The retail sector, both organized and unorganized remains as one of the largest employers, after agriculture in India (Shabnam & Paul, 2008). With the coming of organized mega company owned retail, such as Raheja Group, Fortune Group, Reliance, Tata etc., the picture of retail has changed. The different stores of these groups which sell a plethora of consumer goods, from groceries to electronic items, including apparel and shoes, just to name a few has affected the way urban India experiences shopping. Taking the Western model of shopping as its reference point, for example, Walmart, organized retail format in India focusses not only the products to be sold, but also in the way the product is sold. It is here that that the organized and the unorganized forms of retail are hugely different. With emphasis on customer service and customer satisfaction, the organized retail format is hugely dependent on the emotional labour and aesthetic appeal of both its labour force as well as its stores. This is starkly different from the unorganized retail formats like *kirana* stores or local stores which do not emphasize on the atmospherics as evident in organized retail. Whatever the difference in terms of operation, labour force or structure be, there is a clear indication that the organized retail sector has been clearly expanding. This is evident in the fact that shopping malls are opening up at an alarming rate in the metro cities, as well as gradually making inroads into the smaller cities. Malls are only one form of organized retail, others are specialty stores, department stores, hypermarkets, convenience stores or multi-brand outlets. Sometimes, shopping malls may house all of these different formats of retail under one roof.

Traditionally, across formats, retail has remained an employment generator which has the capacity to absorb labour power who do not have technical or professional expertise. With organized retailing, although the professional or the technical degrees are not required for jobs in the lower rung of the hierarchy, there is a need to learn how to serve the customers. Because, the customer is considered as the king. It is taking cognizance of this fact that there are training organisations both run by the State programmes as well as private institutions that create a pedagogy so as to train and produce an ideal customer service assistant. I take the example of one such programmes run by the Employment Generation and Marketing Mission of Telangana- The English Work Readiness and Computer (EWRC) programme. I talk about the details of the programme in the third and the fourth chapters. However, it is important to note here that these training programmes partnered with private institutions, create a labour force that is suitable to serve at the emerging spaces of consumption. There is an underlying assumption that the people serving at these neoliberal consumption spaces should be polite, smart, presentable in their appearance and should speak English.

Women are very often considered appropriate or preferred in the retail sector. Although statistically, the number of women employed in the retail or any other service sector is much less than men as with other sectors, yet there is a certain preference for women because of the assumptions related to the *innate* nature of women- that is being polite and obedient (Dubey, 2013). There is a problem of retention that afflicts the organized retail- employees often shift stores because of higher pay (Shabnam & Paul, 2008). However, the general assumption is that women do not change jobs too often because it would then lead to a series of changes in other aspects of their lives. For women from weaker socio-economic backgrounds without higher educational qualifications,

employment in the organized retail sector becomes a good opportunity (Dubey, 2013). Labouring in a site which is different from their immediate social contexts and very different in what their parents were engaged in, young women take this employment as an opportunity to fulfill their aspirations for upward mobility in a neoliberal environment. Speaking English, wearing make-up and uniform or dressing according to prescribed dress codes gives them a sense of identity and are able to both contribute financially to their family's income as well as be independent. They can thus fulfill the aims of neoliberal feminism- women who are taking the responsibility of their own success or failure (Harris, 2003). Fraser (2013) is of the view that neoliberal capitalism has used feminism for its own benefits. Usurping the feminist ideals of emancipation of women, neoliberalism has been successful in creating an obedient labour force who are willing to be subservient to the capitalist masters to achieve the goals of identity and freedom, which was reiterated by the second wave of feminism and continues till today that in order to be successful women have to be in wage-earning jobs. That the nature of these jobs is exploitative is often ignored in the need to get paid employment. After all, upward mobility is actually possible because of the new economic opportunities.

### **OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Having laid out the theoretical frameworks in which the thesis can be located, the objectives that have guided the research are as follows:

- To understand emotional and aesthetic labour in the context of the service sector, mostly in the apparel and cosmetic sectors in India.
- To explain how capitalist and patriarchal notions of politeness and beauty, aided with elaborate methods of surveillance aid in the production of desirable bodies and emotions.

- To understand how the shopping mall acts as a “layered space” for the retail shop floor employees, manifested in the difference between the mall as a site of consumption and as a place of work
- To understand the growth of a neoliberal, entrepreneur subjectivity in low waged service work.

A Google-Scholar search on the retail shop-floor employees in India will present results on the scholarly work done in this area from the Human Resources Management perspectives, often giving data on quantitative data on employment, on measures to improve performance, or how the retail industry has been a great generator of employment. Sociological studies that discuss aesthetic or emotional labour or feminization of labour in this sphere are often based in the United States, United Kingdom or Germany. This necessitates a sociological study on the emerging labour force in the service- sector in India, which is relatively very new as compared to other labourers in different spheres like that in the construction, health, factories to name a few. These new jobs cater to the smooth functioning of the growing culture of consumption in a country like India, yet studies on their identity, emotional and aesthetic labour on the shop-floor and their perceptions of it and their social and economic relationship to the very place they work in are rarely there.

What further necessitates a study on retail shop-floor employees is the preference for women for employment in this sector. Although the data shows that women are still very few, yet the growing preference for women calls for an investigation, especially when the labour market, in the urban sector is deeply gendered. These new forms of labour market are interesting in other aspects as well. Not dependent on technical or

professional academic qualifications, these jobs provide an opportunity to millions of people, often from weaker sections of the society to get into waged labour, thereby participating in the growing neoliberal globalization in the society. For a sociologist, it becomes pertinent to study the nature of this participation. It is further complicated by the fact that there are hardly any labour organisation that binds this labour force. Usually, any trade union activity is barred from these neoliberal spaces as conditions of employment. In trying to understand the nuances about conditions of employment and trying to address the above issues, my study, hopefully, can attempt to answer broader questions related to Neo-liberalism and its ramifications on the body engaged in service-oriented employment and broader issues related to the nature of modernity, work, consumption and the body in the present times.

### **CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The second chapter is on the methodology adopted in the study. The chapter begins by stressing the importance of feminist methodologies which emphasize representation of women's voices. It asserts that studies of social realities can be more democratic in the nature of production of knowledge by listening to women's voices rather than invisibilizing them. An understanding of the lived realities of women, through the different intersectionalities of caste, class, gender, ethnicity, religion can render the knowledge so produced as more holistic in nature. The chapter gives a detailed outline of the different methods adopted in the study and how each method was suitable for a particular stage of research or a particular set of respondents, given the larger set of conditions. It recognizes that belonging to the same sex category was not enough to build friendships on the field, rather it was the conversations around gendered roles that women were expected to perform that led to friendships beyond the duration of the study.

The chapter makes it evident that the researcher had no intention of imposing her ideas of emancipation or feminism on the respondents. Doing so can at best be judgmental and detrimental to the aim of bring out women's voices regarding their experiences of work, the personal lives and aspirations.

The third chapter titled 'Emotional Labour on the Shop-floor' traces the relationship between gender and paid work which is crucial to understand the essentialist argument that emotional labour, as a form of care work, and as a skill is often construed to be gendered, because women are thought to be better at it because of their innate qualities. The chapter then shows how organisations and the relationships within them become gendered by the way of role expectations and the manner in which work itself is organized. This calls for an understanding of the way emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) is manufactured in the sites of the service economy. It then looks at how prescriptions are made to be adhered by employees and what happens when the rules are not followed, thereby trying to answer the pertinent question of how living and thinking beings respond and negotiate with management prescribed emotional performance. By conceiving the retail shop floor as a socio-emotional economy, as theorised by Clark (1997) the chapter recognises the importance of certain forms of emotions like smiling, politeness and so on as valuable resources in this socio emotional economy. These valuable resources are reproduced through emotional labour, thereby lending the shop floor a characteristic of a continuing process, rather than a static site of mere economic exchange. The chapter in the end, tries to understand, how care workers, manufactured by demands of a service economy and extensive training fetch care for themselves, in the absence of an institutionalised care system.

Where the above chapter talks about the labouring body's performance through the body, the fourth chapter, titled as 'Bodies on the Shop-floor', begins by pointing out the importance of the body and its appearance in interactive service work. By focusing on women retail shop floor employees in the Hyderabad mall, employed in the apparel and cosmetic sections of multi-national brands argues that employment in this sector requires working on one's body to produce a "presentable" body by grooming so as to fit the larger image that the mall presents. The body, in the context of retail shop floor employees, becomes both a process as well as a site. The body as a process is never a finished product (Schilling, 2003) and needs constant care so as to attract more customers as well as to exhibit the goodness of the products that the employees have to sell. As a site, the body is the surface on which manufacturing of a particular image, which suits the brand, takes place. Aesthetic labour is thus performed by the shop assistants to personify the brands they are selling. And by personifying the brand, through clothing, behaviour and demeanour the workers create and enhance consumption. And thus, the workers become company representatives through the process of *corporate production of aesthetic labour* (Pettinger, 2005) by organisations that employ workers. The chapter then points out how the logic of corporate production of aesthetic labour functions caters to the male gaze through stylized uniforms and make-up. The presence of the mannequin and its dressing is also analysed to understand how it perpetuates stereotypes of the 'ideal' body through the apparent function of attracting customers or giving the customers an idea of the products on display. The chapter then brings out the various ways of surveillance, enabled by technology, to maintain the image of the serving bodies on the shop-floor.

The fifth chapter titled 'Layered Spaces of the Shopping Mall' theorises the concept of space to show its nature in a neoliberal and global context. Through the concept of *layered space* (Sam, 2012), this chapter aims to understand the nature of a shopping mall both as a place of work and the space of work that it produces, and how there are multiple forms of *layering* within the shopping mall that is often seen as an important site of consumption only. These different layering play out between customers and employees, and even amongst employees, based on their location on the different layers of differentiated spaces. In doing that it tries to show how hierarchies of caste, class and gender play out in the space that the mall produces. The analysis recognises that these different layers of the space, are never fixed and static, rather run into each other. It is this fluidity that makes it important to read the shopping mall as a place and a space of work vis-à-vis as a site of consumption. In trying to understand the different layers created by the shopping mall and its experience by the women employees, the chapter looks at the location of the mall in the city itself, which is an exclusive space by nature.

Finally, in the concluding chapter it is shown that using the context of the retail work space, the thesis talks about how the body of the service provider needs to be worked on every day to suit the demands of the service sector, which, in this case, works towards maintaining the spectacle that the mall as a space of leisure and consumption offers. Focussing specifically on the women employees, it asserts that grooming is an ongoing process throughout the day with having to do touch ups at regular intervals and that it is pertinent. It is not only an end of being presentable but also a means to an end of attracting more customers thereby enabling and increasing sales. Emotional labour forms a crucial component of this work, along with prolonged physical strain which has adverse effects on the well-being of the body. The manufacture of emotional labour through a

programme such as the EWRC run by the State shows its role in recognising and catering to the demands the expanding service economy. The thesis looks at the subtle control mechanisms by the management and the different challenges to those control mechanisms by the employees, thereby suggesting that the retail shop floor employees are not merely bodies that are subject to control, but can and do express agency, in different ways. The operationalization of layers in the mall space brings out the fact that the hierarchies based on gender, caste and class and their intersectional ties take on new forms in these spaces. The elaborate training procedures, scripted interactions, similarities in the structure and function of shopping malls point at the tendency of production of a uniformity, of an internationally accepted culture, in the present times.

## Chapter. 2 The Researcher and Her Field

*I am asked by K whether I am married because I didn't 'look' married. He asks how I met my husband and also wants to know when am I going to start my family. He wants to know the date of my marriage anniversary and wants a party for that. His friend owns a restaurant which apparently serves good biryani. He then proceeds to talk about his wife and daughter. I wonder whether the conversation had followed a similar pattern had I been a male researcher. (Field Notes: 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2016)*

As a middle-class, upper-caste, married and feminist woman, trained in the language of Sociology, I have my own biases about the ways in which the shopping mall, Mosaic, would speak to me and would lend itself to my perception of it. The Mosaic mall existed before I began my research and shall continue to exist long after my study. However, through my study, I attempt to present the mall through the lens that my social location has equipped me with. My ethnographic reading of the shopping mall privileges women's experiences of their work space. However, it does not imply that women's experiences are homogeneous neither does it try to invisibilize the men in the work space. Towards that purpose, the chapter begins by explaining feminist standpoint theory and its relevance to the study. It then proceeds to describe the setting of the study. The section details the physical space of the mall, the profile of the respondents, which then lead to the section on the methods applied in gathering data. The chapter ends with problematizing the researcher's presence in the field and the consequent complexities of her interaction with the setting as well as her respondents.

### FEMINIST METHODOLOGY(IES)

The emergence and growth of the discipline of Sociology, through the works of its founding 'fathers' have been successful in creating social theories as if women did not exist (Rayaprol, 1997). Traditionally issues of labour, class, mobility, work and religion have been discussed without women's voices or assuming their realities from their silences. Harding (1987) asserts that feminist research should begin by accepting women as *knowers*. There cannot be special feminist methods of understanding the social reality, rather the existing methods of research should be used in a way which legitimizes women's knowledge and understands it as a valid social reality. To emphasize women's position and role in the process of production of knowledge, she lays out three different kinds of feminist epistemologies: *Feminist Empiricism* acknowledges the role and presence of women and therefore involves adding women to the existing research, thereby merely trying to make women visible, numerically. *Feminist Standpoint Theory* goes beyond women being only as *addendum* (Smith, 1987). It acknowledges women's specific experiences which shapes the nature of knowledge produced. Feminist Standpoint theory asserts that women's experiences and their perspectives of the world around them can form a legitimate source and basis of knowledge. *Feminist Postmodernism* epistemology challenges any sort of unity in women's voice and therefore focusses more on women's voices. According to this postmodern epistemology, women's experiences vary according to their locational differences of caste, class, gender, race, ethnicity and therefore the knowledge that recognizes and visibilizes these pluralities, can be thought of as legitimate and valid. Hill Collins (1990) talked about the experiences of marginalization through the intersection of race, class and gender which produces specific experiences. Purkayastha (2012) goes a step further and brings to this grid of intersectionalities, the dimensions of religion and

transnationalism, which is relevant in an age marked by unhinged and exploitative and forced migration. Similarly, Kannabiran & Swaminathan (2017) have emphasized that relationships among sexuality, tribe, caste, social location, wages are complex and each of these social locations affect the way in which each of them is constituted.

Continuing the point on the need for visibilizing and recognizing women's voices in knowledge, particularly sociology, Smith (1987) wonders how sociology would appear from women's point of view. She advocates the representation of women's views not in the sense of excluding men from the process of knowledge creation, rather the knowledge that shows the relevance of women's place in the field of knowledge. It is in this context that women's experiences play a crucial role. These experiences enable a representation from below, discarding the top-down view. This marks a shift, according to Smith, from an administrator's world to the experienced world. Over the last four decades there has been a great deal of work on women's experiences. However, new forms of androcentrism continue to subsume women's experiences which often get dominated by other intersections such as caste and class.

In my study, I attempt to show women's experiences of working in the retail spaces, which are one of the many manifestations of global capitalism. It is their experiences and the meanings that women give to their work place and the space that it produces, that form the basis of my study. I do not assert that these women's experiences are the only kind of experiences or perspectives that is the absolute reality of working in a shopping mall. If we look at the data of the percentages of men and women employed in the retail sector, it is obviously skewed against the women. According to a World Economic Forum (WEF) survey, a report on the Financial Express

(<https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/gender-gap-4-out-of-5-retail-firms-hire-less-than-10-women-finds-world-economic-forum-study/1341323/>), dated 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2018) revealed that in India , four out of five retail firms in India employ less than ten percent women. Moreover, technology led growth in employment benefits more men than women. The study titled as ‘The Future of Work in India’ by WEF, 2018 revealed that among the 770 companies studied, which included textiles, retail, logistics, only 2.4% of them have half or more female employees. Others have either no female employees or less than five percent female employees.

Thus, numerically, there are many more men employed in the retail sector, specifically apparel sector than women. The study therefore, essentially, does not convey or attempt a universal experience of most of the employees. As the data will show, the study is skewed towards women, it tries to read the shopping mall from their experiences. Similarly, Patel’s study (2011) on the call centre employees also shows a skewed data towards women because the presence of women in the nightscape, enabled by their employment conditions disrupts the stereotypical notions about women’s visibility. In my study, I want to show how women negotiate new forms of labour in the neoliberal capitalist context which is again manifested in their notions of bodies, emotions, aspirations and gendered spaces. Drawing on intersectionality theories, I do not intend to show that all women employed in the retail sector have the same experiences. Experiences amongst women are dependent on the position one occupies in the job hierarchy while expectations and aspirations are different amongst women on the basis of their economic and social backgrounds.

## THE FIELD SITE

As Reinharz (1992) and Harding (1987) assert, there are not specific methods which can be the absolute domain of feminist studies. Rather, feminist studies use the general methods available like ethnography, interviews, questionnaires with feminist insights in the research process which can visibilize women's voices. Reinharz (1992) opines that usually in social science studies, a single method is used for any particular study, although there are also cases where different methods are used in one particular study which is called as triangulation or mixed methods research. The different methods that I have used to gather data has been in accordance with the stage of the study that I was in, with the nature of the respondents and with the access that I had to in certain sites.

In my study, the shopping mall, Mosaic, serves as the primary site where I observe the retail work in action. The Mosaic mall is actually a chain of malls, having presence in other cities also, like Mumbai, Bengaluru and Vadodara. It is this site which I use to understand the stark differences between the mall as a site of consumption and as a place of work. There has been abundant literature (for example: Brosius 2010, Mathur 2014, Srivastava 2015) on the new spaces of consumption in a country like India where the neoliberal consumer culture has been steadily growing along with the growth of a class of people having the ability to spend in these new avenues of consumption, be it spas, shopping malls, resorts, adventure or themed parks and plethora of restaurants serving food from all over the world. What often gets blurred in this picture of a consumer culture is the people who sustain this culture and its requirement of intense physical labour. My study focusses only on one class of these new labour: the shop floor assistants. In the context of my study, it is pertinent to understand this new form of labour, not in terms of mere statistics of employment opportunities, but in terms of their relationship to their

everyday space of work which is a space of leisure, constructed for the consumption of a particular class of people.

The Mosaic mall is a product of that endeavor to create a space of leisure for a particular class of people in a context where consumption defines lifestyles. In terms of its spatial location, Mosaic is an embodiment of the urge to consume and cater to those who can afford that lifestyle. Geographically, it is situated in the HITEC City area of Hyderabad, which in itself a manifestation of a *worlding* city (Roy, 2011). Post 1990s, with the adoption of neoliberal economic policies, it was pertinent to develop the infrastructure in big cities like Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, Mumbai so as to attract foreign investment. These foreign investments in setting up of corporates, hotels, shopping malls in turn complemented the rules of the New Economic Policy of India. However, the *worlding* of Hyderabad, specifically HITEC City has not been unproblematic.

In 1994-95, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh had envisioned to build high-tech knowledge conclaves in the city similar to those in Malaysia or the United States, aiming to change the infrastructure of the city. It was in conjunction with the national economic policy as mentioned above. Both urbanization and liberalization of the economy, at the federal and the State level, were simultaneously happening to create self-sustained enclaves, like the HITEC city (Das, 2011), with shopping malls, residential enclaves, schools, hospitals. People therefore were provided not only a work-space but also a space where they could relax and engage in the newly emerging culture of shopping malls, multiplexes and chain of restaurants. Needless to say, these spaces were exclusive in nature, that aggravated socio-spatial disparities (Ramachandriah & Prasad, 2008). The exclusions produced in the process of manufacturing a global city in the emerging

network society were varied in nature. Where on one hand, many people lost their lands to forced displacement as a result of urbanization, on the other hand, within the created spectacle of a city, there were exclusions on the nature of paid work one engaged in. According to Sam (2013), within the same global space of HITEC city, certain people have access to global work and global consumption, while there are others who are part of the workforce to maintain the system, yet systematically become global non-persons due to their class positions. The Mosaic therefore was a site where I could see both the mundane and the spectacular working simultaneously. The spectacular site of consumption designed within a part of the city which was itself created to be part of the global network, coincided with the mundane site of work where numerous people were working not as part of the IT workforce but as people serving the hyper visible workforce in the discourse of India emerging as an IT hub. This new service class consisted of retail shop-floor employees, security guards, janitors along with the people who had kiosks selling food outside the huge offices and malls. This study could have been done in any mall in any Indian city but what is distinct about Hyderabad and specifically the Mosaic mall is its location within the city. HITEC City as mentioned above, was created towards the project of building a global city, with a definitive image of 'software hub'. The spatiality of the project is however complicated by different forms of inclusion and exclusion that is a product of hierarchized work and consumption spaces (Sam, 2013). It is this complexity that marks the location of Mosaic as appropriate to study layering and its varied ramifications.

### **The Mall as a Place of Leisure:**

Mosaic is a 600,000 square feet shopping mall with three levels of parking below the ground level, while five levels of retail space including the lower ground and the ground

level. The mall manifests a '*hyperbuilding*' (Ong, 2011) which might not be a skyscraper in height, but has a wide base, marking itself onto the ground. Apart from the parking area, there are levels marked as lower ground floor, ground floor, first floor, second floor and third floor. The administrative office of the mall is situated on the top-most floor, while at the ground floor there are help-desks, provisions for prams for babies as well as provisions for wheel-chairs. Wheel chairs can be booked in advance. In the parking level, there are car-wash facilities as well. While entering the mall, either from the parking, or through the main entrance there are security points, where customers are checked before entering the mall. Although according to the norms of the mall, outside food is not allowed inside the mall, I have been often allowed with my lunch without any questions asked. The parking services are available from nine-thirty in the morning till two-thirty in the morning, considering the late-night movie shows. The parking is available at a cost, depending on the number of hours one uses the parking space. The entrance into the parking is demarcated according to two-wheelers and four-wheelers. The cost of parking a two-wheeler is cheaper than the four wheelers. Three-wheelers i.e. auto-rickshaws are not allowed to be parked. They can only drop-off and pick up the customers.

There are escalators and elevators to enter the mall. The elevators are present on one side of the mall, while the escalators are present on both the ends of the floors. The glass walls of shops make it possible to have a look at all the stores and the products on sale while walking towards the escalator. The glass walls, a characteristic of most of the shopping malls ensure maximum visibility. The structure is designed for a place of comfortable consumption.

**The Mall as a Place of Work:**

Next to the front entrance-gate to the mall, there is another gate which is strictly for the people working in the mall. All the employees, stocks and supplies have to enter through this gate. The parking space is demarcated for the employees. All the employees' vehicles have a sticker and they too avail the parking space at a nominal monthly cost. The parking space of the employees has more varieties of vehicles including bicycles, motorcycles and cars. The employee's entry to the mall is through the back side which is usually hidden from the mall space as 'Emergency Exit'. Employees enter the mall through displaying their identity cards to the security personnel who guard the employees' entry and exit. As a researcher, I was also issued an identity-card to enter the mall through the employee's side of the mall. Unlike the detailed and color maps marking each store in the consumer space, the employees' side of the mall does not have a map. I have often got confused with the entry points leading to back side of the stores and had to return and enter again through the customers' entry side. I had to confine my study to three stores after being denied permission from other apparel and cosmetic stores in the mall. All the three stores had leased huge spaces, spanning up to two-three floors in the mall. All the three stores claimed to be catering to all the categories of customers rather than only middle class or upper-middle class customer segments. In the retail sector, as it was conveyed to me repeatedly, it is important to know the social class or more specifically the buying power of the customer one is targeting.

**SOURCES OF DATA****Entry into the Field and Observations:**

I could not live in my field as was not possible practically. Like the customers and the service-providers, I lived in my own house. I happened to move two houses during the

course of my study. The first house was located at a distance of around twenty kilometers from my field while the second one was conveniently located at a distance of approximately seven kilometers from the field. While I took city buses when I was in the first house to reach the mall, I drove my bike to the mall on shifting to the second house. Between September, 2014 to April, 2016 I had several field visits to Mosaic. My entry to the mall as a researcher was difficult with no earlier contacts with anyone who was working in the mall in any capacity. I was also asked to explain 'research purposes' on multiple occasions, on the shop-floor by store managers as well as the staff while filling up their responses. I had a letter from my supervisor which clearly stated that I was a student of the Department of Sociology, University of Hyderabad and was conducting a research for my doctoral degree. But on different occasions the store managers would assume that I was a business administration student, because of my interest in retail work. My respondents would also ask me if I could give them a job or a promotion, after the 'interview'. I would politely explain to them that I was interested in understanding the nature of their work and the conditions in which they worked.

Since there was no other way, I decided to directly enter the store Maximum and speak to the store manager about my study and that I wanted to speak to the shop-floor employees. Not unexpectedly, the Assistant Store Manager asked me to speak to the Human Resource Manager and seek his permission. I followed the same procedure with the two other stores, Spot and Post. After receiving permission from the concerned managers, I went to the stores and distributed the questionnaires that had basic questions about name, age, salary, experience at work. I also received permission to be on the shop-floor and observe the daily work of the shop-floor. However, I had to be careful and considerate because if the shop-floor employees, also called as customer-service

executives were caught talking to me frequently, through the cameras, they could lose out on their incentives. Apart from these stores, three shop-floor employees of a stand-alone<sup>5</sup> cosmetic store, Vanity, agreed to be part of the study, once I explained them my work and that I was also doing the same thing in the other stores in the mall. However, they spoke to their supervisor over phone to take his permission before actually speaking to me. One of the respondents, who works with a lingerie brand Elle which is part of a larger store, agreed to speak to me without disclosing to anyone in the store. This particular store had refused to be part of the study. I got in touch with her during my frequent visits to the store to seek permission for the study. While answering the questionnaire, in Maximum, each of the respondents was called to the table where I and the Store Manager were sitting. The Store-Manager took over from me and explained the study to them. He also offered to fill in the questionnaire for some of the respondents. Perceiving the hierarchical work culture on the shop-floor I asked each of the respondents to tell me, by marking 'yes' or 'no' on their questionnaires if they would be interested in personal interviews. A clear manifestation of the power relations was the uniformity of answers in the responses to the questionnaires. The uniformity of the answer could also be in the training processes that the staff receive. I would short-list the 'yes' questionnaires, come back home and call them up later to fix a time according to their schedule, for interviews. Many of these 'yes' did not turn up later, either due to lack of interest or time.

While observing the daily rituals of the shop-floor, while I held a diary and a pen, it was difficult for me to note down. I was allotted a particular member in each of the three stores who would explain to me the shop-floor work. I decided to observe as much as I

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<sup>5</sup> Not attached to any other store, in the mall.

could by following the staff, rather than sitting down to write. While on the floor I was often advised by the staff to sit as my legs would hurt if I kept standing. I would follow the staff everywhere, from stock clearing, to setting up of new stock, steaming the displayed clothes, having tea and lunch. I stopped asking questions about the retail work where I found the staff was getting annoyed. It was normal on her part to get annoyed because morning hours, before the customers start coming in are usually very busy for the staff. I usually visited around ten in the morning and left after the lunch hour because the customers start coming in huge numbers around lunch time.

I consider myself non-participant observer because I was not present in my field as a shop-floor employee or participating in any of their activities. On a few occasions I might have helped a staff in hanging stocks on the gondolas. On days when I wore black to the Stop store, I was mistaken for a customer care-executive by customers and was asked for help in looking for a particular size of clothing or was asked to give suggestions for particular mix-n-match clothes from the ethnic section. It was known to the staff as well as to the store managers that I was there for research. Patel (2011) mentions that her study drew from participant observation when she was in the call centers observing the employees in their usual work environment, without herself being one of the employees. Therefore, the line between participant and non-participant observation seems to be blurred.

It was through one of these shop-floor interactions that I got to know about the English Work Readiness and Computers Programme (EWRC) managed by the Employment Generation and Marketing Mission (EGMM) which trains rural youth in soft-skills, basic computers and spoken English. I wrote an email to a high ranking official at EGMM

stating my research and asking for an appointment. I was immediately given an appointment to meet him at their Khairtabad office. I was also asked to visit their classrooms in different district centers along with one of the consultants. I knew I would not be able to interview the students, but the fact of getting to see the classrooms, to interact with them and getting their training materials was a great opportunity for me to visit their regional training centers in Chilkoor and Nalgonda apart from their 'finishing school' in Masab Tank area, Hyderabad. I remained purely an observer, focusing mostly on their training processes. Personal interviewing was not possible, although on some occasions I got classrooms with students without any course instructor present. It in these situations that I got to know about training processes, job resource persons, students' idea about retail organisations. EGMM was not part of the initial plan of research. It emerged from within the field during the various interactions. Apart from observing the processes of retail work and having the opportunity to see training sessions, surveys of shop floor employees and trainees, interviews, training materials in forms of booklets, worksheets, videos, photographs and finally casual conversations about retail works with trainers served as valuable sources of data.

### **Survey of Shop-floor Employees and EWRC Trainees:**

I used survey questionnaires as an entry point to understand the field which would further lead to my interview sample. A set of questions printed on a paper legitimized my presence as a researcher in the shopping mall. Armed with a letter from my supervisor which confirmed that I was a student of the University, along with some questionnaires I set out to understand the mall. Though, Moser (1977) states, the usage of surveys arises from a need to understand the characteristics of a set of people, their social environment, activities or opinions and attitude. Survey questionnaires are usually criticized for

lacking in-depth answers and often fail to give the researcher an insight into the respondents' experiences of social phenomenon that is being studied. I used the survey questionnaire with two-set of respondents: a) with the shop-floor employees, b) with the students of EWRC. The first set of has forty respondents, while the second set has twenty-one respondents. In the former the survey questionnaire itself formed an act of forming an acquaintance, in the latter, the survey questionnaire was the only method of gathering data that was possible. In the both the sets, I used convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling "*where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study*" (Etikan et.al 2015: 2). My respondents' initial agreement to fill up the questionnaire was facilitated by the people in managerial ranks. In an organisational set-up, specially like the retail shop it is otherwise difficult to conduct a study without the approval of the managers.

My initial contact with the shop-floor employees was either through the Store Managers or through HR managers. It was through coordination from the employees in positions of power over the shop-floor employee, that I had to reach the latter. Therefore, getting a questionnaire filled with basic questions on education, family and regional background could give me a general idea about the shop-floor employees as well as lead me to potential respondents. In all the stores studies, the managers would call their employees to the back-office, I would introduce myself and my study. After that I distributed the questionnaire and waited for them to fill up. The questionnaire had to be approved by the store manager, with which I did not have a problem, because I was anyway waiting for the interviews to happen. The problem arose when one particular manager started

filling up the form on behalf of an women employee because she was nervous. I would ask the respondents while they were filling up the form if they would be interested in an interview. If they agreed, I marked 'Y' on their response-sheets and would call them later.

My assumption was that I would get only demographic data, from this method so that I have the socio-economic background details of the respondents. However, as I went about gathering responses, I could see a uniformity in responses of the employees, employed with different stores. It is through these responses that the importance of training, specifically grooming, 'smiling' and speaking in 'English' emerged. Migration for 'jobs'<sup>6</sup> was another response that was common throughout the forty respondents, irrespective of their position in the retail hierarchy. Table 1 in the appendices shows the profile of the respondents. The second set of questionnaires was given to the EWRC students, again to know their training procedure, aspirations regarding their future, reason for joining the course, expectations regarding their salary, apart from socio-economic background. I could not proceed in a similar manner for interviews because the students were expected to go back to their hostels after class. Also, my access to the students after the class hours could have irked the officials who in many ways were cooperative and provided access to class-rooms, exam results and course materials. That could have affected my access to the finishing school of the EWRC programme situated in Hyderabad. Table 2 in the appendices represents the profile of the respondents.

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<sup>6</sup> One response stood out, where one of the male respondents expressed that he migrated to Hyderabad from Kolkata, to become a hero in Telugu films!

**Interviews:**

Open-ended interviews formed one of the most important sources of knowledge in my data. As stated above, the respondents themselves decided if they wanted to be a part of the study and meet me at a later date for the interview. I interviewed a total of twenty-two respondents. As Reinharz (1992) emphasizes, feminist studies have often resorted to the interview method so as to achieve the involvement of the respondents in the process of constructing of data, about their own lives. This assumes importance specially in a context where women have either been silenced or have been spoken for or represented by others, in patriarchal cultures. Interviews usually have a scope for discussion, often giving an insight into people's perception of reality; in this case the meanings that women attached to their employment and the shopping mall itself. Where surveys helped me see the similarities in shop-floor employees, interviews laid bare the differences amongst them. Realities of class, gender, aspirations and their inter-relations emerged through the interviews. I used both convenience and purposive sampling methods in the selection of my respondents. Convenience sampling method helped facilitate the consent of the respondents for an interview, who had already filled up my questionnaire. I also relied on purposive sampling methods in cases where respondents' role either in the retail shop-floor or training organisations had vested them with some authority. I used purposive sampling in cases where I had to interview a few respondents for their job positions. For example, I interviewed the lease manager at Mosaic, the retail operations managers, store managers, a department manager and consultant with EGMM to gain an insight into the managerial perspective of retail shop-floor employment and the training processes that it entails.

The interviews were open-ended and varied. Though all of them started with the basic questions like name, age, designation at work, years of experience, the questions that followed depended on the responses received. The place of conducting the interview also influenced the nature of the interview. When I would interview the respondents at their home, on their invitation, the respondents would be freer and less cautious. In some instances, I met my respondents in malls that was closer to their homes or when they came to those malls to spend their off-days. There was never an instance where the respondents would come to their place of work on their off-days to relax. There were also interviews which were conducted in the mall, on their shop-floor. These interviews were not continuous, and were often interrupted by tasks to be completed or arrival of the customers. Questions about work, physical ailments would be answered in hushed tones. It is these non-verbal gestures that revealed knowledge of being surveilled. Moreover, during these interviews the respondents also went to and from the stock room and the shop-floor to either arrange new merchandise on the gondolas or take down old stock from the gondolas. Interviewing them during the performance of their daily chores often served as validating their responses on having to stand throughout the day, or about grooming routines.

I was conscious of the fact that being a woman was not enough to build relationships of trust<sup>7</sup> with the respondents. I knew that there were other differences between my respondents and myself of which my respondents knew. They knew that I was a student with the University of Hyderabad, studying for a degree about which they had limited

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<sup>7</sup> During one of the interviews, a respondent's elder sister who is a police constable kept on calling her to know if she was alright. Finally, she arrived at the eatery we were at, to take her home. I wrapped up the interview while assuring myself that it was a wise decision!

idea. I was not working for an M.B.A degree, I clarified. The fact that I was older than most of them and studying, without having to worry about a job or about the household chores marked my privilege. Yet conversations regarding food choices, quality of vegetables, ‘in-laws’, ‘family’ during lunch-hours helped build trust. There was an issue of being perceived as a stranger initially which however faded away with my regular visits to the mall and through WhatsApp messages. Their familiarity with me through my regular visits to the mall helped me build rapport with my respondents. I believe my position as a stranger initially and then with gradual familiarity helped respondents open up to me and invite me to their homes and family functions like weddings subsequently.

Mies (1983) suggests that women social scientists, should reject value neutrality and adopt conscious partiality, which invariably leads to a view from below, a view that tries to understand the perspectives of those not in powerful positions in their social locations. As emphasized earlier, in my study I have tried to understand the retail work in a shopping mall from women shop-floor employees’ perspectives. I have also interviewed men and women in positions of power, for example store managers, operations managers, coordinators of training programmes and trainers, to show how perceptions about requirements of jobs varies across one’s location in the social and economic hierarchy. The view from below becomes crucial to understand the futility of overarching managerial ideals like “good future”, “customer satisfaction”, “store as family”, owing to the deconstructed meanings that employees associate with these ideals. The table 3 in the appendices shows the profile of my interview respondents. The name column represents the pseudonyms that I use to refer to the respondents in my study. I have used the letters M and F in the gender column to represent male and female respectively. Although I have used the restrictive male/ female to represent the gender

of my respondents, I was in no way imposing this identity on them. All my respondents were clear with the gender they wished to be identified with. While tables 1 and 2 give a general picture of the employees and the trainees waiting to be inducted into the retail sector as lower end staff, Table 3 in the appendices is representative of the different voices<sup>8</sup> that help function the retail sector.

### **Profile of the Respondents:**

1. C.M.V- C.M.V is an Assistant Store Manager, employed with the brand Maximum. He has been employed with Maximum for almost two years and finds it a great place to work in. He is around 30 years old and got interested in the retail industry because of its dynamic nature that constantly kept one on one's toes.
2. A. G- G completed his Bachelor in Commerce from Osmania University in Hyderabad around 10 years ago and during that time retail industry was still new in the market. He and his friends decided to get into the retail industry because the idea of being in the fashion industry fascinated them. Apart from the fashion element, the work space was also something different and attractive. Air-conditioned work space was a major attraction for him. Moreover, the retail industry did not require a technical degree; performance was evaluated on output and not on the number of degrees one had. There was no importance placed on seniority which attracted him to the retail sector.
3. Mary- She is one of the trainers at Maximum. She trains newly recruited CREs at the Somajiguda, Hyderabad centre. She claims that she was the first female Store Manager of a Van Heusen store in Hyderabad at a time when retail was still emerging and there were no other store managers in the city who were women. It was a very respectable job, although she could not continue with the job due to the high pressure involved and

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<sup>8</sup> Though, the data is skewed towards the women employed as shop-floor employees.

therefore shifted to training. She asserts that there is absolutely no difference in which she trains men and women recruits.

4. K- K is a 24-year-old man, who migrated to Hyderabad in 2009 in search of a job from Khammam in the Andhra region. He started working with brands like More and Fashion Big Bazaar, but due to low pay, he went to Maximum in expectation of a higher salary. After 5-6 years of working in the retail sector, he is now a Senior Customer Relations Executive with Maximum, earning a salary of 10500 rupees per month, sends 7 thousand rupees to his family and manages with the rest. His family is dependent on his money as both his parents are farmers. He shares accommodation with his relatives who are also working in Hyderabad. He pays 200 rupees a month for sharing accommodation on a terrace. The asbestos gets really hot during summers. But he cannot leave the place because some of his room-mates are his relatives and also because the rent is good. Cooking is done alternatively between him and his room-mates. After reaching home, he finds cooking to be the most difficult job. He just wants to sleep. Sometimes he carries lunch. When asked whether his family came to visit him in Hyderabad, he affirmed and said happily that he had taken them to visit City Centre mall, Koti for shopping and the Charminar. He loves watching movies and on his off days he goes to City Centre Mall, which is near his house, just to roam around. He hopes to buy a bike someday to ease the travel.
5. A- A is the Leasing Manager of the Mosaic mall. He is from Rajasthan, and after completing his Master's in Business Administration, he got a job with the Mosaic mall. He claims that being in the leasing department is one of the busiest jobs and involves a lot of meeting with retailers and other clients.
6. P- P is a 24-year-old woman, who is works with the brand Maximum as a CRE. She is pursuing her Bachelor's Degree in Commerce in distant mode. Her father works as a

Security Guard in Apollo hospitals while her mother is a home-maker. She joined Reliance Fresh in 2009, directly after her higher secondary exams. But since the salary was too less and the yearly increment was also around 500-600 rupees per month, she left the job and joined Maximum, after hearing about vacancy through friends. At Maximum, she earns a salary of 10000 rupees plus incentives. I met P in her house on her off-day. The house was modest, with 2 rooms. There was a kitchen on entering the house which led to another room. The other room had a bed and a television set. It was part of a 2-storeyed building, with similar apartments adjoining each other. There was a common bathroom outside the house for all the residents of the building. There was no fridge. She offered me lunch at the end of the interview. And also offered me juice during the interview. After a few months of the interview, P came to my house to invite for her wedding. After that meeting I went again to her place to give her the wedding present. She told me that she would work in the Vijayawada Maximum, as her husband stays in Vijayawada. She got married and now her husband does not want her to work, so she is a house wife. She has a daughter now and is in touch with me via WhatsApp.

7. S1- S1 is a 22-year-old woman who works with Spot as a Customer Care Executive and earns a salary of 8500 rupees per month. Her father is a farmer. After completing her graduation from Kakinada, she came to Hyderabad as her elder sister also stays in Hyderabad, with her family. She stays in a paying guest accommodation in Kukatpally. One of her other reasons for shifting to Hyderabad was that her boyfriend also works in Hyderabad, in a cell-phone store. She got to know about retail vacancy through one of her friends. Her family thinks she is doing 'time-pass' in Hyderabad and is taking some banking coaching. She has not told her parents about the job because they will be worried regarding her safety and health. A few months after the interview she shifted to another

apparel store. Now she is taking training in a popular beauty salon to be a hair stylist. She resides in Bengaluru these days.

8. S2- S2 is a 19-year-old woman works with Maximum as a trainee. Once her job position is confirmed her salary will be confirmed. She migrated to Hyderabad recently, along with her family, from Mumbai after some familial disputes. Her younger sister also works at a popular retail apparel store. Her father does not have a job and wants both his daughters to stop working after he gets a job, because of the timings of the job as well as the work pressure. S2 has failed her higher secondary exams twice, so her father wants her to resume studies. S2 also wants to continue studies and build a future in accountancy.
9. SG- SG is the Retail Operations Manager, working with the brand Spot. During her Master's in Business Administration course, she did an internship with a retail store and liked it. So, after her course was over, when she got an opportunity to work in the retail sector she took it. She first worked as a management trainee in the Begumpet store of Spot, and once they liked her work, she was sent to the Spot store in Mosaic mall as a Retail Operations Manager.
10. S3- S3 is a management trainee, working with Spot. She is from Odisha, and got this job through campus placement of her M.B.A college. Her father is a government employee, while her mother is a home-maker. At the time of recruitment, she was told that she would receive a salary of 18000 rupees per month but receives only 12000 rupees per month. She is not happy with her job as she expected a job in the management level. Her senior colleagues ask her to have patience and continue with the job as the job has a lot of scope. She stays in a paying guest accommodation in Madhapur and does not like the food at all. She has not discussed about the issues at work or the work-related physical stress, because then her parents will get worried and ask her to return home, leaving the

job. According to her, Bhubaneswar, her home town, does not have as many opportunities as Hyderabad.

11. S4- S4 is a 22-year-old woman, from Guntur. She shifted to Hyderabad for job because of financial problems in the family. She is simultaneously doing her graduation in distance mode and has completed her first year. She gets a salary of 7000 rupees per month and is a Customer Service Associate with the Spot. According to her, she is paid less as she does not have experience. Her father is a farmer and mother is a home-maker. She belongs to Scheduled Caste and says that Hyderabad gives her a freedom which Guntur did not. In Hyderabad, she has not experienced any conversation that discuss her caste. She is the first one in her family to pursue graduation and hopes to make her parents proud one day. She plans to do an M.B.A and also has plans of taking banking exams so that she can get into a stable job. She had been staying with her aunt in Hyderabad, but on the day of her interview, shifted to a paying guest accommodation in KPHB colony.
12. S5- S5 is a Beauty Advisor, working with the Spot store. She is a 29-year-old woman, with eight years of experience in the retail industry. During the time of the interview, she had left her job to take care of her child. She has worked in different malls and stores in the city, evident in her salary as well as her experience. She has also gone to Bengaluru on different occasions to take training in newly launched beauty products by her company. Her husband works in the Police Commissioner's office in Gachibowli. She plans to get back into the retail sector, at a higher post, once her child grows up.
13. G- G is a 23-year-old woman, who is married and has a child. She was working with Spot, however left it after her pregnancy because of the work pressure. The 3-month maternity leave was not enough. She is from Srikakulam, but migrated to Hyderabad for her job, through training in the EWRC programme in EGMM. She joined a popular retail

store first, where she met her husband and they got married. Now she stays at home and intends to get back to work once her child grows up. She says two salaries are required to give her daughter a good English-medium education.

14. N1- N1 is a 25-year-old woman who works with the store Post as a Fashion Assistant. She is proud of her job as she tells me that she had started working in the retail sector with a salary of 7000 rupees per month, but now her salary is a 20000 rupees per month. She is the sole earning member in her family, supporting her husband, children and mother-in-law. She stays in Boduppall and travels daily sixty kilometers by bus for her job. She cooks and cleans before coming to work, while her mother-in-law helps her in other domestic chores. Since the interview, she has moved to a Post store in Kothapet, to be closer to her home.
15. Laxmi- She completed Master's in Business Administration from Alluri Institute of Management Sciences, which is affiliated to Kakatiya University, in 2009. After that she got placed through campus placement in Coromandel International Limited, a fertilizer company. worked for 10 months and then shifted to Marks and Spencer's. There she worked as a supervisor for 2 and half years, then moved to Bharti Walmart where she was the Team Leader of the entire non-food section then she took a break for 2 years for motherhood, resuming as a Department Manager, in the brand Post. She is not happy with her job as her package is also low. She lamented that taking a break pushed her down the job hierarchy.
16. V- V is a 26-year-old woman, who works as a Make-up Advisor with the brand Vanity. She stays in Kacheguda, Hyderabad along with her family, which includes her two children, her husband and her parents. She says it is her necessary for her parents to stay with her so that they can take care of her children, while she and her husband are away at work. Her husband also works in an apparel store.

17. S6- S6 is a 24-year-old woman and works with the make-up brand Vanity as make-up advisor. She stays in Jubilee hills area of Hyderabad. Her father owns a small grocery shop, while her mother is a house-keeping staff in the Mosaic mall itself. Both her elder sisters are married, while her younger brother is studying. She has completed her graduation- Bachelor's in Commerce with Computers. Her mother got to know of this job and contacted the supervisor of the Vanity store. S6 then sent her resume along with a photograph and then she was selected. She has been at this store for six-seven months and has experience working with other stores.
18. M- M is make-up advisor with the make-up brand Vanity. She is twenty-six years old and stays in Banjara Hills, with her family, which includes her mother, her husband and her 1-year-old baby. Her husband works in a resort. Her mother takes care of the baby while they are away at work. She cannot leave the job because of financial necessities; therefore, her mother shares her domestic responsibilities.
19. R- R is a 21-year-old woman, and has completed her Bachelor in Science degree. Her father is a farmer, while her mother is a home-maker. Her elder brother is an engineer, working with Tech-Mahindra, while the elder sister is married with children. R does not see a long-term career in the retail sector as it is not conducive for her health. After a few months of the interview, she married and now stays in Maharashtra with her husband and her child.
20. S7- S7 is a 24-year old woman, working with the lingerie brand Elle. She has 6years of experience working in the retail sector. She stays near the Mosaic mall, which makes the daily commute very convenient for her. Her elder sister works as a Police constable, while her father is a security guard at Apollo hospitals. Her mother is a home-maker. She discontinued her studies after her intermediate examinations, because of financial issues

at home. However, she has applied for a degree course, so that after the course, she can have better salary. Her sister was also working in retail, before getting into police service.

21. A.K- He is a Senior Consultant working with EGMM. He heads the EWRC programme. He did his Master's in Business Administration from Jawaharlal Nehru University with specialization in Finance and Human Resource Management. His wife is a doctor and works in Delhi. He has earlier worked with the Bank of America and a Sweden based company.
22. K.R- K.R owns a man power agency and has had many years of experience in the retail industry. His man power agency as tie-up with DDU-GKY (Deen Dayal Upadhyya Grameen Kaushalya Yojna) and coordinates with the training and supply of man power to various corporates as well as training organisations.

#### **Documents/Conversations:**

Documents about the programmes and promotional material from training centres dealing with grooming, basic mathematics, English or Computers served as crucial sources of information. The documents and the training videos from an organisation that collaborates with the State or corporates to train young people were important to point out that already the model of an ideal retail shop-floor employee is created and that the trainees need to emulate the behavior shown in the training videos, if they want to be potential employees. Photographs of the mall late in the night or photographs of the 'exclusive' employee space helped me to corroborate my data as well as to show the physical phenomenon of layering in action. The photographs of the employee spaces were taken with permission. Situational conversations with trainers, and being witness to a viva examination of the trainees on one occasion showed how important learning

from the booklets on grooming and on handling various kinds of customers were crucial for the trainees.

### **THE RESEARCHER IN THE FIELD**

As Smith (1987) asserts, feminist research often stems from the researcher's own experiences. My interest in the shopping mall both as a consumer and as a sociologist began after I shifted to Hyderabad from Delhi. The part of Delhi where I spent five years between 2007-2012 did not have too many shopping malls. Like most college students, I would go to street-side shops in popular areas like Kamla Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, Lajpat and Palika Bazaar to do 'shopping' or 'hang out'. Moving to Hyderabad for higher studies, the experience that Delhi had given me as a shopper with a tight budget suddenly changed, with the Mosaic mall becoming a regular place to visit. It was the presence of a large number of uniformed people engaged in the process of selling products intrigued me not only because of my previous experience in Delhi but also because of the stark contrast it had with my father's wholesale shop selling clothing, situated in a busy market in Balasore, a town in Odisha. The comparison offered contrasting visuals: Clothes piled in stacks in stores in Motiganj Bazaar, Balasore which shared walls, food, national and international news, along with discussions on Bollywood. I have also heard shop-owners telling customers to buy goods where ever they found better rates! On the other hand, there was Mosaic- huge stores, systematically arranged pieces of merchandise according to shades and sizes, with the staff always ready to help the customer.

As I began regular visits to the mall and started having conversations with the shop-floor employees, I knew I would always be an outsider because of language barriers, class differences but most importantly in establishing or in legitimizing my presence in the

field. The fact that I did not know the language proved to be a hindrance, where on multiple occasions I could not capture the essence of their conversations during the breaks. Most of my respondents were kind enough to translate their conversations but I felt meanings were lost in the process of translation. However, I feel that being a stranger and not knowing the language placed me in a situation where my respondents could speak to me openly without the fear of being eavesdropped upon.

My status as a married woman was constantly questioned because I did not show any signs of a Hindu married woman, for example the red vermilion or the *mangalsutra*. I did not get questions on my caste, except once when one of the respondents told me how important caste is in AP where each caste has its own status. The same respondent showed interest in my wedding anniversary and other details of my personal life. I thought it was important for building trust and familiarity, which would have implications on my access to important sources of data. As long as it was not harmful I did not have any major problem with it. I had no hesitation in going to my women respondents' homes for interviews. Whenever I had to interview or meet a male respondent I was cautious enough to meet at a public place. When I went to different training centers located in different districts I made sure that I kept my family informed about it. I have also turned down offers of going to recruitment camps in different cities because I was not comfortable.

I did not impose my feminist ideas of emancipation or empowerment on my respondents. It was difficult for me to accept some of my respondents' ideas regarding household work, importance of looking good or standing throughout the day on the shop-floor even when there were no customers. However, my aim was not to make them question their

life situation or their work -requirements. As a researcher I could not impose my own feminist beliefs on them. My purpose was not to emancipate them, rather to understand the shopping mall as a work-space from the women's perspectives (Rayaprol, 1997). It is through these perspectives, I could understand the varied meanings of empowerment, aspirations and happiness attached to labour that I had assumed to be only exploitative in nature.

Once I felt I had collected the required data I exited the field. However, I kept in touch with a few of my respondents. Some of the respondents who told me enthusiastically that they wanted to be department managers and therefore wanted to learn English, are now married with kids. One of them is not engaged in paid employment because her husband does not like the idea of her working in shopping malls. Another wanted to do something with computers, is married with a child. One of my respondents who had shifted to Hyderabad to be able to be with her boyfriend has shifted to Bengaluru to do a course on hair styling. It is interesting to see the shifts now over a period of 5 years in the retail sphere where already the turnover rate is so high. Communication technology and social media such as WhatsApp has helped to be in touch with some of my respondents.

In these 5 years there are at least ten shopping malls that have come up in the vicinity of my field site. As someone who has looked at the shopping all from the perspective of the shop-floor employees, it is impossible for me to be in the shopping mall as a consumer only. Clicking pictures of workers cleaning, fixing or installing something in the mall late in the night still remains a habit. However, I have become more conscious in my interaction with the shop-floor employees- I make sure I smile at them and interact with

them knowing that it might convert to monetary incentives for them. My respect for the service class in consumptive world has grown immensely.

### Chapter 3. Emotional Labour on the Shop-floor

*We were instructed to be polite with the customers, smile at them and be properly dressed. We were also asked to suggest them their sizes. But how can we smile throughout the day? [S3, a respondent who works with Spot, on being asked about the process of induction]*

The above instance shows that the act of smiling throughout the labouring day, is a burden for the shop-floor employee. The young woman finds it difficult even if it is a requirement of her job. She does not get paid for the number of smiles she can produce in a day, even though her smiling face is believed to be an absolute necessity on the shop-floor, especially while dealing with customers. What does this instance tell us about the relation between gender, paid work and display of emotions? Are display of emotions merely important on the shop-floor or do they tell us more about the kind of labour that women have been trained and socialised to do since birth? What do these prescribed emotions convey about the new regimes of labour? The chapter tries to answer these questions by understanding the relationship between gender and work and its ramifications, then proceeding to show how Arlie Hochschild's feminist analysis of the self, interaction and structure through the concept of emotional labour, can be useful to understand one of the most important requirements of labour on the shop-floor, which is emotional labour and how the concept can still be used to understand the labour on the retail shop-floor. The chapter then focusses on the processes involved in the manufacture of emotional labour, which is often formatted and reinforced through constant training. The chapter however asserts that in spite of the elaborate training mechanisms, the shop-floor employees cannot be seen as passive bodies on whom rules are enforced. Thus, different ways of resisting are also discussed. It then conceives the retail shop floor as a

socio-emotional economy, as theorised by Clark (1997) and recognises the importance of certain form of the presentation of the self like smiling, politeness as valuable resources in capitalist economy. These valuable resources are reproduced through the process of emotional labour, on the shop floor thereby making it more than a static site of economic exchange.

## **GENDER AND WORK**

### **The Private and the Public:**

Historically, women have been relegated to the constructed private sphere, taking up responsibility of cooking and caring while patriarchy has made men the rightfully deserving guardians of the public sphere. It is this constructed difference between the public and the private and the ascribed belonging of sexes to the different spheres, that manufactures a gendered work relationship. Writing in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir, points out that paid employment can finally end the second-class status of women and that they do not require men as mediators with the outside world:

“It is through gainful employment that woman has traversed most of the distance that separated her from the male and nothing else can guarantee her liberty in practice. Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumbles, between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator.” (de Beauvoir, 1949, 689).

Surprisingly, seventy years later, with an increased rate of women’s participation in the paid workforce, the observation is scarcely true. One of the reasons is the strange relationship of women with paid and unpaid work. Women, in this sense, can probably

claim a common ground even in the face of multitude of differences in class, race, region, sexuality, caste, and ethnicity amongst themselves.

### **Gender and Paid Work:**

What is the relationship of women, then, with paid employment, which is apparently different from the responsibility of the nurturing work, that they are so often equated with? Is the relationship based on essentialist assumptions about women's bodies and their innate capabilities? Gottfried (2006) tells us that looking at the organisation of paid work through feminism shows how employment is organized, for example working hours, skills, contracts, rest rooms and so on, through male bias and sexist assumptions. It is the second wave of feminism that developed the relationship between women and paid work, even when the first wave had ignored the patriarchal nature of capitalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This recognition of the patriarchal capitalism gave rise feminist theories like that of Walby (1986) and Hartmann (1979). Both the theories, amongst others, emphasized on how women were structurally clustered in low-paying jobs, thereby making them dependent on men and being subjugated to men in supervisory functions. Thus, paid employment did not change the circumstances for women radically. Later works also recognized the fact that gender and class intersected to produce new ways gendered relationships to paid work. One of the ramifications of this gendered process is the feminization of labour. It is this labour that is the focus of this chapter by highlighting aspects that usually remain invisible.

### **The Retail Shop-floor:**

In the Indian context, the growth of the service sector can be traced to the liberalization policies of 1990s which enabled the opening up of markets to foreign investment and

development of retail chains across the metro cities (Shabnam & Paul, 2008). and is discussed in chapter 2. Subsequent opening up of corporate cinemas, salon, global fast food franchises etc. contributed to the growth of the service sector, based on face to face interaction. Talking specifically about the retail sector in the Indian context, various studies have shown that usually young women are preferred in this sector:

“Women are considered to be more suitable for certain jobs in this sector. With the customer being the king for all retailers, women are quite expectedly becoming the choice in most front-end profiles, which require constant interaction with customers. Women employees are also preferred choice in certain product categories like food and grocery, cosmetics, kids, jewellery, home décor and apparels. Young and smart women with impressive communication ability are considered better employees...” (Dubey, 2013:89).

The visibility of women employees in organised retail does not translate into the assertion that there are more women employees than men in this sector or it is completely women-centric in its employee preferences. In the Western context, studies have shown (for example Pettinger 2005; Broadbridge 1991), that it is considered a highly feminine sector, and therefore, men usually don't prefer these jobs. Men who work in those jobs that are considered feminine are also paid less. However, in India, like it was in other parts of the world in the 1970s, there has been a trend of rapid feminization of labour occurring in the service sector since the 1990s, irrespective of the fact that the number of women in India's workforce decreased from 28.7% in 2004-05 to 21.9% in 2011-2012, according to NSSO report of 2011-2012 (Muyarath & Roopak, 2018). Women are preferred because they tend to stay longer in this service sector as compared to men and

it is an important factor, given the high rate of attrition. Other reasons include cheaper availability of female labour and lack of unionisation in the retail sector (Muyarath & Roopak, 2018). The qualities required to be in this sector, are gender stereotypes such as soft spokenness or politeness.

Broadbridge (1991) in her work on the retail stores in London in the 1980s, finds that most shop workers are women, while the highest positions in the hierarchy of shop work were traditionally filled by men as the managerial positions were christened as '*skilled*' and hence dominated by men. Sales assistants, clerks were mostly women and these were part-time jobs. Using part-time workers was a strategy to cut down the cost. Moreover, married women with child care responsibilities took up these jobs as timings were flexible, and also because they had difficulty in finding jobs especially when they took a break for childbirth. Women were also thought to be better at being sales assistants because they were thought to be conditioned to provide services to the customers with efficiency, pleasantness, submissiveness and patience. This again perpetuated gender stereotypes. Retail work was also segregated by sex not only vertically but horizontally. Women mostly sold lingerie and men sold medicines, books, wine and so on. With increasing competition, retail establishments had to provide other services like reading rooms, better ambience, and escalators to attract more customers. However, this did not translate to better working ambience for the sales assistants. For example, there were long hours of work, minimal breaks often with no meal breaks, fines for talking or sitting down. The salary they received was less, out of which they were expected to dress well and be groomed to appear presentable to the customers. Sexual harassment from customers was also faced by many of Broadbridge's female respondents and they felt that they were unable to complain but had to accept it smiling. Although retail stores

had enticing ambience yet non-customer areas were dirty, smelly and dark. Cameron (2000), talks about the language training that call centre workers and retail shop floor staffs go through. The language is deemed as feminizing by male workers because they believe that certain kind of language emasculates them and robs them off a strong personality at the same time essentializing certain attributes to women as innate in them. Cameron's work helps in understanding work place cultures which are entrenched in essentialist gendered attitudes and behaviour.

### **EMOTIONAL LABOUR**

Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour is based on the emotion management perspective through which the relationship between the self, interactionism and the structures of power can be understood (Hochschild, 1979). It is her sociological conceptualization of emotional labour that forms the basis of my argument in this chapter. The retail shop-floor is dependent primarily on the emotional labour of the shop floor employees and is the site that manufactures pre-conceived scripts of emotional labour, thereby using an intimate emotion to be put to commercial use.

Her work signifies how emotions which are so intrinsic to oneself can be used as a commodity in the labour market. According to Hardt (1999) emotions become important specially in the context of late capitalism where labour is evaluated on the quality of service it provides to its customers as well as the relationship that is maintained on the shop-floor<sup>9</sup>. Emotions, are no longer intrinsic to oneself, rather, they become sites of control and needing approval not only from the management but also from fellow

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<sup>9</sup> For example, calling a colleague as 'Buddy', seen in new places of work like McDonalds' or KFCs.

workers, on the shop-floor as a means of producing service. These emotions are not merely simple, but also are appropriate, conditioned and scripted or formatted. This nature of labour which is largely dependent on the working on one's emotions, which Hochschild (1983) calls as emotional labour. The Emotion Management Perspective conceptualizes emotion as a "*bodily cooperation with an image, a thought, a memory- a cooperation of which the individual is aware.*" (Hochschild 1979: 551, footnote:2). Hochschild differentiates between emotion and feeling<sup>10</sup>, although she uses them interchangeably.

In *The Managed Heart* (1983) she explores the territory of feelings which are being increasingly commercialised. Hochschild, using the experiences of flight attendants, shows us how "feelings" which appear so intrinsic to one self, can also be manufactured. Different jobs require emotional labour, albeit in different degrees. Hochschild defines emotional labour as: *this labour requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others- in this case the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place* (7). Thus, one does not have to deal with machines in this type of labour; rather one has to *process people*. (8). And in the course of processing people, through *artificial elation*, the flight attendant gets estranged from her own smile. The work of the flight attendants is to present a self that is quite happy and a willingness to serve.

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<sup>10</sup> Emotion is something that has been overcome while feeling does not have that connotation. According to Hochschild, emotion management theory fosters attention to how people try to feel, that is work on their emotions.

Hochschild in this work, also points out the transition of emotions from the private to commercial uses in the public life. She asks what happens when feelings are put to commercial uses. Display of emotions is sold to maintain an image and *the principle of emotive dissonance ...is at work* (90). Emotive dissonance refers to the discrepancy between what one is feeling and what one is feigning and this discrepancy in the long run leads to immense strain, leading to the estrangement of the person from her own feelings. What creates the demand for this acting? In the context of the airline and the flight attendants studied, this acting is a resource for the maintenance of the brand image of the airline company, Delta, as well as to promote its sales. The better personalised treatment the customers get on flight, the more is the customer count. Assurance of a cosy, cared for, comfortable flight claiming to give a home like atmosphere is intended for a greater customer base as well as more profits for the company. Hochschild also points towards the subordination of a private and intimate emotional system to commercial logic.

In the context of the present study, emotional labour is performed on the shop-floor not only in terms of the visibility of the smiles and politeness. It is a labour that requires effort specifically when the nature of places and spaces shift drastically from the employee's social world to the world created by the shopping mall. The act of management of the emotions comes from the daily movement from a life of struggle to a life where one has to forget that struggle to be in a space created to serve the people who have disposable incomes. While the later may also have daily struggles of varied nature, they come to these sites to forget those struggles, even when it is temporary. The shop floor employee on the other hand has to suppress her emotions, not to feel better herself, but to make her customer feel pleasant. The struggles of the shop-floor

employees may emanate from diverse sources such as lack of disposable incomes, long hours of travel, often single-handed responsibility of household chores in spite of long hours of work and worry for children's education in limited resources. The markedly different contexts of the retail shop-floor employees in India in the twenty-first century from the Delta flight attendants in the 1970s have a similar story to tell in terms of the larger commercial setups of commodification of emotions. The emergence of service dependent sectors has recently started gaining momentum in India, with expansion in beauty, wellness, health-care industries and therefore the visible stark differences in the contexts of the usage of the concept of emotional labour has underlying similarities.

### **Gendered Organisations:**

Organisations become gendered when they depend on women's emotional labour. Even when men are expected to perform this labour the principles of feminization kick in. Gendered organisations function in a way to create expectation from men and women employees and this is where emotional labour becomes important. For Acker (1990):

“To say that an organisation, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine”. (146)

The gendered relationship between women, men and paid employment does not stop only at the hiring process or preference in terms of employment. The gendering continues to the work space. The way the work is organized, the policies, the kind of conversations that employers and employees have, the times of work, location of the organisation

contribute to the way the work is organized. Stereotypes of ideal workers are created and it is expected that everyone adheres to those stereotypes. Gender stereotypes pervade different jobs and that of the flight attendants in Hochschild's work is one of the early illustrations of such work. Flight attendants are mostly women of a certain kind: young, 'beautiful', have a body of certain 'acceptable' height, weight etc. Warmth, cares for others seems to come to them "naturally" as compared to men. Hochschild (1983) shows that through training and company guidelines how uniformity can be brought about among different women: uniformity in looks, smiles, and how much they eat, and how they deal with irate passengers, suppressing their own feelings. The qualities of being sweet and warm is over-emphasised among female flight attendants as if it occurs naturally to them. Hochschild shows that even when female flight attendants have a position of authority and superiority over other flight attendants, including males, it is usually overlooked and a much junior male flight attendant is thought to be having authority over others. The belief that women cannot have authoritarian positions comes into play here. This belief is further extended when to control certain passengers male flight attendants are called upon because those passengers simply don't pay any heed to female flight attendants. Hochschild says that emotion work is important for both men and women. But where men are encouraged to vent their feelings openly, women are not. They are rather socialised in a way so as to suppress their own feelings for the larger good, the family, may be, for example. The concern for other people's feelings is thought to be an intrinsic quality of women. It is hardly recognised as important and often referred to as 'shadow labour'. The same job of a flight attendant holds different meanings for a man and a woman.

In this study the gendered nature of the shop-floor is evident when contradictions occur between the sex of the shop-floor employee and her work-place requirement. The requirement of putting on a pleasant and smiling face also has some unwanted consequences. K, one of the respondents, employed with the brand Maximum, recounts with regret:

*“We are instructed to GMD: Greet, Meet, Direct. We have to keep on smiling. But smiling always is a problem. When I was a CRE in the Western wear department, a lady had come along with her husband. The husband got really angry because of my smile. He thought I was hitting on his wife. We always have to compromise with the customer even when he/she is wrong.”*

At the same time, Mary, the trainer working with Maximum, presenting various gender stereotypes mentions that before some years she was the only female Store Manager in the whole of India and being a woman, she enjoyed some influence on irate customers. She cites an example where the customer was really irritated and wanted to meet the Store Manager, but on meeting her [she was the Store Manager], he cooled down. What is interesting here is that the same behaviour which irritates some, soothes others because the performers are different and hence the assumptions and expectations from them are different. For example, in the 1990s, *Linda McDowell* in her work ‘*Capital Culture*’ (1997) studied women working in the financial sector, particularly the banks, in London. She found that women had bleak prospects of promotion and men with similar levels of qualification got promoted faster. There were a few women at the managerial level who had to constantly keep on proving that they were serious about their work and totally deserved the position they were in. Most other women were concentrated in the

secretarial jobs and these jobs were thought to be perfect for women as women had innate qualities to follow orders. Sexism was inbuilt into the work place cultures as women were expected to be dressed well and very often these women were conscious of what they wore to work. They had to choose something that was not too *girly* or too *manly*. Even though London as a city had expanded and grown and women were very visible at the work place, the old hegemonic structures of domination had remained. There was both occupational sex segregation and gendered patterns of inequality that remained at the workplace. It is not as if men do not have to adhere to sexualized stereotypes. Connell (1987) similarly argues that for men, it is important to stick to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemony in this sense means:

“...a social ascendancy achieved in a play into the organisation of private life and cultural processes...Ascendancy which is embedded in religious doctrine and practice, mass media content, wage structures, the design of housing...and so forth is.” (60)

A masculinity which does not adhere to the norms of accepted masculinity is not masculine enough and inherently inferior to the accepted and approved guidelines of what masculinity ought to be. That masculinity which is not hegemonic, is subordinate and is often in a contest with the hegemonic version. This version is always very visible and is meant to be aspired to. Its sustenance depends on the circulation of its ideals and images. Gendered organisations are not free this hegemonic masculinity and there are often expectations of what an authoritarian male boss should be like. There is not one universal hegemonic masculinity, but it may vary over time and across societies.

## MANUFACTURE OF EMOTIONAL LABOUR ON THE SHOP FLOOR

*The shop is yet to be opened to the customers. But before that an important task has to be completed: the daily briefing. The sales staff along with the department managers, led by the Assistant Store Manager gather in the employees' room. The briefing session starts with a group Namaste. The Namaste is not loud enough. The Assistant Store Manager asks them to be louder, "Be loud! Is this how you are going to wish the customer?" The subsequent Namastes are louder. [ Field notes, March, 2016]*

Hochschild (1983) argues that feelings which are often thought of as intrinsic to a person, can actually be manufactured, *shaped to social form or put to civic use*. She also develops the concept *transmutation* which is a very important concept in her book. To quote her:

*"When I speak of the transmutation of an emotional system, I mean to point out a link between a private act, such as attempting to enjoy a party, and a public act, such as summoning up good feeling for a customer.... By the grand phrase 'transmutation of an emotional system' I mean to convey what it is that we do privately, often unconsciously, to feelings that nowadays often fall under the sway of large organisations, social engineering, and the profit motive."* (19) and thus, feelings can be managed.

Focussing particularly on Delta airways and its Stewardess Training Centre she shows how through training flight attendants are asked to manage their anger, thereby showing that the relationship between the stimulus and response is controllable. Preventive tactics are taught to the trainees to elicit favourable expressions and emotions while avoiding unpleasant ones. To quote Hochschild: *"The broad array of techniques for averting*

*anger was offered as a protective cloak, but just who was being most protected from anger- the worker or the company- remained vague.”* (29). This leads to another important aspect of the book: the flight attendants’ emotions were used as a resource to be exploited by the company. There are two kinds of acting: surface acting and deep acting and says that both kinds of acting go on in our everyday lives.

In the context of the shop floor, the manufacture of emotional labour in the retail sector takes place at various levels and there is a simultaneous production and consumption of the product, which in this case is service in the form of emotional labour. Like the demand for these emotional displays, an adequate supply of these is also maintained. Companies invest in training of emotional management of their employees. For example, in Hochschild’s study (1983), the company, even before interviewing flight attendants, gave them booklets guiding on how to prepare for interviews and what is expected from flight attendants. These booklets talk about an appearance which should be sincere and unaffected, a modest but friendly smile, alert, attentive etc. The private lives of the employees are also regularized in accordance with company rules. The training programme conducted by the airline company for the flight attendants is designed to produce company-conducive results. The flight attendants are trained to draw an analogy between their homes and the airplane, thereby comparing ‘irate’ passengers to kids who need to be tackled; thereby the flight attendants’ own anger is reduced at these irate passengers. The treatment given by these flight attendants is so similar that very often passengers on board confuse one flight attendant to another, thereby producing *one-way personalization*. (110) Hochschild also talks about collective emotional labour when flight attendants collectively work towards producing a good atmosphere on flight and avoid topics like divorce, funerals etc. which depress them. They constantly work

towards achieving the *transmutation* of feelings, thereby displaying standardized emotion. Workers are expected to have a uniform emotional tenor at the workplace. To quote Braverman (1974: 248):

“The worker who is employed in producing good renders a service to the capitalist, and it is a result of this service that a tangible, vendible object takes shape as a commodity. But what if the useful effects of labour are such that they cannot take shape in an object? The useful effects of labour, in such cases, do not serve to make up a vendible object which then carries its useful effects with it as part of its existence as a commodity. Instead, the useful effects of labour themselves become the part of the commodity.”

Some organisations train people for employment in the service sector, sometimes people without any prior experience join the sector and then get trained and sometimes there is on the job training by colleagues. The format of the training in the stores that are studied differs amongst respondents, stores and brands. But the underlying theme of this training is on how to be pleasant and polite by maintaining a smile. There is also an emphasis on the grooming of the shop floor employees, which is discussed in the next chapter. The training modules prescribed by the management for the CREs are known as Behavioural modules based on one's competency. The competency is evaluated on the basis of a: working in collaboration, b: analytical skills, c: execution skills, d: adapting to change and e: communication skills. These training programmes are held every three months. Based on the performance of the CREs, they are categorized as Star performer, Potential Performer, Well-placed performer or a performer who needs a lot of development. An important part of the training focuses on the appearance of the CREs and the grooming standards are claimed to be strictly adhered to by a trainer, working with Brand A Retail.

On the question of appearance, Mary, the trainer says proudly, “*Our brand’s tagline itself says ‘Look Good, Feel Good’, so appearance is very important.*” The body language of the CREs can be expressed verbally as well as non-verbally and the latter is very important. Facial expressions, hands and legs movements and eye-contact are indispensable skills required for employment in the retail sector. These are some of the strict instructions given to the CREs:

- *Do not point out, rather guide*
- *Do not be rigid, be relaxed*
- *Do not be forced, be spontaneous*
- *Do not stare, make eye contact*
- *Do not be distracted, be focussed*

A smile, showing an interest to help through the instruction of G.M.D which is Greet, Meet, Direct, being polite, not arguing with the customers are the instructions often given to the shop floor employees. Even when the customers are rude or do not adhere to company policies in cases of return of merchandise, the shop floor employees are strictly instructed to be polite. As there are targets to be achieved by shop floor, both individually and department wise, they keep on pushing customers to buy merchandise. Even the cashiers have targets of selling membership cards to customers, while billing. Sometimes, the insistence to buy membership cards or merchandise gets too much so as to get a rebuke from the customers. It can only be responded by the employees with a smile or an apology. As a respondent, Sahoo<sup>11</sup>, puts it,

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<sup>11</sup> Sahoo is one of the respondents of the survey questionnaire, that was given to the shop-floor employees. Although he did not agree for the interview, his answered the

*“In this format of retail, customer is always the king. If someone is angry, we deal with him politely and try to solve his problem as soon as possible.”*

The performance of emotional labour has to become a continued process. It starts at the start of the labouring day and has to end with the labouring day. Its continuation becomes pertinent because of the regular checks by department managers and colleagues. The loudness of wishing, one's energy in the interaction, helpfulness in giving directions to the fitting rooms, exchange policies, discount offers and so on are always important towards one's performance and hence incentives. There is also a system called “Mystery Audit Mark” which makes it mandatory to act according to the instructions. According to Sahoo,

*“Mystery Audit Mark is a process where a person from either corporate or regional office comes to the store in disguise of a customer and randomly goes to any counter in the store and examines the grooming standard of staff, customer service, quality of information provided and then finally gives them mark, which adds to incentives.”*

Mystery Audit Mark leads to an important point about surveillance which is further discussed in a later chapter. The training is provided not only by retailers but by private institutes as well as state agencies. Some programmes which are conceived by the State

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questionnaire in a very detailed way, and wrote on the questionnaire about things that were not even asked about the job conditions and processes. His articulation, I believe has to do with his education which is a post graduate degree in Banking, Finance and Insurance. His dissatisfaction comes from the fact that he did not get employment in the sector he was trained in.

actually function or facilitate the programme through collaboration with private agencies. For example, some private agencies provide resource persons for the training while other agencies might be involved in facilitating in the accommodation of the candidates. One such state-initiated programme is the English Work Readiness and Computers (EWRC) programme of the Employment Generation and Marketing Mission under the Department of Rural Development of the Government of Telangana that functions to create employable youth in the service economy which is heavily dependent on soft-skills. There are a number of skills taught to the future service providers which is shown in the table below:

TABLE A: SKILLS TAUGHT DURING THE EWRC TRAINING (Source: <http://egmm.org/ewrc.do>)

BASIC SKILLS	HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS	AFFECTIVE SKILLS TRAITS
Oral Communication Reading, Understanding & Following Instructions Basic Arithmetic Writing	Problem Solving Learning Skills Creative, Innovative Thinking Decision Making	Initiative & Leadership Working as a Team Adaptability Enthusiasm, Motivation Personal Presentation (Appropriate Dressing & Grooming) Honesty & Reliability Positive Attitude towards Work Punctuality

The above table shows the qualities that are required to be a “successful” employee in the service industry. The qualities like positivity, enthusiasm, leadership should all be manifested through one’s emotions. These qualities are aimed to be imparted through

the 90-day course, thereby producing the right person for the job. This production also involves subtle gendered patterns especially at the enrolment level. One gets enrolled either directly by contacting EGMM office and stating that he or she was in need of job; or another way of getting enrolled in the programme is through Job Resource Persons (JRPs). These JRPs visit rural areas and contact different groups of persons and spread the word about the programme. One of my respondents got to know about the programme through her mother, who in turn was aware of the programme through a JRP who visited her friend's group. One of the problems of this method is that the JRPs are not adequately trained. Gendered socialization was continuing even in the training. The only two male participants of that batch said that they had joined the programme because they wanted to save money and pursue higher education. The eighteen girls in the same batch said they wanted to save money for their marriage so that they could share the family's financial burden incurred usually during weddings. While for the young men the reason for learning adequate emotional labour was to further their own career prospects, women respondents were trained their employment as a means to help them save for their wedding expenses. The gendering in the workplace was thus being manufactured right at the induction level.

### **THE RETAIL SHOP-FLOOR AS A SOCIO-EMOTIONAL ECONOMY**

Emotions, generally mean what we feel in any given situation. This given situation that we find ourselves in, might be the result of our actions or inactions or the place and the space that we are in. Sometimes, these emotions can be expressed as happiness, sadness, anger and so on. There are also situations when there is a discrepancy between what we feel and what we express. For example, maintaining one's cool, even when one is feeling angry with someone or something. This discrepancy between the feeling and the display,

again may be the result of different factors. The feelings and their display and the discrepancy between the two become very important in the context of a retail shop floor because of the importance of emotional labour, generally in the service sector and specifically in the retail shop floor. Using the concept of socio-emotional economy to understand the relevance and prescription of emotions on a shop floor leads to an understanding of the different hierarchies that exist on the shop-floor and how they are negotiated with by the employees. Thinking about the shop floor as a socio emotional economy also makes us go beyond the idea of a shop floor as mere site of economic exchange towards a broader reality where shop floor employees are not merely situated in the site as merely facilitating consumption, but bring in with them their emotional selves, reproduce prescribed emotional selves in their interaction with the customers and different other emotions with their colleagues.

Clark (1997) defines the socioemotional economy as *“a system of give and take within which people negotiate many aspects of identity and self-worth.”* (131). She widens the connotation of an economy from a system involving transaction of monetary and material goods to a system involving the transaction of emotions in relationships amongst people. The resources that keep the socioemotional economy working may be attention, compassion, love, attraction, sympathy, help and so on. According to Clark, studying the socioemotional economy can help understand the underlying pattern of day to day interactions amongst people as well as hierarchies present in the space where emotional exchanges take place. These patterns have some *“rules and logics”* (146) that determine how people should behave to be considered good and acceptable. It is these rules and logics that serve as resources or social capital of the socioemotional economy. As people reproduce the underlying patterns through their actions, they participate in the

socioemotional economy. These underlying patterns may take on three different forms: complementary role requirement, reciprocity and beneficence. The pattern of complementary role requirement implies that if every person fulfils the requirement of the role which she is assigned, then everybody's needs in the economy are taken of, for example performing the role of a customer and a sales person makes the act of shopping possible. The pattern of reciprocity involves giving back what one has received either immediately or after some time, as in the case of giving and receiving gifts. The pattern of beneficence implies treating others the way one is expected to be treated, for example sympathising with people in the hope of receiving sympathy later on, in a similar situation. These patterns, represent ideal types and can function together in a similar situation. Resources or patterns of negotiations do not function according to labels and can easily flow into each other. So far as understanding hierarchies in a given space is concerned, emotions play a crucial part because emotions relate people with a physical space. According to Clark (1997), emotions play an important part in the micro politics of creating and negotiating hierarchies.

This give and take relationship with the socioemotional economy might not always involve commodities of similar nature. In the context of the retail shop floor employees are trained to exchange their emotions in return for other valued resources, which might be their wages, promotion, incentives. So here we see that non-monetary resources are exchanged for monetary exchanges. For a customer, the take away from this economy may be good service and the commodity of her choice. Thus, this system has monetary and non-monetary features functioning simultaneously. The non-monetary resources in the above sense, which Hochschild (1983) calls 'feeling currency' need to be produced every day as a commodity to be exchanged in the socioemotional economy of the shop

floor. The act of production of this commodity which is comprised of appropriate emotions, is emotional labour.

### ENGLISHIZATION AND ENTERPRISE CULTURE

The correct performance of emotional labour i.e. smiling and talking appropriately to not only customers but also colleagues and management implies a regularisation of a format of speaking. This format implies what has to be said, how it has to be said and in which language it has to be said. Cameron (2005) calls this format of regularisation of communication as “Verbal Hygiene” which “...*attempts to clean-up’ language so it confirms to particular standards of correctness, clarity, efficiency, beauty or morality.*” (viii). It not only refers what is to be said but how something has to be said. It also refers to the language in which it is to be said. In the context of the retail shop floor the correctness, efficiency come from not only through emotions of politeness, helpfulness or smiles, but also through the language through which the emotions are expressed, which is English in this context. In post-colonial cultures, English becomes a language of necessity because it the primary language of communication. Promotion from a sales employee to a department manager depends on English proficiency, and also it is assumed that customers want to speak in English. Both the standardisation and the scripting of the communication depends on one’s fluency in English which further implies that one’s soft skills are very strong, thus making her suitable for a retail job. The following excerpt from an interview shows how employees are made to believe that they should aspire to learn English, even when they are not comfortable in it:

*I: What was the medium of instruction during these trainings?*

*P: English or Hindi. Sometimes mixing the two.*

*I: No Telugu?*

*P: No Telugu.*

*I: Are you comfortable in Hindi and English?*

*P: I am not very comfortable in Hindi or English but I know Telugu [as it is her mother-tongue]. But I need improvement, so I have to learn English and Hindi.*

*I: What about those who don't understand these languages?*

*P: Many people have a little understanding of Hindi or English but cannot speak these languages and hence face problems but have to adjust because of self-improvement*  
 [P, an employee with Brand Post]

For Bousseba et.al (2014), this phenomenon of the importance of English in the corporate sector, which they call as 'corporate Englishization' is a form of neo-colonialism. The access to English as a resource creates new forms of hierarchies, including those who have access to the language and excluding the ones without this linguistic resource. Access to this resource is also a part of the enterprise culture which is characteristic of a neoliberal economic context.

Paul du Gay (1996), explaining this idea of the enterprise culture suggests:

“...store managers and shop floor employees within retailing are increasingly being reconceptualised as enterprising subjects: self-regulating, productive individuals whose sense of self-worth and virtue is inextricably linked to the excellent performance of their work, and thus to the success of the company employing them...the contemporary ‘making up’ of the work based subject as enterprising self is both the medium and the outcome of the contemporary dislocation of production and consumption relations within retailing.” (119)

Paul du Gay in his study of the retail industry in the U.K, talks about how the enterprise culture has set into the retail industry in a prominent way. Retail plays a very important factor in the functioning of the consumer society and being able to do shopping in the right way, is a skill, required to be able to cope up with the new consumer society. To facilitate this consumer culture, the enterprise culture has been a marked characteristic of the retail sector, among the employees, who in turn are being constructed as enterprising subjects. These subjects are hardworking and strive for excellence as they are aware of the fact that this would lead to their own progress as well as their employer's subjects. This enterprising subject is constituted by qualities like ability to think strategically, assuring customer satisfaction and product handling etc. This subject is constructed because of the different ways of control that are devised to assure that the enterprising subject continues to function. Although the study is based in the context of England, the underlying pattern which du Gay calls as "*rationality of governance*" (120) is not completely different for the Indian context. It would be wrong to assume that all the shop floor employees are extensively trained, yet the purpose of the training system that is in place aims at creating total customer satisfaction through work on the employee's self. The enterprising self is a combination of strategic thought with appropriate body and emotions which is quite gendered. Enterprise culture is one of the components of the emerging neoliberal subjectivity<sup>12</sup> that is built around the ideas of personal success and achievement of aspirations through labour on one's emotions.

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<sup>12</sup> The neoliberal subjectivity on the shop-floor is discussed in the chapter on 'Layered Spaces: Processes and Ramifications'.

## EXPRESSIONS OF RESISTANCE

However, the ‘rationality of governance’ pattern does not work always. Employees construct excuses to escape from governance of strict rules. Certeau’s (1984) terms of strategies of the labellers and tactics of the labelled are important to understand the resistance and manipulation, both overt and covert against the totalising policies and mechanisms. He discusses how very often commodities or rules are used by people in way that is different from the way it has been conceptualised. Giving example of the advertisements which broadcast an American culture or American way of doing things, he says that something being broadcast does not mean that people accept it the way it is shown. People modify the “ways of operating” (xi) according to their needs, which adds a *“political dimension to everyday practices.”* (15). Strategy according to Certeau, refers to a set of rules imposed on a given space which lends intelligibility to that space, it is like a users’ manual. Whereas, tactics refer to what is done with those rules, and how are those rules modified. For Certeau, strategy refers to space, while tactics refers to time, as tactics look out for opportunities to grab and suit it according to one’s convenience. Thus, tactics do not throw away the strategy completely, but rather insert into the strategy another level of meaning for its convenience. This interaction between the strategy and the tactic is called as “La perruque”.

In the context of the retail shop floor employees, the control is not only exercised by the management over the employees, but also by the presence of the customers, thereby becoming a continued process, throughout the working hours. These over-arching rules and regulations do not imply that shop floor employees strictly adhere to the rules all the time. They find ways out of the larger system to get moments of respite. Bargaining with the system does not always imply a violent revolution and very often involves subtle

struggles of the kind that Thapan (2009) and Kandiyoti (1988) have shown us. Specifically speaking of the work-place, Hodson (2001) talks about how workers adopt various strategies to express resistance like defying the rules, making fun of the supervisor to show independence from the over-arching system of rules. He also talks about how employees use different kinds of tactics to defy the employers and their rules to assure that their dignity at the work place is maintained. Resistance, citizenship, creation of independent meaning systems and development of social relations at work are some of the important strategies that workers develop to gain a foothold over their work place, thereby defying the employer's control.

The responses of the shop floor employees also hint at the agency which shop floor employees create for themselves in the process of surviving in the system of rules. The interaction with the larger structure of rules and regulations is constantly tense with employees finding out ways to bargain with the system of rules and gain some freedom. Usually, this involves sneaking into the washroom and sitting on the toilet seat for some time as they are not allowed to sit when they are on the shop floor, or requesting the departmental manager to be allowed to go to the food court area, right after getting salaries, to have ice cream, snacking covertly on the shop floor and many other ways of subverting the system. Discontent or resistance is also shown usually shown by munching food on the shop floor, or absence from one's counter and sitting on the stairs<sup>13</sup> idly or being in the restroom for longer hours than usual. There is never an open discontent about the issues that affect the women employees like the long hours of standing at work, repeated grooming activities or the low salary. However, the

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<sup>13</sup> These stairs are usually in the staff entrance side which is not accessible to general public. Generally located at the back side of the mall, the entry and exit to and from this area is regulated by valid identity proofs.

conversations come up amongst friendly colleagues during lunch breaks or in the absence of senior colleagues. There are also instances where employees make fun of the products they sell by pointing out the exorbitant prices and the designs. The customers who are most important on the shop-floor are also not spared. Discussions on the customer behaviour, body-shapes and irritation on the customers' activities are a common practice. This further explicates how gossip and discussions can be a mode of resistance (Scott, 1985) where it is ensured that these discussions don't leak out of the close-knit group of employees. The purpose of these forms of resistance is not to change the structure and conditions of work or reveal the problems one has with one's employment. The employees maintain compliance with the structure while simultaneously venting out their feelings and for Scott (1985) this venting out is often the only way of expressing their feelings. What becomes important here is that although Scott talks about resistance in a very different context of the Malaysian villagers resisting their oppressors in the late 1970s, the expressions of resistance seems to take a similar pattern. In a context where already trade union power has been severely curtailed because of capitalist neoliberal regimes, marked flexible accumulation and compression of time-space (Harvey, 1989), the open resistance does not seem to be feasible, especially in a country like India where the supply of labour is in abundance as compared to the requirement. These employees, who du Gay calls as *enterprising subjects* are thus not always the ones to accept these mechanisms to control themselves, and produce desired images that their employers desire (du Gay, 1996).

However, overt protests are not unknown. In Kerala, a series of protests and strikes were held in 2014 by women shop-floor employees of big textile stores to ensure their right to sit on the shop-floor. Although the protests were successful, subsequently young

women were reluctant to join trade unions as it could sabotage their employment opportunities and union activities were highly discouraged. In the context of my study, the respondents clearly mentioned that there were no trade unions. They discussed their problems, if any, with their Department Manager. Questions on sexual harassment were also played down as non-existent with constant reiteration that the shop-floor was like a family. The issues that led to fights or arguments on the shop floor were mostly related to incentives, as expressed by the respondents. The shop-floor employees as well as the store managers emphasised that good behaviour on the shop-floor was mandatory with no tolerance for any unwarranted behaviour. The women in the study, unlike Broadbridge's (1991) study above, did not complain about sexual harassment at the work place. Only one of the stores studied, had a circular on the employees' notice board stating details of whom to contact in case of any experience of sexual harassment. It had the contact details of the Human Resources manager who was located in Mumbai. The Store Manager was also proud to inform that till date no one from his store had called the said Human Resources manager. The silence or the inability to recognise sexual harassment is indicative of the pervasive phenomenon in the Indian context where women are socialised into being silent so as not to draw attention. Often the repercussions of voicing out against harassment are on women's livelihood. In situations where women are already struggling to make ends meet, recognition of the harassment, complaints and following up seem a Herculean task. It is women who are also bearing the large burden of care work which again is largely dependent on working on emotions.

### **COMPLEXITIES OF CARE**

Having traversed the relationship between gender and work and emotional labour, I want to steer the discussion towards care work, which is the basis of the expanding service

economy in a globalising world as well as highly gendered, in a time where there is reduced state welfarism and increased job insecurity. Care work and service economy are interlinked with each other because of the direct interaction of the producer and the consumer. Stephen Edgell (2006) laying out the characteristics of paid service work, says that the nature of interactive service work, which is a kind of care work, demands a face to face interaction or an interaction over voice, thereby suggesting a connection between service providers and its recipients. The service economy which rests on the quality of service provided to the consumers is nothing but care because care is their product. The growth of service work can be traced to the rise of industrial capitalism. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and other industrializing countries, the sales work in stores was performed by employees outside of the family, who depended on their employers for both job and accommodation. They did a variety of work including domestic chores. But with the beginning of the twentieth century, especially in the United States of America, retailing and other service sectors like restaurants, food shops etc. experienced a change in the way service was provided to customers. A demand for cheap food and products meant that low-skilled and low waged labour was to be employed. Self-service was first used in the restaurants of the United States of America. This was a consequence of application of the principles of Taylorism<sup>14</sup> in the retailing sector. The retail shops were also organised in such a way that that customers had to pass through all the aisles with over-laden racks of good to exit the store. This arrangement encourages more buying as

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<sup>14</sup> Introduced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, by Frederick Winslow Taylor, Taylorism refers to production efficiency methodology that involves breaking down every down every job, mostly in factories and assembly lines to small segments. By this, according to Taylor maximum efficiency can be extracted from the machine as well as the worker.

the customer is exposed to more and more products<sup>15</sup> (Edgell, 2006). This also meant that the customer is actually picking up the things that she requires or does not require without assistance, thereby reducing the need for a large number of staffs. It reduced costs of the shop, thereby increasing the profits. For the employees, it did not only mean deskilling but also reskilling in terms of scanning the barcodes, learning to operate computerised system, learning to speak scripted talks with the customer, thereby providing service. The system expanded with fast food franchises and retail chains, providing similar services.

Understanding the concept of care becomes pertinent because every society needs care and the growth and sustenance of the service sector depends on the quality of care, in any form, that is provided. Care work usually involves maintenance of people. This care may be caring for someone or care about someone (Duffy, 2011). Care for someone usually refers to a job, with the task of maintenance only, while care about involves an emotional relationship of the care-giver to the care-receiver. Historically, women have been thought to be better than men at caring because of their *innate* qualities of being understanding, patient, polite, warm and so on. These qualities supposedly an extension of their motherly nature, which is inherently connected to their position of belonging to the private and the protected sphere of the household, which accounts for the invisible labour. It is in the household that the assumed superiority of women in caring abilities is put into use. Hochschild (1989) shows how working couples often believed that it was the woman's responsibility to take care of the house while it was okay for the man to not

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<sup>15</sup> This phenomenon is even true today in shopping malls, where the escalators are organized in such a way that customers passing through each floor of the mall can have a look at all the stores with their goods on display, through the glass walls. More visibility induces more buying.

to be involved. For women working outside their homes as well, for wages, was their first shift, and their home was the site of their second shift. There was no time for leisure, especially for women who believed in the traditional model of family, where a woman's primary responsibility was the family. For Hochschild there were also couples who were transitional in the sense that even if both the husband and the wife worked outside the home, the major responsibility of the home and the children fell on the wife, while the husband helped the wife in carrying out those responsibilities. The third kind of couple was egalitarian where both the partners maintained a balance between the housework and the paid work or even both equally devoted their time either to their homes or their jobs. Beyond the household care and the children's responsibilities there are also other forms of care. It is here that the distinction between the nurturant care and the non-nurturant care becomes important. Nurturant care is based on intimacy and relationships like that of nurses and nannies while non-nurturant care is devoid of any relational aspect or intimacy (Duffy, 2011).

Rayaprol (1997) in her study on the South Indian immigrants in Pittsburgh shows that many of her respondents adhering to traditional model of the family got involved in new forms of care for the family members and the household, that was constituted of outdoor work, like that of buying groceries or dropping children off at school. This extension of care work is different from the Indian context when women are generally less involved in the domain of the outdoors. Similarly, in my study, the married women respondents were engaged in household work with no help from their husbands in managing the household chores. At the same time, their income was not secondary to the household income, as is generally the perception in India where women's income is thought to be secondary to the men's. One of the respondents was even the sole earning member of the

family with having to care for the husband, two children and her mother-in-law. She was the primary care-giver of the family, with the mother-in-law who assisted her in caring for the children. Palriwala and Neetha's (2010) study on the domestic workers and Anganwadi's workers show how data on care work in India is unreliable because of non-consideration of care work as work. Moreover, data on the variety of the work done by women that contributes to the country's income also remains unaccounted and scant, thereby representing women as non-contributors to the economy. People do not define their work as work so it is hard to generate the data. Even in my study, it was not easy to understand the quantum of care work done by the women.

Speaking broadly, emotional labour on the shop-floor is a way of showing care which assures that the customer will be looked after although it is not nurturing in nature. There is an element of pampering that a customer expects, while trying on shoes or clothes, and the shop floor worker is expected to cater to that need. With the increasing number of women getting into paid work, as opposed to earlier when female participation in the paid labour force was minimal, there has been a growing tendency of commodification of care, specifically in a global context. The commodification of care has taken various forms like opening up of crèches where babies as young as six months can be left while both the parents are away at work, taking care of the elderly, pets and other household works is dealt with, of course in exchange for a price. Many of these care givers in these arrangements are women, who are under-paid. Even if men take these jobs the wages continue to be low due to feminization of labour.

The role of the family as a unit which provides and cares for its younger and older generation has undergone a major change. There is a certain class of people who can

afford the outsourcing of care and household work. Those who provide the care are in paid employment but can neither afford the cost of outsourcing the care work of their own households nor does their work places provide crèches or day school for their children. As a result, very often, they fall back on the network of their relatives for the care of their children. In terms of child care, one of the recent developments has been the availability of crèches in malls, restaurants etc. It is here, parents can leave their children and engage in leisure activities. This service is provided for in exchange for a price. But the irony is people managing these care centres cannot use these centres for their own children. Moreover, the long work hours with a day off in the week and no holidays, the service provider in the neoliberal space is forced to care for the clients. The service-provider who cannot afford to buy care for her own family has to depend on her networks to garner support and care for her family while she has to be in paid employment to earn a living. Studying networks therefore become important to bring out the processes of care-giving outside the institutionalised or market framework. It shows how people weave the social structure around them to meet ends. The ties that connect the members of any network may be of varied nature (Wellman,1999). Espinoza's (1999) study on the urban poor in Chile shows how relationships based on networks actually operate to provide economic help through exchange practices and thereby produce social integration. The households in the network get access to resources<sup>16</sup> through four modes: market, bureaucratic distribution, self-provisioning and interpersonal exchanges. It is usually through all the four modes and none of them is exclusive of the other. It is the social ties in the networks that enable access through these modes, which also shows how important these ties are for the social reproduction. Expectedly, market access and bureaucratic distribution of goods are less significant. The inter-personal networks

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<sup>16</sup> Resources include child-care, education, household goods, emergency cash and so on.

between people is most noticeable in the everyday life of the people. Access to clothes, washing-machines, taking care of children is based on inter-personal support. Social networks, thus become survival strategies.

In the context of retail shop-floor employees, the network of relatives forms a huge support base, for mothers with young children as working in this sector means very little flexibility in work hours. Relatives like mothers-in law, parents etc. take care of the household as well as the children, while the married couple is away at work in paid employment:

*I: What do your parents do?*

*V: Mummy and daddy stay at home, husband works in South India Shopping Mall in Ameerpet.*

*I: You are married?*

*V: Yes, I have 2 kids also.*

*I: Who takes care of the children?*

*V: My mother. We all stay together. My daughter is in class 7 and my son is class 4. I finish all the work in the morning and come. Children come back from school around 4 in the afternoon. After they come she looks after them. Anyways they are not babies, so there is no problem.*

[V, Respondent, employed with Vanity]

*I: Who all are there in your family?*

*NI: My husband and my children.*

*I: And what are your working hours?*

*N1: It is 9 hours.*

*I: So how do you manage family and job?*

*N1: My mother in law is there with us. So, she helps in the household work.*

[N1, Respondent, employed with brand Post]

Thus, the networks based on familial relationships are a necessity to survive in the service economy, as service providers. To reiterate, the organisation of work in the service economy is based in such a way that familial time is reduced or largely ignored. It is not as if all employees in the study had similar support of their own networks. One of the respondents had left her job because she got pregnant and planned to get back to work only after her daughter went to school. For her it was important to take care of her infant, while at the same time, it was important for her to get back to paid employment to give a good future to her daughter. Retail stores in the organised sector usually give three months of maternity leave to employees. Apart from that, there is no other benefit in terms of child-care. Often, as one Operations Manager stated, pregnant employees are asked to take rest or to take long leaves. It becomes a 'problem' when employees are pregnant, because as such retail work is considered to be very stressful. What is evident here is that the system of retail work is not conducive to fact of pregnancy, and therefore even when maternity benefits are exist, employees are encouraged to go on long leaves with a pay-cut. The same companies in other parts of the world may follow norms of serve rules for their workers but in countries like India, they depend on cheap and easily replaceable labour. It also hints at the fact that care-givers who are trained extensively to care for the customers are alienated from their care-giving capacity to their families because they no longer possess total control over their emotional care giving capacities.

They are themselves dependent on others to provide care for their children and may be a spent force when they reach home.

## CONCLUSION

With the globally expanding service economy, the need and demand for emotional labour in paid employment, beyond the intimate sphere of the household, has grown. With that premise, the chapter charts the relationship between gender and paid work to show how work done by women, both paid and unpaid is often devalued. The visibility of women engaged in paid labour in a particular sector does not translate to higher numerical presence. One such sector is the retail sector, where women are preferred employees because it is perceived that women are obedient and polite and tend to stay longer in a particular job. Emotional labour on the retail shop-floor, based Hochschild's emotion management perspective, is the main theoretical perspective that I use in this chapter. Paid employment demanding emotional labour as well as aesthetic labour from its employees involves manufacturing it through training processes involving work on the emotions as well as on the body [which is discussed in the next chapter] of its employees. The training process in the former context involves ways of being polite, ways and measures of smiling and being smart with the knowledge of English language as a way of expressing verbal communication.

The logic of training, which aims at producing rationality and uniformity amongst the employees, through objective training modules, falters in some ways because the employees, have their own personal rationality systems which does not allow them to imbibe the rules fully. This personal rationality system is expressed through subtle resistance in terms of behaviour that is expected of the employees on the shop floor. The

training process, in some ways, negates the gendered expectations that women have to be more polite or amicable than men, because of the uniform set of rules to be followed on the shop floor. But as we saw the gendered reasoning given to young men and women at the training level and therefore the labour itself is conditioned by gendered stereotypes.

The chapter looks at the retail shop-floor as a socio-emotional economy, where in the resource of emotional labour is a valuable resource. In this socio-emotional economy, the emotional labour is exchanged not only for monetary returns but also for the good will of the customers, which has implications for gaining regular customers as well as incentives. The act of caring which forms the basis of emotional labour is complicated with the realities of class and gender, when intersected with paid labour. The following chapters on aesthetic labour and on layered spaces, continue with the idea of surveillance on not just women but men who are working in the retail sector.

## Chapter 4. Body(ies) on the Shop-floor

*Tabu comes back after washing her face and starts applying eye-liner, looking at the mirror near her counter. She is reprimanded by S1 who asks her to use the trial room for the make-up: "Go to the trial-room and do it. It is time for the customers to come".*

[Field-notes: 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2015]

As we saw in the last chapter, the performance of the shop-floor employee becomes crucial in the management of the store. This performance is dependent not only on the interaction between the customers and the employees, but also amongst the employees as well as the relationship between the physical space of the store and the shop-floor employees, more than the back-end staff. The Goffmanian understanding of the relationship amongst the employees and between the physical space and the employees, uses the metaphor of a theatrical performance. This performance may be any activity in the presence of others, whom Goffman (1956) calls as *audience*. The '*front*' of the performance usually presents the performer, with the context of the performance. To legitimize this front, there is a setting, which in the context of the study is the shop-floor with the display of merchandise in an order, and a personal front which indicates name, age or sex of the performer or any other detail about the performer, thereby, defining the *performer*. There is also a *back* to the performance, where the weaving of the front is done. For Goffman, the chasm between the front and the back is important to maintain the 'mystification'. The audience should never know how the front is created.

In the above excerpt from the field notes, there is a risk of the separation between the front and the back being sabotaged by the audience, who are the customers. The process through which the personal front is manufactured is at risk of being exposed. The

mystery of the performance won't sustain if S1 does not ask Tabu to go to the trial room and get ready. The mystery of the performance of the employee vanishes if the customer witnesses the processes of the back region. It is in this context of the personal front of which the body is a very crucial *insignia*, that this chapter dwells in. In the last chapter we saw how emotions were an important part of the relationship between the sales employee and the customers, wherein the emotions are manufactured in a systematic way with requirements of smile, appropriate gestures and the knowledge of the English language. In the next chapter on the nature of the mall as a spectacular space as well as a hierarchized work-space, we will see how this performance is also influenced by the setting of the shop-floor as well as the mall serving as the larger setting, with definitive rules of interaction amongst the employees and the physical structure.

As part of the performance of a shop floor employee, who is engaged in interactive customer-service<sup>17</sup>, the body of the performer<sup>18</sup> becomes extremely important. The importance of the body has two contexts: first the context of the site of the service sector where the appearance of the body is crucial to its functioning and becomes an eligibility criterion; the second context is that of the present time of the neoliberal regime with a deep-rooted consumer culture. Both the contexts of the site and the time are intertwined in producing the serving body on the shop-floor. The chapter begins with a discussion the highly gendered nature of paid work in the service sector, underlining aesthetic labour. It then goes on to discuss how embodiment of the presentable self occurs through the formal process of grooming. Grooming as a process and presentability as its end-product is maintained through training processes and brand ideologies perpetuated by

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<sup>17</sup> Serving the customer involves direct face to face communication.

<sup>18</sup> The retail shop floor employee, also common called as customer service executive

contemporary notions regarding the appearance of the body. The brand ideologies and training processes reiterate the importance of the consumer gaze, which is largely a masculine representation of what the serving body should look like. It serves the purpose of producing the desired body-image and also enables sales. Further, there is a discussion on the ways of control and surveillance imposed on the shop floor to make sure the system functions according to the prescribed rules of the brands and the forms of agency exercised by the employees. Understanding these processes in the context consumer culture shows how patriarchal capitalist regimes impose norms of conformity and uniformity on the bodies of the shop-floor employees, especially women.

### **WORK IN THE INTERACTIVE SERVICE SECTOR**

As we saw in the earlier chapter, there are different kinds of labour in the service sector, and the retail sector involves interactive service work. where there is a direct communication with the recipient of the service (Edgell, 2005). When direct, face to face to interaction is involved, the body of the service provider becomes a part of the process of service delivery. McDowell (2009) says that service work provides a platform where both the service purchaser and the service provider are co-present and this space may be virtual or real. In virtual spaces, the conditions of anonymity prevail. But it is just the opposite in real spaces, like that of a retail shop floor, or a massage parlour. Personal attributes of the worker's body enter directly into the exchange process, because of which those bodies, which are of a certain body shape and well groomed, have to be reproduced, either through strict regiments of dieting, exercise or application of cosmetics.

The body of the service provider thus becomes an important attribute of the quality of the service that is provided. The work on one's body to produce a desired appearance, as

part of paid labour, which in itself is a requisite of the labour performed is called as aesthetic labour. Warhurst et.al (2000) talk about aesthetic labour in the service sector, which is increasingly becoming crucial as a criterion of employment in the service sector in Glasgow, thereby producing a stylised work force. They write:

“Within significant sectors of the economy it is clear that employers are utilising labour and seek labour markets that do not, in the first instance require acquired technical skills but, instead, rely to a large extent upon the physical appearance, or more specifically, the embodied capacities and attributes of those to be employed or are employed, providing...aesthetic labour.” (2)

There are three important sets of qualities that are essential: technical, social and aesthetic. While the former two qualities have been researched extensively, aesthetic labour is an under researched area that is performed by different sectors within the rubric of the service economy. Pettinger (2005) studies fashion clothing retail outlets in the U.K to explain aesthetic labour. Aesthetic labour is performed by the shop assistants to personify the brands they are selling. And by personifying the brand, through clothing, behaviour and demeanour the workers create and enhance consumption thus becoming company representatives.

Aesthetic labour is different from emotional labour in its operationalization. The logic of emotional labour is to please the service consumer through working on one's emotion to produce a congenial feeling in the person to be served. The process involves a prescribed way of speaking and preferably in English. Most of the interaction with customer on the shop-floor is either scripted or formatted or a combination of both.

Aesthetic labour, on the other hand involves on working on one's body to produce an image, which is appealing visually. On the retail shop-floor, the aesthetic labour implies that the shop-floor employees have to dress-up<sup>19</sup> in a way that is decided by the brands they work for. Aesthetic labour should be differentiated from Wissinger's (2015) 'glamour labour' which refers to working on the body to produce an acceptable body-image. Studying fashion models in New York, Wissinger included in 'glamour labour' not only working on the body in terms of bodily appearance but also a way of life that involves one's social and professional connections. Appearance of the body forms a part of the image that glamour labour is constantly engaged in creating, beyond the paid job.

Various studies have shown that the performance of aesthetic labour is a gendered process. Studying retail workers *Lynne Pettinger* (2005) shows that they manifest particular forms of gendered embodiment enacting feminine performance according to the brand they are employed with. According to Pettinger, there are three kinds of gendering that are present in the customer service work: a) *gendering of work activities* refer to the nature of labour prevalent in the service sector, involving customer service. The qualities that are demanded in the customer-service sector are usually thought to be intrinsic to women like being soft-spoken, polite, constantly smiling, b) *gendering of occupation* refers to the service-work employment which is largely dominated by women. Pettinger sites the examples from studies in Australia (Game & Pringle, 1984), France and Ireland (McGauran, 2000) and the United States (Tolich and Briar, 1999) to show how the customer service sector is largely female dominated. The feminisation of labour can be attributed to the fact of expectations of certain traits from female

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<sup>19</sup> Dress-up includes wearing either the prescribed uniforms or wearing clothes according to dress-codes as instructed by the management.

employees and c) *gendering of the retail products being sold points at the gendered nature of the merchandise that are on sale. Since clothes are one of the distinctly gendered products, often female employees tend to cater to female customers.* In the context of the presented study the processes of gendering take a different form. There are more men than women employed in the shop-floor and many men are engaged in departments selling women's wear, as are women employed in the men's section. This complicates the nature of interactions because women employees have expressed initial discomfort about dealing with men's clothes mostly involving fitting while men have expressed the difficulties in interacting with women customers where rules of interactions have caused problems for male employees. There are no clear demarcations regarding the work that has to be done by male and female employees but women become a different category of workers in ways we will see in the following sections.

Pettinger's essay (2005) focuses on understanding aesthetic labour performed by the retail sales assistants to show that it is highly gendered. She studies fashion clothing retail outlets in the U.K to explain aesthetic labour. Aesthetic labour is performed by the shop assistants to personify the brands they are selling. And by personifying the brand, through clothing, behaviour and demeanour the workers create and enhance consumption. And thus, the workers become company representatives. Clothing usually is a signifier of social status. Using Bourdieu, Pettinger says that femininity is cultural capital which is an asset in the labour market or care industry and thus the gendered body is operationalized in the labour market. Similar to language training of call centre workers, there is *corporate production of aesthetic labour* by organisations that employ workers, these workers' bodies are then worked on, developed and refined to produce the desired femininity. To continue the production of desired femininity, sales assistants had to wear current stock always and used make-up. Workers were given branded clothes

at discounted prices and not free of cost. So being poorly remunerated and insisting on buying expensive branded clothes was sometimes a double burden and an added forced investment by the workers.

The performance of aesthetic labour is a laborious process and the body of the retail shop-floor employee is an extremely important site of labour that not only involves maintaining the appearance of her body but also maintaining the appearance of the store which requires an immense amount of physical energy. Peter Freund (1982) talks about how emotional modes of being affect embodied selves, which in turn affect social relationships, which further influence the bodily well-being. He talks about how long periods of grief, isolation can have a deteriorating effect on the physical body. Pettinger (2006) says that we cannot ignore the materiality involved in service work because the work that service employees do often makes consumption possible. They are the link between production and consumption as they create favourable conditions for consumption. In the context of the retail shop floor employees, nine to ten hours of work every day on the shop floor, with prescribed emotions along with long hours of standing does have repercussions on the body's wellbeing. Complaints of pain in the leg, back ache, discomfort during menstrual cycles are common among women employees. Apart from the painful standing throughout the working day, it also involves moving huge stacks of clothes from the stock room to the shop floor and vice versa, cleaning one's counter, dusting glass shelves, and steam-ironing displayed garments, thereby indicating repetitive physical labour on the shop floor. It is this kind of mundane routinized task which also involves physical labour. I show in the next chapter that the spectacle of the mall is created and maintained by shop-floor employees who invest a physical labour to

make the mall a favourable site of consumption. It is a perhaps a different form of feminization of labour.

### **EMBODIMENT OF PRESENTABILITY THROUGH GROOMING**

*Grooming is very important in Vanity<sup>20</sup>. First, I use moisturizer on my face, to give moisture to my face. Then I use concealer to hide the marks or dark patches on my face. Then I use the foundation, then compact. Once it is done, I do my eye-grooming like putting on Mascara on eye-lashes, kajal, eye-shadow. After that is done, I do lip grooming, and finally blush-on. This has to be done every day, before store is opened for customers. And regularly we have to do threading and waxing.*

[S6, a customer service employee with a popular make-up brand, Vanity]

In my study, looking at the women shop-floor employees' requirements of work on a retail shop-floor leads us to an understanding of women's employees' embodiment of the ideal femininity as constructed by the employer. For Thapan (2009), the perspective of embodiment is crucial because "...a woman is undoubtedly located in a physical and psychological space as much as she is in the cultural and social domain." (xiii). She warns against essentializing women by means of understanding women through their bodily experience of the everyday life and therefore suggests a perspective of embodiment which studies embodiment through the body as well as the social context where women are located in. In the context of women shop-floor employees, both the body and the location of the body become important in the embodiment of femininity. Embodiment becomes a '*gendered materiality*' (Hughes & Witz, 1997). The materiality lies in the measures of controlling or representing the female body through an over-

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<sup>20</sup> Vanity is pseudonym for a make-up brand.

arching idea of femininity. Femininity is emphasized through work-place rules, by inscribing on the female body in a location which is manufactured by the neo-liberal logic of the spectacle<sup>21</sup>. There is a global expectation of the gendered body that is being met and reinforced in the shopping mall.

Gauri Pathak (2014) talks about the notion of ‘*Presentability*’ and its importance in the work place. An integral part of the idea of ‘presentability’ is bodily appearance. As it is visible and connected to the image of the self, it becomes a component part of one’s identity, according to Pathak. The uncontrolled market economy provides numerous avenues to construct the appearance of the body and eventually Presentability, manifested in knowledge of the English language, putting on the right kind of make-up in the right amount, and wearing appropriate outfits and jewellery, looking smart, knowledge of “carrying” oneself in the proper way. There is thus a commodification of beauty through the consumption of appropriate kinds of products and services. The attribute of being “presentable” is an aspect of *habitus*, in the Bordieusian sense, according to Pathak, as it implies an appropriate bodily presentation of the self, according to different fields.

In the context of the retail work space under study, “presentability” usually connotes clean uniform, hair tied in a neat bun, painted nails, made-up face and fresh breath, clean shoes:

*P: We have to take care of everything... Shoes, nails, hairs have to be taken care of. Ear-rings cannot be long. We have to wear single-top ear-rings. We are also permitted*

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<sup>21</sup> I elaborate of the neoliberal spectacle in the next chapter.

*to wear only one finger ring. These are the basic requirements. Nails have to be clean, fresh breath is also important. We are also asked to use deodorants because, it is a standing job and we have to interact with the customers in the store. We have to be groomed.* [ P, employed with Brand Maximum]

Presentability is achieved through the process of grooming. The process of grooming is invariably tied to bettering of appearance<sup>22</sup> thereby propagating a fixed notion of beauty. For Wolf (2002), beauty is a currency system in itself which is determined by patriarchal standards of society. People are evaluated on the basis of their possession of the beauty currency, but women are invariably subjected to the set global standards of beauty in an extensive and harsher way than men. The ‘beauty myth’ according to Wolf, propagates that the quality exists objectively across societies and it is imperative that women should possess it and men should try to possess the women who embody the societal standards of beauty. Beauty, according to the myth, becomes a resource that women must compete amongst themselves to achieve, thereby increasing their position in the societal hierarchy of appearance. The ideal beauty requires one to be tall, slender, fair-skinned and young. This myth of propagating conventional form of beauty through embodiment of femininity is manifest in the grooming process on the shop-floor.

Grooming, in the study, thus, refers to the processes which comprise of the activities invested in the appearance of the employee’s body, by the employee herself. It is not only the bodies of the shop floor workers that are groomed; it is also the mannequins which are “groomed” once every week or even more frequently. Mannequins are representatives of the human body. According to a Times of India report, the demand for

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<sup>22</sup> Along with mannerisms and appropriate way of interaction

“slim” and tall mannequins is on the rise (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/sunday-times/deep-focus/Guess-who-has-lost-weight-The-mannequin/articleshow/48497189.cms>). Mannequins are the most crucial element of visual merchandising as they entice the customers to buy the garments on them. As Jo Tidy puts it: “She represents the birth of a garment, brand new and full of promise.” (Tidy: 2). The mannequins symbolise the ideal body-image which everybody ought to have: Slender, tall, no body hair and fair and uptight breasts. It can never look bad or wrong. The process of dressing up of a mannequin for its exhibition on the shop floor is itself a process marred with the enforcement of the gendered stereotype associated with women’s bodies. Instances from the retail work space substantiate this. The dressing up of a mannequin is a cumbersome process, as the mannequin has to be disjoined, dressed up with the latest fashion and then joined again. Once the three-step process was over, one of the respondents, involved in it wanted to repeat it because she was not happy about the look of the breasts of the mannequin. She was bent on making the mannequin wear a chemise or a bra! The “Presentability” of the body is dependent on the grooming as well as the age of the body. Dress, an important element of the fashion industry, is a “situated bodily practice”, in the words of Joanne Entwistle (2001: 34). But this bodily practice is related to the age of the body. An aged<sup>23</sup> body can does not necessarily fit into the stereotyped image of the fashion world because it does not look “fashionable” or “sexy” or “desirable” enough, just like fat or hairy or short or black bodies. Age is one of the very important factors that hierarchize bodies in the retail sector. In terms of employment also, people above 35 years of age are usually not preferred because as one respondent puts it, “*What will old people do here, Madam?*”

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<sup>23</sup> The definition of “aged” is dependent on the context. For example, in general use, 35 years of age might not be considered “aged”, but in the retail industry, 35 years of age might disqualify someone from getting employment on the shop floor.

*This is the fashion industry, no?*”. It is assumed that young people are fit for this work because it is the fashion industry and middle-aged or old people are not suitable for this work. There are also concerns about health, from the managerial point of view. For instance, people more than 35 years of age might tend to fall ill often because retail indeed is a very demanding and exhausting job and might not cope up with the dynamic retail industry.

Grooming activities on the shop-floor usually include tying the hair into different styles, putting on nail polish, maintaining the length of the nails, without chipping nail-paints. The colour of the nail paints is also usually prescribed. It also includes putting on lipstick, make-up, powder and perfume along with wearing clean uniforms or dress-codes. Grooming is strictly differentiated from other work-requirements like that of a smile. Grooming can be understood through the following characteristics:

- **Routine:** Grooming is part of the everyday life of the women employees. They cannot step into the counter without being groomed. Every day, there is a time allotted for grooming in the morning routine, before the counter is opened for the customers. Grooming for work is markedly different from the usual body adornments that usually women do in every culture. In this context, going to the beauty parlour, threading their eye-brows and hair on the upper-lip, waxing their body hair is something that these women do regularly as bodily practices. But what differentiates grooming for work is the consciousness involved in the process. In the words of G, a customer service executive who has left her job, to take care of her new-born baby says: *“there is no pressure now”*. Her grooming is not for herself but part of her job description.
- **Frequency:** The frequency of grooming on the shop-floor is maintained in a sincere cycle. There is coordination amongst women employees, whose counters are next to each

other or at least nearby. If one leaves her counter, the other one keeps a watch on the former's counter. In case there are customers, she helps them with the merchandise. Sometimes, explanations are also given for the absent employee, to the department or store manager. The frequency is no less than 3 times a day, where face is washed and make-up or deodorant is applied:

*It takes me around half an hour to do the initial grooming. Then I take around 10 minutes. Every 2-3 hours I used to go and groom myself and come to the store. [R]*

Frequency of women's grooming is quite different men's grooming on the shop-floor. The continuous element of women's grooming makes it a very important part of their daily labour, while for men<sup>24</sup>, it is a fixed activity which is not continuous throughout the day, for example shaving or wearing clean uniforms.

- **‘Wastage’**: The other characteristic that is implied from the frequency is the perishable quality of grooming. Grooming one's body is seen as a process where there is an underlying understanding that the body needs constant “touch-ups”, given the fading away of the make-up. V, who works with a make-up brand pointed out that she did not do the grooming at home, but preferred to do it after reaching the store, because the “grooming” is wasted during the long journey that she undertakes each day to reach the store. So, grooming is seen as a perishable thing, which needs to be taken care of. It is a resource on the shop-floor, which has to be replenished. It is also not a personal requirement but part of the job description.
- **Backstage grooming**: As seen in the beginning of the chapter, the process of grooming cannot be witnessed by the customer. It is usually avoided. Before the store is opened to

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<sup>24</sup> The range of required grooming standards is usually limited with short hair, clean shaven look, which is not dependent on frequent touch-ups.

the customers, the women employees can use the trial rooms<sup>25</sup> for grooming themselves. But in peak hours they either go to the employee's section of the store or to their washrooms. Sometimes, when the washrooms are not free, they go to the washrooms meant for the customers, to groom themselves. Also, some of the women, prefer doing their grooming at home because they are not comfortable grooming themselves in front of other colleagues, while others, do their grooming after reaching the store. Some of them even share their products for the daily grooming on the shop-floor.

- **Grooming as a mark of difference:** The ritual of grooming is different amongst products, brands and even employees working for the same brand. Women, working for the same retail outlet but different products differentiate amongst themselves with the kind of make-up that is applied, which includes body-shaming and racist undercurrents in a casual way:

*“They do too much make-up, it looks funny because they put white make up on black face”.*

Here, S1 differentiates between the employees of the make-up section and the apparel section. She is employed in the apparel section and clearly distinguishes herself from the women employed at the make-up section by pointing out the excess of make-up. The different code of grooming forms one of the many ways of othering<sup>26</sup> on the shop-floor.

There are different policies by different brands and products pertaining to grooming. Some cosmetic brands give products to their beauty advisors to use while they are on the counter. These beauty advisors are not allowed to take the products home, which for their own use. While in some others, there is monetary compensation promised at the time of

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<sup>25</sup> Trial rooms which are meant for customers to try merchandise.

<sup>26</sup> There are different ways which employees use to distinguish themselves from each other and from customers, which is discussed in the next chapter.

recruitment for grooming purposes. This compensation usually covers the cost of fortnightly threading of eyebrows to give it a shape and removal of hair on one's upper-lips and waxing of bodily hair. While for others, the grooming cost has to be borne completely by the employee. Thus, grooming itself becomes a part of the conditions of employment.

### **PRODUCTION OF AESTHETIC LABOUR**

The systemic production of aesthetic labour is in itself a product of the neoliberal<sup>27</sup> ways of controlling bodies. Banet-Weiser (2017), through the example of beauty vlogging shows how through virtual instructions the vloggers can manufacture obedient viewers who are willing to work on their bodies in a disciplined way to produce conventional forms of femininity and yet be empowered to take control of their own bodies through make-up, buying *fashionable* clothes, and honing the body. This control over their own bodies suits the neoliberal capitalist context where conducive economic subjects are created. Focussing on the work-place rules regarding the appearance of the employee's body, Pettinger (2005) defines *corporate production of aesthetic labour* as the process through which corporates hire employees, work on their bodies through prescribing grooming standards and giving them branded clothes to wear on the shop-floor, thereby making these employees their brand representatives, thereby producing an aesthetics of their brand. In the process, the employees through their labour produce an image of the brand they are working for. Though both kinds of production aim at the creation of disciplined subjects who obey the rules of bodily appearance, the former does not have

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<sup>27</sup> The neoliberal, capitalist principles aim to control each part of the human body by creating products to 'better' those body parts and construct the 'appropriate' image, consequently producing consumers, who in turn keep the capitalist system working.

consequences of disobedience. On the shop-floor, employees usually have to abide by the laid down rules.

The production of aesthetic labour on the shop floor takes place through elaborate training on the shop floor as well as at the training centres which train prospective employees. The training, after the recruitment may be imparted on the shop-floor through instructional videos or through special training classes held in head-offices of brands. Usually, when there are no customers, instructional videos are played on the electronic screens installed in the shop-floor. These videos describe the correct way of grooming. These videos are also informative about the *correct* way of speaking to the customer and what should a customer service executive do when a customer enters the shop. There are also instructions on the correct way of arranging the merchandise on the shop-floor. The instructions on grooming and its usefulness is also reiterated through the department manager everyday through department<sup>28</sup> meetings held twice a day, once just before opening the store to the customers in the morning and the other in the afternoon when the shop does not have enough customers.

Mary, a trainer at one the brands says proudly:

*“Our brand’s tagline itself says ‘Look Good, Feel Good’, so appearance is very important...The grooming standard is also strictly maintained. The CREs are instructed to maintain their appearance. For example, women are instructed to tie their hair, wear a good deodorant /perfume and have short nails. In case they wish to grow long nails,*

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<sup>28</sup> Different categories of clothing have different department, managed by different staff. For example, ethnic wear for women is a department.

*they should polish their nails with nail paint and chipped nails is a strict no. Similarly, men are instructed to wear clean formal shoes and have short hair. Shaving every day is a must. All the CREs are instructed to have breath fresheners.”*

The importance of grooming is seen through the language of training itself which emphasises instructions and strictness. Mary also points out that there cannot be a seamless overlap between the ideals of the brand and the employee if grooming is not done. Each of the employee is then assessed through a variety of criteria, of which presentability is an important one. There are also training bound with a time frame that are held in different branches of the brand:

*“Our training was done in Begumpet store for a week... We are taught how to groom ourselves and we just cannot come to the store without grooming. Grooming is very important. I have long hair, so I was told to tie my hair in a neat pony-tail or a bun and not to leave it open. We should always look fresh and smile when we are greeting the customers. Our nails cannot be too long and have to be cleaned before coming to the store. We have to take care of that. And our uniforms should be clean.*

[R, Customer Care Associate, Spot]

Training sessions are also held in different cities:

*In the fragrance company we were trained about different kinds of fragrances and how to smell them. In make-up and skin care there are many things which are taught. Like make-up products, how to use them, which product suits what kind of skin. There is a lot of detailing. We were also taught how to do grooming...First foundation is compulsory.*

*I am in skincare. So, foundation is must. Then moisturiser. Then compact, eye shadow, lipstick. This was normal.”*

[S5, Beauty Advisor in Spot]

Apart from having the training systems in different cities, there are also day-long training sessions held in hotels where brand employees meet and get trained about new products as well as grooming techniques:

*Like self-introduction, talking about one’s body, likeness, training about product category, quality, product and skin types, how to apply make-up, hand movements, then body language in the store, grooming. They told me about the products, new products that were to be launched, how those products worked, all these things.*

[V, Vanity]

Grooming sessions are also conducted by organisations that train prospective employees for employment in the retail and hospitality sector. EGMM<sup>29</sup>’s training programme of 90 days has the last 15 days allotted to preparing the students for grooming and placements. Grooming is thought of as a skill, which has to be imparted to the students, who are mostly young women. It is defined as a *set of activities performed in order to present or make oneself better in appearance*. The training is elaborate which starts with identification of the various body parts. There are also worksheets which the students have to fill, identifying the body parts on a diagram. Lessons from the text books explain that grooming helps create a positive image of the self and the brand one is working for, in the customer’s mind. The training on grooming is divided into sections:

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<sup>29</sup> Detailed discussion of the programme in the previous chapter

1. *Clothing: Uniforms should be clean and pressed. Employees should wear clean socks every day. There has to be a proper display of identity cards, preferably on the right side of the uniform. The tag has to be worn at all the times. In case of loss of the tag, the supervisor has to be informed immediately.*
2. *Grooming Standards: This section includes instructions on brushing your teeth twice a day, bathing daily with a soap, shaving, trimming hair and having an overall clean appearance. Under this section, there is a picture of a woman, threading her eyebrows is inserted.*
3. *Footwear should be neat and clean. There is also a tip given: wash socks after each wear.*
4. *Hairstyles: Hairstyles for men and women are prescribed in detail. For women it includes tying hair in a neat bun with hair pulled back from face. There are also instructions on the clips/rubber bands that are to be used: devices should be plain and clear or close to the employees' hair colour. For Men, the hair should not fall over, and should have a neat appearance.*
5. *Facial Hair: The part on facial hair is not elaborate. It shows a man's face, with half of the face clean-shaven, which is termed as 'acceptable', while the other half has stubble. There is no mention about women's facial hair.*
6. *Oral Hygiene: Teeth should be white and clean at all times. Bad breath should be avoided after smoking or having lunch, by washing the mouth*
7. *Fingernails: Women are instructed to trim nails, without dark or bright coloured nail polish. The lipstick's colour also has to be natural. Men are instructed to have clean and trimmed nails.*

8. *Instructions on accessories: Conservative jewellery is prescribed. Women are instructed to wear studs on their ears and only one bangle is allowed. Watches if worn, should be conservative and elegant.*
9. There are also some miscellaneous instructions:
- *Do not touch or comb your hair*
  - *Wash your hands after meals, smoking and wash room visits.*
  - *Do not wipe perspiration from body with your hands*
  - *Do not touch edge of mouth when talking to someone.*
  - *Do not scratch any part of body or clothing.*
  - *Do not lick your fingers while trying to separate carry bags.*
  - *Do not stroke your beard or moustache*
  - *Do not rub finger along your nose*
  - *Do not cough or sneeze into your hands. Use a handkerchief.*
  - *Do not pick pimples on face.*

The importance of grooming is asserted under the “*Did You Know*” section”:

- *First Impressions are formed very often by one’s appearance alone.*
- *Well Groomed persons are regarded as people with higher intelligence and achievements.*
- *So, it is up to you to project the image you wish the world to see.*

There is also data<sup>30</sup> given to show that first impression is crucial. Apparently, 55% of first impression is constituted by *visual appearance*, 38% is *tone of voice* and 7% is constituted by *verbal* communication. As seen in the above instructions, from head to foot, each part of the body has to be taken care of daily, through prescribed ritual. During the training of grooming skills, students are expected to groom themselves and come to class. A special grooming trainer comes to teach the women students hair-styles and make-up, appropriate for their future work spaces. During one of the interactions, a student showed me her hair-style that she had learnt the previous day in her grooming class. The sole male student of that particular batch only smiled when I asked him what he learned in the grooming class. Immediately, after the grooming section is over, there is a work-sheet which needs to be filled up, so that what is instructed, is remembered and put into practice by the trainees.

The production of aesthetic labour on the shop-floor cannot take place successfully if there is no acceptance on the part of those at the receiving end. As seen in the instructions, the onus on grooming is on the prospective employees: if they want a successful career for themselves, then they have to do give efforts on the maintenance of their outward appearance<sup>31</sup>. There is a manufactured rationality that the better shop-floor employees look, the more customers or sales they will do, hence leading to their own benefits, in the form of incentives and repeat customers<sup>32</sup>, while for the brand it would mean profit. This rationality is presented in different forms:

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<sup>30</sup> The source of the data is not provided in the work book.

<sup>31</sup> This gives them a sense of agency which is discussed in the section on control, surveillance and agency

<sup>32</sup> Customers who come back to the store and often look for the customer service executives who had served them on an earlier visit.

*S7: We do grooming to attract customers. If we remain neat then customers will come to us. Otherwise, customers won't come. Look at me, I have put Lipstick, kohl, I am fully neat.*

*S5: We were taken to Bangalore for training. We were taught how to do make-up and about the different make-up colours and which make-up suits which skin colour. I learnt a lot during the training. In the office also, I received training. First, I apply foundation, then I apply moisturiser. It is very important. ...Without grooming I cannot step into the counter.*

S7 works with a lingerie brand. For her grooming is a part of her duty and her assertion that she is neat points at her capacity of being an efficient employee. So, the appearance of her body becomes a crucial component of her efficiency as a labouring body. For S5, the labouring body demands to look in a way that is groomed. She works with a make-up brand, hence her work itself depends on the appearance of her body, displaying the goodness of the products that she sells. Her appearance, according to her, leads to the way her customers want to look like. Therefore, she has to be very careful in the make-up she does on herself. Without the expected appearance, she ceases to be a labouring body on the shop floor because of her inability to embody the product that she is selling. Her inability to represent the product through its application on her own-body marks her failure of producing aesthetic labour. While for S7, grooming or what she calls as 'neat' is a component of her efficiency, for S5, grooming in itself is the scale of efficiency.

### THE GAZE OF THE CONSUMER:

'Gaze' refers to the process of seeing. The Sage Dictionary of Sociology (2006) defines the gaze as: "...assumptions underlying specific cultural products or viewpoint or perspective built-in to them" (119-120). The concept of gaze was introduced by Laura Mulvey (1975) in her essay, which talked about a male gaze that determined the way the female character was looked at by the male hero as well as by the audience. Though it was coined in the context of film studies, the concept is useful to understand the function of the male gaze in the retail shop-floor. Mulvey draws largely from psychoanalysis to explain the representation of the woman in cinema. Women are seen as bearers of meaning and never the makers of meaning. Women's bodies are coded with meanings to produce *scopophilia*, which involves pleasure in looking, which may take different forms. Women become indispensable to the spectacle (of the cinema) because it is on them the male characters have to act and show their power. Thus, the presence of women is important for the spectator who watches the cinema and usually identifies with the male characters as well as the male characters within the story itself. Therefore, the visual of the film or a picture and its spectatorship become the sites of production of meaning (Rose, 2001). I extend the argument of women bearing the meaning of the visual to the retail shop-floor to show how women are placed within the shop-floor which has an overarching narrative of systemic functioning of a spectacular space as that of the mall. The space of this narrative is based on a consumption culture which emphasises the appearance of the body of both the service provider as well as the recipient of the service. This appearance is structured through an imposition of aesthetics. I do not intend to show that the male servicing body is outside the gaze of the consumption culture. Rather, my intention is to show how the masculine gaze creates or demands a feminine body, through aesthetics.

*Make-over means changing their looks. We clean their face with cotton, then apply make-up, our products only. So, after getting make-up from professionals, they look beautiful. See, they also use make-up at home. But the way we do their make-up, they cannot do it. That is why they come.* [S5, employed with a make-up brand]

S5 is employed with a make-up brand in the Spot store, which sells make-up products as well as apply make-up on their customers, mostly women, who demand for a make-over. That is why it is important for S5 to have the appropriate grooming on her face. It is through her make-up that a potential customer can gauge the quality of her ability to apply make-up as well as the products themselves. Her presence on the other side of the counter enables her to produce visible femininity on the bodies of the customers who have made the choice to entrust her with their make-over, even though this make-over is not meant to stay for a long time.

This choice, is not made in a vacuum. It is made in the context of a consumer culture which has already prescribed rules about how a woman's body should appear. Bartky (1988) suggests that following these prescriptions under the garb of choice is obedience to patriarchy while for Grosz (1994) there is always a fine line between subservience and a free will. I argue that the perpetuation of pandering to a masculine gaze by women is made possible in a culture which focusses on consumption and on the appearance of the outer body. Mike Featherstone (1991) asserts that in this cultural regime of consumer capitalism, the difference between the inner and the outer body gets widened and the outer body begins to get a prominence. People want to save their bodies from deterioration from aging, scars and obesity so that their appearance is maintained

according to the standards set by advertisements and films. People are made to feel sorry for their appearance if they do not meet the standards of accepted beauty. They are made to spend the leisure time working on their body to achieve the goals that these media of films and advertisements have set. In the Indian context, Oza (2006), argues that women's bodies become surfaces on which India's image as a modern globalised nation is inscribed. With economic liberalization in India, a nationalist discourse around the ideal Indian woman was constructed through the gaze of the patriarchal popular media. This new woman was modern and represented the globalised India yet was firmly anchored in the Indian value system. For Oza, the discourse made sure that India was globalised yet away from Western influences. The modern Indian woman was therefore independent, rich and fashionable capable of making her own choices and at the same time she was anchored to her domestic life. Her study of the Miss World pageant in 1996, held in India shows how the male gaze can be of different forms and yet function to oppress women's bodies. While the government of India, along with corporates wanted to host the event to showcase India's arrival on the global scene, thereby presenting to the world the exotic Indian beauty, the opposing<sup>33</sup> Hindu nationalists wanted to stop the event because of its obscenity, which was detrimental to Indian values. Both the groups thereby viewed women as "*...material and discursive sites where the nation was performed, values were contested and bodies and boundaries were policed and controlled.*" (80)

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<sup>33</sup> Feminist groups also opposed the pageant because of different reasons. They were against the commodification of the women's bodies and the evident coalition between the State and the global capital.

In a context where bodies become markers of globalisation, independence and self-reliance, the labour of the servicing body like that of the S5 become crucial because she is not only preparing her body to suit the male gaze but she is also creating other appropriate bodies through her service. She is selling the image that the male gaze has produced. The male gaze can be perpetuated by both men and women while gazing at women's bodies. The manufacture of the consumer gaze takes place through instructions of the management which devises the gaze. These instructions convey what the customers want and therefore what is acceptable on the shop-floor and what is not:

*Grooming is very important in the retail sector, especially in apparel retail. Because if you are handling a particular section, and if you are not groomed well, customer does not have a very good impression about your brand. If you are in formal section and you are coming in casuals, what will you explain to the customer? You are the brand ambassador so you should represent the brand perfectly.*

[Laxmi, a department manager employed with Brand Post]

For Laxmi, appearing groomed on the shop-floor is important for the shop-floor employee because it is she who is the first point of communication with the customer in the transaction process of selling. Laxmi knows definitely that the customer won't like it if the brand person herself is not dressed well. This knowledge, which is presented as doubtless is never questioned. Rather, there are ways of transmitting this knowledge about the customers' thought process among the retail shop-floor employees, through various ways.

Another way of maintaining consumer gaze is by accentuating certain body parts as very important, which leads to a valorisation of work of the shop-floor employees, by themselves:

*I am like a doctor only. The one that is most important part. We give suggestions about size and product quality.*

[S7, a customer service executive employed with a lingerie brand]

For S7, her work is important and comparable to that of a doctor because she has knowledge about a very important part of the woman's body which is her breasts. She has knowledge about the correct size and material which would be appropriate for different body types. She does not feel uncomfortable to discuss the size and material even with male customers who come to buy gifts for their wives or girlfriends. Her knowledge about brassiere: underwired, push-up, cotton, synthetic, strapless; and the ability to guess correctly the brassiere size by looking at a woman shows that the customer gaze is not only presented in the usual way of aesthetics in terms of what appears to be good, but also by creating multitude of alternatives, from where the customer can choose from. That the correct brassiere is absolutely necessary for a woman's body is a way of affirming that a feminine body should be well taken care by appropriate clothing. In the process, S7 finds her role that of connecting the customers to the correct product because that is what she has been trained for, very important.

This consumer gaze, which is largely a male gaze, perpetuates femininity and also makes femininity a cultural as well as an economic capital in a feminist reading of Bourdieusian *capital*. For Bourdieu, though, women are repositories of capital, in the social field of

men, to be appropriated by men. The former's role is only to convert economic capital into symbolic capital, through display of their taste. Skeggs (1997) in her study of young working-class women found out that femininities, like masculinities are a resource in the labour market which demands labour for care-work. Therefore, femininity is not merely symbolic capital but also an economic capital. In the field<sup>34</sup> of consumer culture, where the body is the primary focus, the woman retail shop floor employee uses prescribed femininity to legitimise her location on the shop-floor. For her it is achieved through a daily practice of the rules of her work-place. As a cultural capital, she displays her body-work as legitimate knowledge and therefore she is capable of transmitting the same cultural capital to her customers. This transmission can be in the form of a make-over as seen in the above examples or suggesting 'fashionable' options for mix and match outfits, which require picking up tops and bottoms from different gondolas. This knowledge is economic capital for her because it is the basis of her livelihood. The knowledge that she has of the products that she sells gets translated into economic resources through sales, target achievements and consequent incentives along with her salary.

### **SURVEILLANCE AND AGENCY**

Wolkowitz (2006) recognises the need to understand the ways by which organisations aim to control the body through different practices. As corporations evolve over a period of time, the style of control on the labouring body changes. Talking about evolution in the manner control is exercised, Wolkowitz refers to Taylorism or the scientific management system of shop floor where a particular task and breaking it down to multiple tasks which can be done even by '*trained gorillas*'! (58). As a result, each sub-

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<sup>34</sup> Here field is used in the Bordieusian sense, referring to the social structure.

task was carried out mechanically but more efficiently, which further had implications on the governance of the labouring body. For example, the body's efficiency was measured through time and motion studies and unnecessary expenditure of energy was eliminated. For Foucault (1984), since the eighteenth century, there has been an emergence of techniques designed to control bodies. It is not like these techniques were something new. In every society across epochs, the body is in the "*grip of very strict powers, which imposed on it constraints, prohibitions, or obligations.*" (180). What is novel in the modern means of control is its a) scale of control, where each individual body is controlled, b) the object of control which aims at economy and efficiency of movements and the organisation of that control and c) the modality of control which implies a constant coercion, focussing more on the process rather than the consequence. (181). It is the coordination of these techniques that Foucault calls as discipline:

"These methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assumed the constant subjection of its forces and imposed on them a relation of docility-utility might be called "disciplines." (181)

As a ramification of this control, the human body enters a "machinery of power" which "explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it", producing docile bodies. This production of docile bodies, which Foucault terms as political anatomy can be witnessed in various sites like primary schools, hospitals and other institutions. The retail shop floor is one such site where elaborate ways of controlling bodies are in operation. The control is focussed on what and how the employees say and the way they present their bodies on the shop-floor:

*“If the gondolas look bad, but you look good, customers will come to you. If the gondolas look good, but you look bad, customers will not come to you, if the gondolas look good and you also look good, then of course, customers will come to you.”*

[Rajesh<sup>35</sup>, a hospitality and services trainer at Progress, one of the training agencies that partners with the Government’s skill development programmes.]

Foucault said that the presence of power does not necessarily have to be overtly present. It can make its presence felt through a network of practices and institutions that sustain power structures. Also, the mechanism of power is not repressive but constitutive, which focusses on ordering bodies rather than destroying them. For Foucault, the controlled bodies have to imbibe the existence of the power structure and act in accordance with the rules of the network of power. What this leads to is the acceptance of dominance and subversion of a potential rebellion (Bordo,1995). The ordering of the shop-floor ensures that bodies correspond to the requirements of a shop-floor employee. Surprise shop visits by higher authorities from head offices are common. To regularise the checks, technology also assists:

*I: So, does anyone check your grooming?*

*V: Yes! Everyday. The manager checks it every day. Sometimes, visitors from head office also come to check. We send our pictures daily to the manager through WhatsApp<sup>36</sup>.*

*I: Why is grooming important?*

*M: To attract customers. Since it is cosmetics industry, we have to do grooming. We get scores also for our grooming.*

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<sup>35</sup> Pseudonym

<sup>36</sup> A messaging application on a phone, that works using internet.

*I: Who gives you those marks?*

*M: We have sudden visits from company. Surprise visits. So, we always have to be in grooming.*

Both M and V work with a cosmetic brand *Vanity* that deals with make-up products. For them, being groomed always is crucial because at any point of time they can be examined for conforming to the prescribed standards of the shop-floor. Foucault's Panopticism becomes helpful to understand the degree of disciplining one is subjected to in a modern, retail store. Foucault (1991: 200) says:

“We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the out-side, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy.....The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately.... Visibility is a trap.”

As far as the retail store is concerned there is no physical structure of a panopticon. But what ensures panopticism is the surveillance through cameras installed throughout the store as well all the employees, who transform into panopticons for each other at times and make sure that their colleagues behave according to the behaviour expected from an employee, in terms of body-language, presentability and interaction. The cameras

installed in the store ensure two things; first, there is no shop lifting in the store and second, to see which employees are chatting on the shop floor or are munching food or sitting on the shop floor. Very often these employees do not know who keeps a watch over the visuals captured by the cameras, yet they discipline their bodies according to the prescribed rules, as if someone is always keeping a watch on them.

Though it appears from the over-arching surveillance system on the shop floor, that there is no way to escape the system of rules and regulations, in reality shop-floor employees do express their agency<sup>37</sup> in ways that sometimes involves acting within the purview of the rules and sometimes outside those rules. To think of women as bodies waiting to be regulated and inscribed with management dictates is to deprive them of any agency. Women in this study do not see the routinized aesthetization as an exploitation. Some of them view it as bothersome while others have complaints about lack of financial support to carry out this aspect of routine work. But almost all of them consider aesthetic labour as an absolute necessity because they deal with customers with face to face interaction which is why grooming becomes important. Sometimes they also enjoy the process of grooming themselves and often enumerate the benefits of putting on make-up. Women employed with make-up brand do not fail to appreciate the quality of make-up products that they sell and are also asked to use on the shop-floor. It is because of the high quality of those cosmetics that they are able to use them on a regular basis and also have a better self-image. The control of the female body by the employer and the use or misuse of their photographs may be a cause for concern but it is not explicated. There are the new ways of surveillance on female bodies by global capitalist players.

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<sup>37</sup> Agency, in this context, refers to acting on one's will. However, this agency is limited in character.

Elias et al. (2017) talk about '*aesthetic entrepreneurship*' to highlight the agency of those who are involved in body work in contemporary times and to show how neoliberalism as a project is to connect to social, cultural and psychic needs of people rather than only economic ones. They refute readings of body as docile, entrepreneurship, according to them, is useful in signifying that there is a labouring body that is involved in exercising an agency and creativity in the process of beauty work. I do not intend to go the extent of employing the idea of entrepreneurship in the routinized activity of beauty work, because it is largely functional in a system which does not allow personal ideas of beauty or creativity, rather formulated according to the prescribed rules which come from the head offices. The agency in terms of accepting those rules and using them to benefit for one's career, is present, even though it is limited.

Agency is exercised when rules about appearance are not followed by the employees:

*I don't like all that make up and all. Some days I don't get into the notice of the store-manager. But when I do, I have to quickly get some make-up on my face.*

[S2, employed with Brand Maximum]

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are subtle ways through which employees subvert rules of interaction with customers. Regarding appearance, because of constant surveillance by the department managers and co-employees who are quick to point out the missing made-up face, it is better to follow the prescribed norms. In such an overbearing system, S2 finds a way of avoiding the ritual of make-up by avoiding her department manager. She makes an effort not to meet her department manager so that

she is not reprimanded. This hints at the limited agency that women employees have regarding the appearance of their bodies. It should also be mentioned here that S2 is a trainee who is still learning the job. It was her first job [at the time of the interview; she has since changed to a better paying job now in the same retail sector, with a different brand] and she is yet to learn the routinization of the requirements of appearance. Expression of agency and resisting the norms in the arena of bodily appearance seems limited and difficult to exercise. It seems from women's experiences that agency can be exercised in terms of degrees of make-up one uses but they cannot avoid the process completely.

### **PRODUCTION OF UNIFORMITY?**

The consumer gaze and systemic surveillance function to maintain conformity to rules and also aims at the production of uniformity amongst employees. One of the most visible ways of producing uniformity is the introduction of uniforms or dress code for the employees. The cost of uniforms is usually borne by the employers themselves who supply their employees with uniforms and name tags. When an employee is still a trainee and is yet to prove her commitment to the job, she is not given the uniform but can follow a prescribed dress code. It is only after the training period on the shop floor is complete that the uniform is finally given. Usually, employees are given two pairs of uniforms which includes a pair of shoes at the beginning, which they have to wear for six working days for almost twelve hours a day. Once those uniforms get damaged, they have to apply for a new pair and wait. The uniforms are designed and prescribed by the head office and transmitted to all stores:

*We have to apply for shirts or pants, whatever we need. We get whenever there is stock. Otherwise we have to wait for it. Sometimes, people wear the same coloured clothes as that of the uniform in case they don't have a pair or their uniforms are dirty.*

[K, a CSE with Brand Maximum]

These uniforms, as mentioned in grooming instruction have to look crisp with proper ironing and should not look shabby. Thus, an employee is expected to take care of their uniform and keep it clean and pressed. This requirement encroaches upon the time of the employees beyond those of the working hours. Being present without uniforms is usually followed by barrage of questions from department managers demanding explanation for not wearing uniforms. On birthdays, some employees choose not to wear uniforms and instead come to work in their special 'birthday-dress'. The training processes which focus both on the body as well as the emotions that are considered appropriate for communication in the retail space, get made according to a script which is created by retailers to suit their image. One of the sources of uniformity is organisations like EGMM which teach the foundation of retail work at the beginner's level, thereby making the knowledge a frame, where experiences at actual stores fit in at a later stage. The underlying assumption is that every retail store has a basic requirement, that of interaction with customers and a groomed outward appearance.

Ritzer (2000) refers to such a uniformity that ensures total control, predictability efficiency and rationality in the functioning of organisations in society by the term *McDonaldization*. Putting systemic uniformity in an organisation, be it a retail shop floor or a fast-food chain requires a central control with formatted scripts or with manuals with instructions for grooming. The extent to which the grip of this centralised control varies

depends on the context in which it is applied. Ritzer's (2004) *McDonaldization* of society stems from a larger system of production of *nothing* at a global scale. He says (3):

“The social world particularly in the realm of consumption, is increasingly characterized by nothing. In this case ‘nothing’ refers to a social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content. This definition carries with it no judgement about the desirability or undesirability of such a social form or about its increasing prevalence.”

The idea of nothingness becomes important to understand the concept of the modern retail format which has its origins in the United States. His idea of *non-people*<sup>38</sup> shows how people act within systems, like the retail shop-floor, which has limited autonomy for formation of distinct subjectivities. He draws a spectrum between nothing and something, with the latter having some distinctiveness, where every social formation contains different degrees of *nothing* and *something*.

In the retail shop floor, for example, it is manifest that each brand has its own set of rules, uniforms and ways of displaying garments, along with the way its employees have to dress and groom. There is a similar pattern of McDonaldization which aims at ensuring control and maximum profitability, for example targets, pushing customers to buy more, selling membership cards, offering incentives, ways of attending to a customer and so on. As a consequence, most shop-floors<sup>39</sup> look similar in the way merchandise is

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<sup>38</sup> For Ritzer, non-people are those who are easily replaceable and lack a specific content to them in terms of time, space, personal relationships.

<sup>39</sup> Shop-floors of those brands which aim to cater to customers from all classes. The high-end brands like Zara/Diesel/Mac were not studied for the purposes of this work.

arranged and employees are dressed and speak. Simultaneously, it also needs to be emphasised that the control systems are aimed at controlling people, which in its totality is not possible because people ought to have their own subjectivities.

## CONCLUSION

The relationship between women and the appearance of their bodies has always been ridden with patriarchal norms. The ideal/correct/trendy body with appropriate clothes has to be something that women have to aspire for to gain social validation. The chapter shows how women who are involved in the facilitation of consumption on a retail site have to themselves work on their bodies to produce appearances that are desired by the capitalist employers, which is called as aesthetic labour. The work on a shop-floor does not stop at working on aesthetics or emotions, as we saw in the previous chapter, but also demands a strenuous physical labour. On the shop-floor, both men and women employees are subjected to produce prescribed forms of body-representation as part of routine work. But the way the routine work operates in terms of its frequency and detailing, reveals the gendered character of body-work, which is called grooming in the shop-floor terminology. The process of training the employees for aesthetic labour is akin, in many ways, to the civilizing mission of the colonizer over the bodies of the colonized. Just as the bathing soap became an instrument to purify the impurity of the colonized at the hands of the colonizer, three centuries ago (McClintock, 1995), it seems that the logic of the process has remained behind at the hands of the capitalist, neoliberal regime. The detailed instructions that shop-floor employees have to go through, which include brushing, bathing with soap, using deodorants, aim at bodily cleanliness. The underlying assumption being that the employees who are usually of lower caste and class backgrounds, have no knowledge of taking care of their own bodies. The process of

grooming and its consequence of presentability thus becomes a purifying technique which is rewarded where adhered to and reprimanded when not. This also serves to feed the masculine consumer gaze which finds contentment in the display of disciplined, organised and uniform bodies. Discipline, organisation and uniformity is ensured through systemic surveillance tools like cameras, checking of uniforms and grooming standards. The bodies of the employees can thus be seen as the site of exercise of capitalist power. Though this exercise of power is legitimised through brand rules, customer expectations and the consequent increased sales, the employees sometimes resist the complete subservience to the rules by avoiding routine checks. Though limited in scope, the over-arching system of surveillance is worked around with. These opportunities, however, do not disturb the larger picture of uniformity and the spectacular vision of the shopping mall, as we shall see in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5. Layered Space(s): Processes and Ramifications

*N1 was disappointed as the stair case was strewn with food wrappers. She stated with frustration “Only 10 minutes is left. Let us go upstairs.” (Field notes, March 2016).*

N1 is one of the many women who work on the shop-floor, tirelessly, smiling and constantly wanting to know if her customer is satisfied with the products on display and whether she convinced her customer of her total attention. In the earlier chapters on emotional labour and aesthetic labour, we saw how the retail shop-floor employees worked on their emotions and bodies in accordance with the prescribed rules of the employer brand. In this chapter we shall see the nature of the relationship that employees like N1 have with their place of work. The above excerpt from fieldnotes indicates two important aspects of that relationship. Her concern for the time left out of a 45-minute lunch break, which is not exceptional in an age where there are strict timings to be followed at the place of work. That the entry and exit times are recorded through devices further necessitates the precision of sticking to time. Moreover, within that work place which is a shopping mall, the place, used by N1 and other employees like her, to relax during their breaks, is strewn with rubbish. This is in stark contrast to those areas of the shopping mall which are primarily used as sites of consumption and therefore manifest a completely different ambience, thereby revealing the opposing nature of the shopping mall for its consumers and its workforce, which is crucial for my study. Sociological literature on shopping malls, especially in the contexts of the global South, has mostly focused on the shopping mall as a site of consumption where customers, perform their capacity to splurge through their consumption practices. The fact that there are people labouring in various capacities within the mall, to maintain this site of consumption so

that act of a particular kind of consumption can be performed, is often ignored. It is these people who become important for the purpose of this thesis.

To that effect, the chapter uses the concept of layered space to explicate the nature of the hierarchy that characterizes a shopping mall. The concept of layered space becomes useful in understanding the characteristics of a space which is shared by people of different social strata, yet there are differences and hierarchies in the nature of their relationship to that space is manifested in many ways. The layers formed, as a result, are fluid with varied acts of constructing physical and social boundaries, under the overarching structure of the rules of the mall. In explicating that hierarchy, the chapter looks at the shopping mall as a *spectacular* site of consumption and its location within the city. It then proceeds to show how the layering are manifest within the mall in its functioning as a place of work and a site of consumption. Through unpacking these layers, the chapter shows how the *spectacular* mall, which is a product of neo-liberal economic policies and consumer culture, relegate those who create and maintain the spectacle, to the background. The layers also reveal the gendered nature of the shopping mall and the nature of the work in the context of the city. Finally, the perceptions of devalorisation and valorisation of work in the capitalist system is discussed.

## **LAYERED SPACE**

### **Social Stratification and the Layered Space:**

Social stratification has been an important area of study in Sociology. Social stratification implies a multi-layered phenomenon, where the differences between those units of the phenomenon are tied together with a common axis (Gupta, 1992). The differences are not visible till a common axis is constructed to understand the stratifying

system. Different societies have manifested different systems of stratification, across time and geographical space. Class, caste, ethnicity, race and gender often form the axes along which societies construct hierarchies and thus exercise of power of one group of people over another is systematized and legitimized. It is pertinent to differentiate between hierarchy and difference to imply that not all systems of stratification indicate hierarchy. Hierarchy implies an ordering or a stratification system where each unit is ranked in relation to the other while difference implies the arrangement of units separately or horizontally.

The contemporary concept of layering is a form of social stratification characterized by hierarchy. But the layers represent a fluidity amongst themselves which make the act of boundary-making, both physical and social, possible, but the boundaries are fluid and hence are accessible to members of each of the hierarchical layers, albeit in different capacities. Marcuse (2002) in his study of the New York city introduced the concepts of quarters and layers to describe the multitude of divisions within a city, thereby pointing at the difficulty of thinking of the city as one cohesive unit and emphasizes on the simultaneous presence of different cities with the same New York city. He draws these differences within a city using a rough binary between the residential and business areas. The category of residential areas is further differentiated into as luxury, the gentrified, the suburban, the tenement, and the abandoned city, whereas the category of cities of business is distinguished into the controlling city, city of advanced services and manufacturing cities which are starkly different from the previous two. He terms them quarters, which may have real walls between them as in the case of ghettos or imagined walls in terms of class or race or ethnic enclaves. Marcuse in differentiating different quarters of the city does not want to lose the emphasis on the interconnectedness amongst

the quarters, hence uses the metaphor of layering to indicate the fluidity and the overlap of these different divisions. There is also a time dimension to this layering between different quarters, given that the different quarters are occupied by different people according to the time of the day. Giving the example of skyscrapers in New York, Marcuse points at the process through which the occupants of these buildings change from lawyers to cleaning crews in the evenings, who are earn very little as compared to the former. A city might have completely different meanings to different individuals given their location in the city. These differences in meanings is constituted through one's use of the city as well as one's experiences in the city, which also points at the processes of layering in the city. Sam (2012) borrows the concept of layering from Marcuse's work and uses it to examine the stratified spaces in the context of globalization. These hierarchized spaces are a consequence of *globalization* and *grobalisation*. She defines globalization "*as a set of transplanetary processes involving people, objects, places and information.*" (1) and grobalisation as "*the imperialistic imposition by nation-states, organisations and the like on various geographic areas, involving the transnational expansion of common codes and practices.*" (2). She uses the metaphor of layering so as to indicate hierarchized and unequal space and thus "*a layered city involves multiple layers of actors who occupy and, in a way, share the same space.*" (2).

The concept of layers thus captures the interaction between the hierarchically arranged units of a system of social stratification, in the shopping mall. The phenomenon of layering allows us to see physical space, not merely in terms of concrete where spaces are allocated on the logic of economics through rent or one's position which is determined by the kind of work one is engaged in, but also through the specific modes

of communication that these hierarchically arranged spaces permit. At the same, the phenomenon of layering also makes it possible to look deeper into these permissions to find out that these spatial allocations don't always work in accordance with the rules of the stratified system. In this study the concept of layers becomes useful because of the nature of the site. The shopping mall is simultaneously a place of work and a place of consumption for different layers of society, resulting in the creation of different spaces within the same mall. There are demarcated spaces for both and yet neither can exist without the other in this particular site.

### **The Spectacle of the Shopping Mall:**

Shopping malls are icons of societies that are based on mass-consumption of goods and services. The nature of these shopping malls which Phadke et.al (2011) call "*privately owned public spaces*" and Voyce (2007) calls "*social fortresses*", are not equally accessible to all the sections of population to enjoy the space, thereby laying bare the exclusionary nature of capitalist spaces. The physical structure of a mall is designed in a way to maximize consumption. Fragrant ambience, goods arranged in an ordered display, a secured environment, represented by uniformed men and women security personnel, away from the hustle-bustle of the street. Different levels of parking, both in the basement as well as in the floors above the mall, further ease off worries of a life with cars in a crowded city. For those who still find it cumbersome, there is provision of paid valet parking. What enables the smooth functioning of the space, bustling with people, apart from the finance, is the presence of a wide range of service providers. This image of efficient service providers which is normalized into the everyday life, for a certain class of people, is called a spectacle in the Debordian (Debord, 2005) sense. A spectacle is a "...social relation between people, that is mediated by images" (Debord, 2005: 7), "it is not merely a decoration added to the reality" (8), but an affirmation of the

choices made in the real world, exhibited in its appearance. The message of the spectacle is: "...what appears is good, what is good appears" (9-10). In the spectacular society which is a hallmark of the neoliberal regime, realities are constructed through images, which serve the ultimate goal of capitalist production. The concept of spectacle becomes relevant to understand the shopping mall as such because the shopping mall presents an imagery of striking visual display where order and discipline are manifested and maintained. Elsheshtawy's (2008) study on the shopping malls in Dubai also uses the Debordian sense of the spectacle manifested in these consumption spaces. His study emphasizes on how people do not merely consume the spectacular images that these spaces of consumption manufacture. Giving the example of local markets, he shows there is a simultaneous existence of alternative consumption spaces, which does not figure in Dubai's global map. In a way, his work points at the existence of both the spectacular and the ordinary in everyday life. The spectacle is ordered, ordering both people and things on display. The purpose of this order is to create exhibitionary conditions, exhibiting both people and things (Bennett, 1995). Brosius' phenomenon of Dubaisation (2010) and Ong's concept of hyperbuilding (2011) further help to capture the specific nature of global aesthetics of consumption which are suited to local contexts. Thus, the spectacle is not a uniform image that is similar throughout the world, rather the spectacle is constructed in a way to suit the local tastes, thereby replicating the global form yet differing in content.

In the Indian context, shopping malls have come a long way since the first shopping mall, Crossroads opened in Mumbai in 1999. Today, shopping malls are common Indian cities and sometimes also form as sites of tourist attractions (Srivastava, 2015). The growth can be attributed to the profitability of shopping malls in real estate business and

also the popularity of retail goods in an age where commodities are produced at an alarming speed and consumption is encouraged through advertisement, credit cards, sale seasons, store-membership discounts etc. The Mosaic<sup>40</sup> Mall in Hyderabad is located in HITEC city, a software enclave created to develop the software industry in the country. This region of the city, Madhapur, is often referred to as Cyberabad which was discussed in chapter 2. Cyberabad itself is a region within a city, created as a spectacle. The kind of roads, huge buildings, apartments etc. are created to present an image so as to suit the global spectacle. It complements the other constructions in that city which includes luxurious apartments, office-spaces of multi-national corporations, restaurants, mostly catering to the people who can afford to spend.

The spectacle is inherently related to the process of consumption in this exclusive space and it is this process of consumption which reflects the process of spectacle making. Bauman (2005) talks about the advent of a society where consumption of goods is of utmost importance. He states that there has been a gradual transformation from a society based on production to that of a society based on consumption. The practice of consumption, according to Bauman is not dependent on the satisfaction of needs, but the hope and the promise that the need will be satisfied. It is a society which cannot afford consumption to rest and has to manufacture new needs and make them appear lucrative to the consumers. The poor, in such a society become flawed consumers because of their limited capacity to consume and then become the problem of this society. The freedom to choose between different and new needs every day and the capacity to satisfy them creates the hierarchy ladder in these societies. In the present times, where consumption is one of the most important processes of the everyday life, shopping malls have acquired

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<sup>40</sup> Pseudonym

more and more usefulness over time. It is in these shopping malls, that people, who can afford to satisfy their wants, needs and desires, are made to realize that promise of a happy life. The goods which serve as wants, as needs and as desires are also in fact signs of a particular kind of life style, goes without saying. Consumption in a place like that of the shopping mall provides spaces for hang-outs, taking selfies, eating-out, going to the cinema, Dandiya nights, kiosks for 'ethnic jewellery' promotional events and many other ramifications of urban cultures. It is in these spectacular spaces, through consumption that caste, class and gender are performed. The handiwork of corporate capitalism seduces the customer through events and commodities waiting to be consumed. The car displayed as part of a promotional event promises a hope to the aspiring customer, the *'mehndiwala'* assures of a 'beautiful design' in the comfort of a mall, without having to go to a bazaar in search of one. The drape of the palmist with signs of 'Om' lend authenticity to his craft. The shop-floor employee selling cosmetics assures of flawless skin by appearing to be applying the same products, the mannequins displaying clothes assure that the clothes on display are needed. Thus, the shopping mall is not merely a site of buying and selling. It creates a space through spectacles to justify and facilitate the act of consumption.

As a site of consumption, the shopping mall is thus part of the everyday lives of many young people. And yet, this site is not free from exclusion based on class. Zukin (1995) points out this principle of exclusion in showing that the sites of 'urban cultures', like that malls, restaurants, public parks which appear to be accessible to all and made for public consumption are not really free of power and discrimination. 'Exclusion' is a very evident principle in the functioning of these 'sites'. Visibility of a certain category of people and invisibility of others is implicit in the plans to beautify the city and impose

an order to make control possible. The exclusion is pertinent to emphasize because of the continuous discourse of India as an emerging market with people having increasing capacity to spend. It should be noted these people are the emerging middle class who do not constitute a numerical majority, yet are projected as such. This middle-classness is linked to aspirations and an identity which recognizes itself as part of the growing consumer culture (Brosius, 2010). This identity is also reiterated through advertisements and other forms of media where consumption practices are legitimized, thereby becoming hegemonic even when not dominant (Brosius, 2010). Sale seasons, discount hoardings, membership cards of retail outlets assure the customer that he<sup>41</sup> is getting a good deal for the money spent.

It is this the larger picture of the growth of consumption as a process of identity formation, due to the rise of disposable incomes as well constant media images legitimizing consumption practices that overpowers the fact that the sites of consumption are also sites of waged employment. If we were to imagine places of work, the idea of shopping malls paints a picture of swankiness which takes us far away from dingy sweatshops. Bright lights, shining floors, huge expanse of empty spaces, and smiling faces, characterizing shopping malls connote, at the surface level, that these spaces are much better places of work. But underneath these, they are not very different from the factory shop floor, as we will see in the sections below.

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<sup>41</sup> I used the pronoun 'he' to refer to the gendered nature of the customer. In India, it is mostly the man who is assumed to be the primary decision maker of major purchases.

## LAYERED SPACES: MANIFESTATIONS

### **The Layered Space in The Shopping Mall:**

A piece of news, dated 31<sup>st</sup> of October, 2016 on mid-day.com stated that a man was denied entry to the Phoenix Market City mall in Mumbai, because he visited the mall along with his family in his own auto-rickshaw and wanted it to park in the parking area of the mall. He said that while it was okay for thousands of people to visit the mall in an auto-rickshaw, it was not okay to come in one's own. He is reported to have gone back and come again to the mall in another auto-rickshaw. The driver's social status is determined by the vehicle he rides. The shopping mall is an exclusive space, primarily a place designed as a site for consumption for a particular class of people.

The elaborate maps (shown in the appendix) placed at the entrance of the Mosaic meticulously locate each store in the mall as well as point out the other areas of leisure like the garden area, the food court, the cinema theatre, perfectly understandable to a person who has visited the mall primarily to consume the space constructed by the mall. But there is no map to read the same physical structure as a place of work. Thus, the mall is designed in a way so as to keep its nature as a place of work hidden behind the curtains. Another part of the mall is accessible only to the service class employed with the mall. This chapter sees the mall as a map to understand it as a place of work, that is not a priority for the builders or the store owners of the mall. Adjacent to the main entrance of the mall, is another gateway which is narrower, less fancy in terms of style of gate and the entry and exit is strictly controlled. The passage is only through showing identity proof issued by the stores. So, each employee of a store is given an identity proof which she displays to enter the mall. Once one enters this passage, she is led by a flight of stairs to enter the back of the mall. This area has staircases as well as elevators. Each floor is

connected with the back of the mall which leads to every store. This stretch of the mall which is hidden from the consumers is where the work force of the mall is in action. This physical differentiation in the structure of the mall, which hides or restricts the view from the spectacle that the mall constructs every day, leads us to the process of the layering of the space that the mall offers. It differentiates between the mundane and the spectacular, and in a way show how both the mundane and the spectacular exist simultaneously.

In this context of the mundane and the spectacular, Ritzer's<sup>42</sup> concept of non-person becomes important again. This idea of a non-person is used by Sam (2012) as an internal global non-person for describing those who have access to global spaces of work but not consumption. Globalization and globalisation produce layered city and thus arise three important questions: a) Who is included or excluded from the global? b) Who is/are the actor/ set of actors who enforce such an exclusion and c) how is such exclusion achieved in spatial terms? In answering these questions, she shows that while one category of people is considered global, another category of people, who contribute equally significantly to the processes of globalization are not seen as part of the global as they don't fit the image of a global city. Through her study this distinction between the two categories is shown in spatial terms. Her field site was HITEC City which was created in Hyderabad as a knowledge hub with infrastructure that could cater to a global world with access to global network and global finance. To further understand the spatial exclusion, she uses Goffman's concept of "*non-person: a person who is simultaneously included and excluded from a setting*" because of inferior social status. (6). She further distinguishes two kinds on non-persons in the context of globalization: a) Internal Global non-person- these are the people who have access to global work but not global

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<sup>42</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter.

consumption, for example, a cab driver employed with an MNC, b) Precarious Global non-person- these are the people who have no access to either global work or global consumption. The non-persons are relegated to the background because they don't fit the global image of a developed, modernized society. The access to the segregated space is determined whether one is a global person or a global non-person. She categorizes global persons into those people who are employed in higher positions with the MNCs and fit the global image very well. They are not bound to a place and travel globally. HITEC City in Hyderabad can be thought of as one coherent unit but has multiple over-lapping spatial layers. The topmost layer is visible as a spectacle and accessible by the global persons, the layer below constitutes the global non-persons and this layer is the least visible, and the third layer is where all three set of actors interact.

To employ Sam's terminology of global non-persons, the retail shop-floor employees would fit into the category of internal global non-persons who have access to the malls and its products but they are not the targeted consumers<sup>43</sup> of the constructed spectacle of the goods and services on display and up for sale. These non-persons in the present study often consider the spectacular city as a site of opportunities for growth and therefore migrate to the city, in this case, Hyderabad sensing opportunities for employment in the informal sector (Mukherjee, 2009). Migration to the cities is both due to push and pull factors, which can be described as lack of personal development in the nearby smaller town and districts of Hyderabad and emergence of new opportunities in the service sector with the creation of Cyberabad, acting as pull factors. The expansion of cities is therefore a result of migration, influenced by capitalist developments in the city (Sassen, 1988).

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<sup>43</sup> I do not mean to imply that the shop-floor employees have no identity as a consumer. However, on the shop-floor that identity is minimal, and the identity of a service-provider is the most prominent one.

The city gives hope of a better condition of life, and in the process creates non-persons who are at the margins as beneficiaries of the opportunities of the city. It is the city which experiences the varied processes of globalization. Migration into the cities can be seen as an implication of the centralization and decentralization processes taking place at a global level, with people and jobs moving to the peripheries for as the economy transitions from industrial to a post-industrial, service-based economy (Sassen, 1994).

In the sections below, we shall see how there are layers constructed and maintained between the shop-floor employees and the consumers as well as amongst the employees and how gender plays an important role in constructing intersecting layers. These layers therefore can show how non-persons and persons interact on the shop-floor amidst the already set physical boundaries by the mall authorities and the employer brands. The functioning of these several dimensions of layering, will show how Sam's (2012) category of internal global non-person is complicated through workplace relationships.

### **Layering between the Staff Area and the Customer Area:**

One of the most visible forms of layering in the mall premises is that between the staff and the customer. I use the term *staff* to indicate employees, particularly those on the shop-floor of the retail outlets. They usually refer to themselves as staff or CCEs, CCAs and so on. One of the important markers of this is uniforms which is an important part of job of the staff. This uniform is sometimes only a dress-code having certain prescribed colors for men and women employees. It is this uniform or dress code that makes visible for the employers the presence of employees in areas of the mall that they are asked to not visit by the mall management as well as the store owner. In the Lefebvrian sense (1974), the representation of space according to the mall designers, does not give space

to the employees in the vision of the mall. According to one of the leasing managers of Mosaic, Mr. A, the mall does not want any nuisance because of the employees. If the employees do not have any instructions to be followed regarding their movement within the mall, it would cause indiscipline, thereby causing trouble to the customers. The conversation is interesting, because of the subtle manner in which it reveals the hierarchy, embedded in the physical space of the mall:

*A: See, the stores should train its employees in a particular way. We do not want any nuisance due to an employee. They cannot go wherever they want in the mall premises. For example, they just cannot open their lunch boxes and have lunch in the food court during lunch hours.*

*I: Why?*

*A: It won't look good, you know.*

*I: So, during the working hours, employees have to be in their respective stores only?*

*A: Not at all. We have a retailers' room in the basement near the parking space, where employees can have lunch. It is basically a space for recreation.*

(Interview with Mr. A, Leasing Manager, Mosaic)

The same mall which is rejuvenating and offering a “*complete package*” to the consumers, is constraining as a work place. Mr. A's remark that “*it won't look good*” if employees start eating out of their lunch boxes” in the food court can be understood in two ways. Firstly, uniformed employees, disrupt the spectacle of that of a food court in a mall, frequented by consumers who pay to buy food and hence deserve the space more than the employees who don't pay Secondly, “recreation” seems to have different connotations for employees and consumers. While for the customers, it means enjoying

the view of the lake which is visible from the mall and the open spaces, for the employees it refers to a retailers' windowless room in the basement, near the parking. However, the distance between the stores and the basement is too much to be actually used by the employees, as they have short duration lunch breaks.

As one enters the staff area from the customers' area, there is a vast change in the ambience. Bright lights, shining floors, empty spaces are replaced by dim lights, dirty floors, seating space cramped with lockers, cartons of clothes, and cafeteria with morsels of food on the table, used plates piled high on an over-packed bucket and walls adorned with winners of various in-store competitions. The walls also have huge boards describing what is expected of an employee, and they also enlist the names of high performers in different categories. Everyone seems to be in a hurry to complete her meal and then may be gain a ten-minute window to relax, either in the garden, overlooking the lake, which is hardly ever accessed or sitting on the stair case of the staff area. The staff area is strictly not accessible to the customers. It is in these staff areas, inside the stores that the employees are expected to relax. Some of the respondents go to the food court or the garden area of the mall. But the act of going there is itself a cumbersome process. They have to go towards the back of their stores, collect their phones or wallets, pass through security frisking and exit the stores, only to enter again through the emergency exit, but this time directly into the mall and not their stores. The usage of these spaces of the mall is highly dependent on the crowd and the staff don't visit the garden area when the area is too crowded:

*I: ..... during the lunch –break, you go to the garden area of the mall?*

*SI: Yes Madam.*

*I: During the tea-break also?*

*S1: No Madam. The tea-break is only for 30 mins and it is also crowded at that time. So, we don't go. We have to come from the cafeteria early, as in the evening, more customers start coming in.*

[S1, employee of Store Spot]

S7, an employee with Brand Elle tries to provide a rationale behind the practices of not leaving one's counter vacant. She suggests that she can go to the food court or other recreational areas of the mall during her lunch break. But that may result in her own loss of customers and hence sales. Therefore, for her, though the access may be possible in terms of time in hand left out of the lunch-break, it may not be wise as it might affect sales. It is easier and more convenient to stay in one's own counter and not leave it as much as possible:

*I: Where do you have your lunch?*

*S7: Upstairs. We have our lunch room there.*

*I: Can you go out as well?*

*S7: Yes, we can go out during the lunch-break. After finishing our work, we can go out.*

*I: Can you access the garden area and other area?*

*S7: Yes, we can. But we have to go in time and return in time. But we stay in our counters so that our sale increases and is not affected. If we achieve target it will be beneficial for us only. [S7, Brand Elle]*

As a physical structure the mall is layered in terms of who should be visible and who should be not and there is a clear separation between the mall as a place of work and a

place of consumption. One is that of the everyday mundane life the other is the spectacular and the entertaining. The differences are clearly marked through uniforms, the hierarchical relationship between the customers and the service provider, food consumed, and different place of relaxation and leisure.

These layers also have a temporal dimension as the day comes to an end, one sees the transformation of the spectacle of the mall. It is at the night time, usually after 11pm when maintenance activities take place. The cleaning of the floor with machines, cleaning of aquariums, disposal of garbage, entry of new goods, polishing of glass panes, take place. The construction of temporary sets for a promotional event also take place after the day is over. One of the most striking displays of this transformation is the change in the parking space of the malls. More bicycles and scooters are visible in the employee side of the parking space<sup>44</sup> of the mall as the other parked cars of customers move out gradually.

### **Layering Amongst the Employees:**

The accessibility to the same space amongst employees located in different ranks in the job hierarchy is defined by their position in the job hierarchy. During a casual conversation, one of the Assistant Store Managers said employees can go wherever they want in the mall and that his store did not impose any restrictions, and this was in contradiction to the rules expressed by shop-floor employees. The rules of accessing spaces meant for recreation like the garden area or the food court are not the same for all levels of employees. For example, in the above section we saw that there are usually rules for employees to not leave the store or their counters. However, these rules are not

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<sup>44</sup> The parking space for the employees and the customers are segregated.

similarly practiced by all the employees, across ranks. Employees in the higher rung of job hierarchy usually don't follow rules strictly. Usage of cell phones, customer entries and food courts are quite common for store managers. This implies that the rules of the mall and the shop-floor effect employees only partially. The mall management team usually consists of around twenty to twenty-five people only while the jobs like that of "IT", security, house-keeping are out-sourced. It is the leasing department of the mall that is responsible for leasing out space on hire. The retail owners then lease in space to set up their stores in the mall. The retail establishment is itself a hierarchized structure, with store manager, assistant store manager, department manager, team leader, customer care executives, cashiers and so on. The house-keeping and security jobs are out-sourced here as well. The layers amongst the employees thus exist along different aspects: 1) nature of work, 2) position in the job hierarchy, and 3) gender of the employee.

**1) Nature of work:**

The shop-floor employees are definitive and assertive when it comes to enlist the work that they are required to do on the shop-floor. They are required to do a number of things on the shop-floor which involves physical labour. It is not only the act of trying to sell a product to a potential customer or helping her with her required sizes of merchandise, but also keeping clothes arranged in an orderly fashion, cleaning their own counters and moving heavy stacks of clothes from the stock-room to the shop-floor and back. However, they distance themselves from the house-keeping staff who are engaged in the general cleaning of the store:

*I: So, you do the dusting of the store?*

*S7: [vehemently] No. We don't do the dusting of the full store. Why will we do it? There is house-keeping staff for that. We do dusting only of our counters. Like my counter is Exotic. I do its dusting, neatly, then do the counting and its sizing....*

[S7, Brand Elle]

*I: Is cleaning also your responsibility?*

*S5: Yes. Cleaning means only dusting the products and keeping the counter clean. Rest, is not my job.*

[S5, Stop Store]

The retail shop floor employees, clearly differentiate themselves from the house-keeping staff. Although are involved in cleaning their respective counters, and dusting clothes on display, they construct a hierarchy between their work and that of the house-keeping staff, placing themselves higher than the house-keeping staff. This dichotomy between one's counter and other common spaces points at the clear division between the public and the private. One considers her counter as the private while the other common space in the shop floor are thought of as public. Similarly, the house keeping staff might consider the shop floor space as their private space while the space of the mall outside the store might be considered as public. This chain of constructions points at the ways how public and private are socially, culturally and spatially defined (Abraham, 2010). The meanings given to differences in the nature of work also points at the ways through which casteism, associated with one's work, gets played out in these modern spaces of work.

By casteism, I refer to the meanings given to differences in the kind of work one does, thereby constructing hierarchies based on those differences and forming series of acceptable and of polluting<sup>45</sup> paid-work, related to cleaning. The sense of purity and pollution underlies these meanings and hierarchy. Traditionally, the ambit of the caste system has associated pollution and therefore low status with cleaning work like that of cleaning toilets, drains or clearing away of carcasses. This association of low status with one's work gets replicated even in the neoliberal spaces, where one would like to imagine that religion and caste do not have any significance.

Retail employees construct hierarchy between cleaning their counters which is a part of their work while label 'house-keeping' as not their work and thereby making the general cleaning of the shop-floor as inferior. It becomes all the more interesting because most of the respondents in the present study are from backward castes<sup>46</sup>. According to Mr. R.K who runs his own manpower agency, people with better incomes do not take up janitor jobs, rather people take up these jobs because of poverty. On asking further about caste background of his employees and the nature of work they opted for, he expressed that people who are already working as cleaners come and join because of better pay.

What follows from this construction of superiority and inferiority, is a belief that house-keeping staff are capable of stealing the goods on display at the shop-floor, which leads to mistrust. Apart from othering the house-keeping staff on the shop-floor as a group of employees who are engaged in low-level work and are capable of stealing, the trust issue

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<sup>45</sup> Pollution refers to low status work, usually associated with impurity and hence untouchability.

<sup>46</sup> The chapter on methodology has details of the background the of the respondents.

also implies a formation of neoliberal subjectivity<sup>47</sup> on the part of the retail employees where each employee is responsible for her own success and achievement in the workplace. By not trusting the house-keeping staff, the employee owns up the responsibility of her counter by locking it up:

*I: ... whose responsibility it is to keep the counter clean?*

*S4: it is my responsibility.*

*I: are there other people who come to clean?*

*S4: Other people, if I believe then it is ok, but if I don't trust them, then I don't give the keys. Brand person has the responsibility of the counter. So, I have to return the keys to the security, compulsory. If any customer comes, then security gives the key, or else they don't give.*

*I: I was asking about the cleaning staff...*

*S4: No Madam, the brand person only does the cleaning of the counter.*

*I: So, you clean all the glass counter?*

*S4: Yes [obviously!] I use Collins to clean the glass surface.*

*I: So, for the floor, is there someone else?*

*S4: Yes, for the floor, there is housekeeping. But my counter is my responsibility.*

[S4, Spot Store]

The practices usually associated with the institution of caste are not only visible in the actual labour practices, as seen above, but can be seen in structure of the mall itself. As seen in the map (appendix) and in the earlier section on layered spaces in the shopping mall, the space of work is invisibilized through creation of employee- only spaces, while

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<sup>47</sup> It is elaborated in the section on Devalorisation and Valorisation.

the space of consumption is hyper-visualized through spectacles. The practices like that of untouchability are rewired in the neoliberal regime, dominated by consumption. The rewiring produces the poor, by virtue of his or her incapacity to be the appropriate consumer, as the new untouchable. This poor might be the unwanted or incapable consumer or the service provider working as shop-floor employee, as janitor or as a security guard. Thus, practices of caste, get replicated in terms of class practices, keeping intact the exclusionary practices.

## **2) Position in the Job Hierarchy:**

One's position in the job hierarchy is an important criterion in the shop-floor with respect to accessing space and enjoying leeway in the shop-floor rules as we saw above. There is a need for recognition and appreciation by those who the retail sales staff think are their superiors, which sometimes leads to minor squabbles among the sales staff in the process of vying for attention from their senior colleagues. Senior colleagues are respected and looked up to and it is made sure that the respect is manifested in obvious ways, either through wishing respectfully every day or following instructions minutely. For the shop-floor employees, senior colleagues review their performance and hence they have to be shown reverence.

The importance of the position in the hierarchy, even if temporary, is evident in the following instance from the field: Every morning, stores usually have a "daily briefing" session where in each department's members are called and briefed about the previous day's performance and the following day's targets. In one of these "daily briefing" sessions which I was allowed to attend, a sales staff was scolded by the department manager because he was laughing and thus was not showing seriousness which, a daily

briefing session demands. It was later that I came to know that the person who was the Department Manager was actually one of the team members of the department, and he was only assigned to do the briefing for the day as the Department Manager was on leave. The incident shows that the temporary Department Manager had accepted his job role and responsibility, even if it was just for a day. By occupying the position, he was aware of his authority over his colleagues. He was successful in creating a boundary on the basis of his position and hence did not hesitate in reprimanding his former team member. While the team member who laughed, could not gauge the seriousness with which his team mate was performing the role of a department manager. He was unsuccessful in drawing the boundary between his former team-member and the present department manager, thereby being subjected to the reprimand. This positionality of superior-inferior is also visible in the mechanisms of surveillance that function on the shop-floor, as seen in the earlier chapters. However, we need to see the positions as continuous chains of relationships. The surveilling employees are themselves governed by the rules of the capitalist system, and at the same time govern those below them in the job hierarchy, thereby producing, being subservient to and simultaneously maintaining forms of control in the work space (Burawoy, 1985).

While the above incident points out that employees constantly create and maintain hierarchies on the shop-floor, there are also layers created on the basis of difference and not necessarily on the basis of the position one occupies in the job hierarchy on the shop floor. For example, during a lunch break, the group I was having lunch with unanimously stated, referring to the employees in the cosmetic section, "*We don't talk to them, they are different.*" This construction of difference was on the basis of the fact that the employees in the cosmetic section were employed by the brand and not the store.

However, this did not hold true in all cases, because they were other employees also who were brand employees but formed a part of this group. So, construction of layers need not be always be defined. Any difference, be it in terms of different brands or different products, might be used to construct layers on the shop-floor.

### **3) Gendered Layering**

We have seen in the above sections that Sam's (2012) conceptualization of internal global-non-person who has access to global work but not global consumption is complicated by the hierarchies in the category itself. Gender further complicates the layers. For Massey (1994) space is always tied with gender relations. Space is not something which is void but lends substance to the material objects in it, for example, sewing machines at home or at workshops have different meanings. Space and Place are gendered thoroughly. Sen and Silverman (2013), Massey (ibid.) agree on the multiple meanings of both space and place. To put it simply, space is more abstract and refers to a socially constructed character, while place can mean a physical location, whose meaning, however, is constantly subject to interpretation. Using these meanings, to understand the gendered nature of space and place, Phadke et al. (2011) McDowell (1997) can be helpful. For example, as places, there can be bars that cater to women and these places can mean a place for friendships or camaraderie for women. However, bar as a space, especially in the Indian context can hinder women's claim to respectability because of the connotations usually associated with the bar- loose sense of morality for example (Phadke et.al, 2011). It indicates transgression from patriarchal dictates, and in any patriarchal society, women should not transgress! Similarly studying the banking sector in London in the 1990s, McDowell (1997) tells us that many women were visible in paid employment, especially in the financial sector. However, the banks she studied

showed sexism in terms of workplace cultures. There a place which visibilized women in terms of their presence, as a space was not democratic from the perspective of gender. The meaning of this gendering is both reflected and affected by the societies that we are in. Gender forms an important means of layering on different levels. It defines the employee's relationship with customers as well as relationships amongst themselves. Physically, the gender of the employee defines the relationship with their work-space as well as the larger context of the city.

The most visible form of the role of gender is the work-place friendships which is primarily based on the gender of the employees. Usually women and men employees have different groups which is evident during the lunch-breaks, where each group eats separately. The groups on the basis of gender does not imply that women and men have no interaction, rather women employees tend to have lunch or spend their breaks together while men have their own groups. The shopping mall as a work-space functions as a gendered space because of the spatial practices adopted by the women employees. The women employees, for example, usually do not visit the food stall across the street, opposite to the mall, unlike their male counterparts who usually go there for a smoke or tea or to have a meal. "*Mall ke us taraf*" [The street across the mall] thus forms the social boundary that women employees tend to maintain. It connotes a boundary as the space outside the mall is constructed as a space not suitable for women employees, particularly because it is men who often frequent those spaces for smoking in their free time. They also justify it by saying that they carry their own food, so there is no need to go out. This act of constantly negotiating with challenges can be seen in the relationship that the women employees have with the larger city, as a result of the nature of their work.

### **The City and Women Employees**

The fact that women employees do not think it is required to go out of the mall for food or tea tells us about the nature of gendered space of the city. To put it in Phadke's (2011) words:

“... space is what one might call an embodied experience, that is, it is experienced viscerally through the bodies we inhabit: male, female, rich, poor, old, young, white, black, brown, able-bodied and differently abled. It is not a neutral void to be filled up but is differently defined by the various people who inhabit it. This means that men and women experience it in different ways, making any given space integrally gendered.” (66).

Within the dimension of gendered layering, there is a sub-layering of class when we look at the HITEC region of the city. One of the examples is that of the SHE shuttles that provides transportation to women employed in the IT sector. It was launched in 2015 by the Society for the Cyberabad Security Council with the Telangana government and the Cyberabad Police in 2015. It started as a public-private partnership so as women employees of the IT sector can be ensured of safety and convenience in their daily commute to and from work. This shuttle system is accessible through mobile phone applications only by employees of those IT firms who are registered with the Cyberabad Security Council, assuming that all the beneficiaries have access to a “smart phones”. At the same time, women working in the retail sector or in house-keeping of the large office spaces that occupy the HITEC region, are not given any special provisions in the daily commute. According to a Times of India Report (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/lack-of-buses-hits-she-shuttle->

[service-in-it-zone/articleshow/59766286.cms](http://service-in-it-zone/articleshow/59766286.cms)), there are around 4 buses, each having a capacity of fifty, whereas the approximate number of women employed in the IT sector is ten thousand, thereby rendering the service inadequate. The report also shows that the mobile application is faulty and often women end up using cab services because of irregularity of bus service as the cab services like Ola and Uber are faster and more reliable even though expensive. The instance of She shuttles shows that the State is engaged in providing customized transport facilities for women employees in the IT corridor of the city, thereby trying to facilitate commutation at odd hours, usually associated with jobs in the IT sector. However, this engagement has an inherent class bias. Women are employed in the IT corridor not only in the white collared jobs but also in the service class of house-keeping staff, shopping mall employees and security guards who maintain the infrastructure that constitutes the IT corridor of Cyberabad. Therefore, in the process of customization of services like safe commutation, a class of people are invisibilized in the planning process itself.

The idea of safety is constructed by women employees as well as their employers who adopt certain measures which they think ensure safety to their employees:

*I: How is the interview done?*

*S7: They ask normal questions like self-introduction, about family etc. Then they ask which store would be nearer to my home. Since my house is near Mosaic, I have been placed at the Mosaic store. They see that. They also see our safety. Had it been far away I would have thought whether to take up this job or not. Now I easily reach in time, in 15 minutes, attend the customers and make sales also. [S7, employed with Brand Elle]*

Apart from measures like placing women employees near their place of stay, which might be true in some cases only, employers also have morning shift for women employees, that is they reach the store earlier than their men counterparts and leave earlier by 8pm. The concern for safety is also manifest in a conversation with one of the respondents' father:

*I: It is nice that your daughters have got jobs here in Hyderabad*

*F: What nice Madam? These are jobs? No life at all. They leave early in the morning and by the time they reach home it is too late. It is not safe for girls. They also have to stand throughout the day. Once I get a job, I will ask both of them to leave their jobs and take rest at home.*

*I: But S2 wants to pursue accounting...*

*F: Yes Madam. But she can do it only after passing 12<sup>th</sup>. She has failed 12<sup>th</sup> twice. Ismail Sir got her this job as 10<sup>th</sup> pass was enough, but she has to take rest and also study. It is not safe for her.*

*I: What is not safe for her?*

*F: This is a new city; we have shifted here recently. How can you trust people? You don't know who is thinking what. They reach home also very late; it is not safe.*

[S2's father; S2 is a trainee who works with Store Maximum]

S2's father concerns reflect the travails of women who traverse the nightscape during times that are usually not suited for women. Patel (2010) in her study of call centre employees points out how the night shift is usually referred to as the hooker shift, so women working in the night shift face questions of morality. Usually, women's presence and mobility beyond the confines of the homes are regulated by a time-scape which puts

them under surveillance. Even though the narratives around women using the streets have been changing and nightscapes are slowly accepting women as citizens and not just sex-workers or bar-dancers, yet women have to be under male supervision when treading the nightscape. Patel opines that even though the night shift employment reshapes the narrative around women's mobility, surveillance continues.

Rutherford and Wekerle (2013) use the term "transit captive" referring to women in their study of the Toronto city, who depended on public transport to go to work. They argue that this has effect on women reaching late at work and having to choose paid work closer to home even if that means lesser income. They also point out an interesting fact: women who are the heaviest users of the public transportation system end up paying more as the Toronto system charges the same fare regardless of the length of the trip.

Out of twenty-two respondents in this study, fifteen come to the place of work by bus, while one has to change two auto-rickshaws to reach the place of work. The distance covered by these women is somewhere between five to thirty kilometers one way, making it a travel of ten- sixty kilometers per day. So far from being "*transit captives*", the women in the present study not only do not have their place of work near their place of stay, but also organize their daily commute in a way where their timings of leaving their homes, reaching the bus stop, travelling time, reaching the destination is meticulously planned as a part of the daily routine: Migrants usually prioritize housing close to the workplace.

*I: What are your duty hours?*

*P: 9 hours Madam. 10am-7pm*

*I: So, when do you leave from home?*

*P: I leave around 7:40-7:50 in the morning. Take bus from Balanagar to Pathancheru, then another bus from Pathancheru to JNTU and then from JNTU to Mosaic Mall. The bus drops me in front of the mall. I manage to reach the mall by 10 am.*

[P, Store Maximum]

The concern for safety and planning of every day commute points at the fact, that while the mall might have gender-neutral prescribed rules about the access to different areas within the mall, the functioning of those rules leads to gendered differences in accessibility to physical spaces around the mall and in their mobility in the city.

It also points at constructed dichotomy between the public and the private spheres in terms of safety and negotiations. The meaning of the public is usually easy to understand in terms of a dichotomous relationship with the private. And this dichotomy has been central to feminist writing (Pateman 1983). Feminists opposing this dichotomous categorization opt for a “*differentiated social order within the which the various dimensions are distinct but not separate or opposed..... Nevertheless, women and men, and the private and the public, are not necessarily in harmony.*” (Pateman, 1983:136). Phadke (2010) who has looked at women in the urban public spaces says that this dichotomous categorization itself constructs women as inferior to men and relegates them to the private domain while making men the masters of the public domain. The dichotomy tries to put the domains of the public and the private into fixed categories thereby restricting their fluid character (Phadke, 2010). Talking about the new spaces of consumption like malls and coffee shops, Phadke et.al (2011) say that these spaces cannot be called as public but private because only a few people can have unlimited

access to it. Exemplifying the nature of these new spaces of consumption, saleswomen in malls are well dressed and often speak to their customers in English. However, their situations at home or in their private spaces given the long hours of work, they are put on a questionable terrain. Moreover, wearing “knee-length skirts” at work place is also an issue of contention. Paromita Vohra’s documentary ‘Q2P’ (2007) is an important work to understand the meanings of the private and the public for women in the city. Through her documentary which is about public toilets in Mumbai, Vohra points out an important but ignored fact- where are the public toilets for women? Often hidden either due to their obscure location or men’s sabotage of the public toilets meant for women invisibilizes women’s need to use the toilet in the public spaces. Women, thus have to resort to various measures to not to use the toilet- either practice bladder control or relieve themselves in locations which might not be safe for them. As shown in the documentary, women’s needs are ignored in the larger discourse of creating public toilets in an urban centre.

During one of the many conversations, shop-floor employee affirmed the complex negotiation that she has to make to work in the retail sector. Her family were not aware of the fact that she did not wear *hijab* at work. The work rules did not permit her to wear a *hijab* and so she negotiated by lying to her family. Moreover, she considered the work place to be her second home. There was another respondent who lied to her family, because retail sector work was not considered to be the ‘ideal’ work for women, by her families, but she did it because it gave her good money and also a chance to be in the city with her “boy-friend”. These instances are interesting because they draw a continuum between the public and the private spheres, and the negotiations that are carried out so as to maintain a balance.

### DEVALORISATION AND VALORISATION

Quite often, low skilled and low paid work is placed in the lower rungs of the hierarchy in the global labour market thereby devalorizing certain kinds of jobs. Sassen (1998) in the context of the globalisation of the labour flows asks a very important question as to why a “transnational system that is so diffused need to have its management and finance so concentrated?” (Xii). Her study makes powerless immigrant women visible in the larger picture of globalisation as “they emerge as the systemic equivalent of the off-shore proletariat in the global city” (86). Sassen asserts that globalisation creates jobs which are hierarchized especially for immigrants. Some jobs are highly paid, more visible globally and involve a more flexible movement from one part of the world to another, and hence these works are more valorised and presented as symbols of a global economy as they cater to the strategic sector of finance. There is also another category of works that involves lowly paid and manual labour that gets created in the process of globalisation, which is devalorised. Though a part of the global economy, these labourers are relegated to the background in the picture of globalisation. Most of the time, these devalorised labourers are immigrant women. These immigrant women form a large part of the cheap labour supply to the cities like New York and take on the roles of nannies, maids, nurses and so on. The fact that they form a significant part of the economy is often ignored due to its invisibility. Devalorisation cannot be simply linked to the economy but also other factors like globalisation of cultural activities and identity formation and the growing presence of racial labour market segmentation. Devalorisation, thus, is a produced outcome of the polarising tendencies of the global processes. This polarising tendency can take different forms in spatial organisation of the urban economy, structures for social reproduction and organisation of the labour processes. Amidst these global changes, the immigrant woman who serves the

professional white woman finds herself in a precarious situation. On the one hand, she is invisibilized and disempowered while serving the people in the strategic sector and on the other hand, her access to wages, a demand for “feminised” jobs alters the gender hierarchies within her family. She makes contributions towards the upward social mobility of the members of her family, by educating her children and providing for the elderly.

The rules of the shop-floor work towards keeping the shop-floor employees in their designated space so as not to disturb the bigger picture of the shopping mall, thereby devalorizing them. These rules act towards making women employees get doubly devalorised, due to their employment and their gender, as we saw in the chapter. Where the process of devalorisation comes from the capitalist system of relegating these employees to the background of the spectacle, a valorisation of these jobs comes from the employees themselves. In the capitalist, exploitative system, the job of a shop-floor assistant helps employees to achieve their aspirations, which are themselves products of the economic context they are situated in. The high rate of attrition indicates how these jobs serve as the source of income till something else is achieved. When the employees intend to be in the same job and aim for higher positions in the job hierarchy, the job promises a lot of hope. The concept of “*neo-liberal subjectivities*” becomes important here. Neoliberalism, as an approach to economic policies adopted by the capitalist systems throughout the world, has effects on the constitution and reconstitution of subjectivities of those experiencing it. With focus on consumption and its glorification, on maximising productivity of people and machines, it creates subjects who themselves strive for these ideals. Setting and achieving of economic goals, being in control of one’s career and calculating each step for personal well-being underline neoliberal selves. The

fundamental opposition, between labour and exploitative capital, is therefore shrouded in terms of personal success of the labour. Giddens (1991) also talks about the idea of personal success and independence through his concept of individualisation which emphasised on self-responsibility specially in the period of late modernity marked by a movement away from state welfare measures to a capitalist era where each individual creates her own success. Rose (1991) underlines the role of power relationships in creating this individualised self. He uses the Foucauldian concept of governmentality to show how emotions, notions of success and identities are engineered to produce subjectivities that complement the existing capitalist structure.

Gooptu (2009) asserts that in a neo-liberal society, marked with a striking importance of consumption, these jobs do provide a means to an end; this end is to be a part of the neo-liberal regime, and strive to be in control of their own careers. Negotiations, then, become a process by which one can carve out a sense of self, with limited resources in possession. It gives the rural women an opportunity to build a career for themselves by participating in the EWRC program that has been discussed in earlier chapters. Being from economically deprived family backgrounds with paucity of educational and of economic avenues, the program gives a hope towards upward mobility. The fact that it also provides free accommodation and food for three months and an assurance of a job at the end of three months, is an important incentive. The parents of these women participants also do not hesitate to send their daughters away for three months because of these facilities. Giving an example of one of the participants, an official of the program gave an example of a young woman whose father died when she was young. She joined the program and now she earned around ten thousand every month and as a result is able to take care of the family. "Being a girl", the official asserted, it is a huge thing to have

a job and take of the family. Valorisation is either manufactured through training before one is employed or during the employment where possibilities of upward mobility<sup>48</sup> open up.

The self-valorisation has to be understood in the larger context of attaining middle class-status. We know that the notion of middle class-ness in India is very complicated, with no clear lines, separating the different class groups (Upadhyaya 2016, Fernandes 2006, Saavala 2012). Using a Bordieusian framework, Upadhyaya (2016) points out that classes are constantly under construction and using different resources, in terms of education or material goods or consumption practices that members try to cement their position in middle-classness or at least in their claims to middle classness. In the context of my study, the upward mobility experienced in the attainment of material goods like smart phones, television sets or clothes from the stores where they work at special employee rates, reassert their belief their economically bettered lives than their parents. Although, the benefits are transient in nature and do not seem to have the financial security like that of a government job, in terms of medical benefits or retirement benefits, yet the fact of experiencing the neoliberal culture by working in it and also consuming its offerings, there is an effort to make and maintain the identity of prosperity. The experiences of prosperity do not imply stability, which also to some extent explains the high rate of attrition in the retail sector, or the horizontal mobility across different stores or different skills, for example shifting from apparel sector to cosmetic brands or beauty salons.

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<sup>48</sup> Upward mobility refers to betterment in one's economic situation.

## CONCLUSION

It is not uncommon for work-spaces to have hierarchies built into their organisational system. What makes the hierarchy on a shop-floor different from other workspaces like that of an office or a factory is that this hierarchy is also based on a site of consumption. The layers of the hierarchy are flexible which make the boundaries permeable and the rules flexible. By presenting these different layers between the employees and the customers as well as amongst the employees themselves, and the daily negotiations of employees, the chapter shows, how the mall serves both as the spectacular site of consumption as well as the mundane place of work. Retail shop floor employees, particularly women, navigate through this continuum of work and leisure. Looking at the experiences of women employees, the chapter defines the series of negotiations, in time management and spatial access that particularly women have to make in their domestic and professional lives. By using the concept of *non-person* to describe the labour in these consumption spaces it points at what goes into constituting this *non-person*, which proceeds to show the relationships that the different categories of non-persons within a site, can have amongst themselves. The category of non-person which is so crucial in the service industry in the context of neo-liberalism is given a context as well as meanings. Through the relationship between customers and employees and that amongst employees, there emerges a simultaneous devalorisation and valorisation of the work of the retail employee.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

*A report in the Hindu Business line, dated 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2017 stated that IKEA, the Swedish founded multi-national group that sells furniture and other household things, has collaborated with the India Development Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme, under the Disha for Women programme in Telangana. It has agreed to train three hundred and fifty women for a career in the retail sector and employ one hundred and fifty women, in its store in Hyderabad, in the first stage of the pilot project. The CEO of the IKEA foundation, in the same report, stated that their organisation believed that women are the most important catalysts of change in the family and therefore by empowering women, they hoped to better children's education and health and futures.*

(<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/ikea-to-train-women-for-careers-in-retail-sector/article9937286.ece>)

### GLOBALIZATION, NEOLIBERAL SUBJECTIVITIES AND GENDERED LABOUR

Given the abysmal data on women's participation in the labour force which is around 27%, ( [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/India/Female\\_labor\\_force\\_participation/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/India/Female_labor_force_participation/)) , the above piece of news gives hope in such a situation. The fact that women who do not have technical or advanced educational qualification, can get into waged labour, which often leads to material changes in their lives, can be understood as the benefit of neoliberal capitalism for the people at the social, economic and educational margins. However, a deeper understanding of the apparent achievement of one of the feminist goals of gaining

waged employment for women can lay bare the unequal relations of this form of employment.

With reference to the spatial and temporal specificities of capitalism and feminism around the world, Fraser, (2013) asserted that the evolution of feminism in some sense converged with the evolution of capitalism from State-managed to a disorganized, transnational and post-Fordist capitalism. The basis of this convergence was that both of these were against traditional authority- be it patriarchy or traditional economy. However, in the course of time, capitalism used women's participation in the waged labour force to further its own goals of cheap and flexible labour power. Feminism thus became 'the new spirit of capitalism' (210).

Harris (2003) explicates how the category of young womanhood is increasingly used by governments and corporates to show that young women are capable and empowered of making their own career choices. Failures of underperforming groups of women can be attributed to their personal qualities of laziness while successes of women can be credited to personal qualities of talent. The creation of this 'young women' subjectivity throws a light on what women are capable of rather than questioning the existing systems of gender, race, class and caste and how they function to produce different hierarchies for women. McRobbie (2008) discusses how ideas like women's empowerment and women's choice have been appropriated by consumer culture to build a narrative where women are seen as active agents, without being subjugated in the classic patriarchal sense. They can no longer be relegated to the background when it comes to education, career or fashion. In creating this idea of a woman in a postfeminist context, patriarchy is presented in the garb of career choices and independence. This apparent independence

however is problematic, as it does not tackle the existing inequalities, rather wraps in them in a different package. In the context of the United States, Rottenberg (2014) suggests that there has been a development of neoliberal feminism which is in sync with the neoliberal economic values of market rationality. Neoliberal feminism thus accepts the values of the market to view women as agents in the capitalist structure, without any critique of the exploitation and inequalities in the system. This produces a kind of feminist subject who believes in the equality of opportunities, free choice and innovation. Her failure is her individual failure, which according to the neoliberal feminist subject cannot be attributed to the patriarchal structure that has inequality embedded in it. Thus, the inequality between men and women is acknowledged and it is believed that the inequality can be bridged by individual efforts. Echoing Fraser, Rottenberg (ibid) asserts that neoliberal capitalism has colonised the feminist movement to produce subjects to further its own cause.

Studying the effects of new economic policies of the 1990s, in the Indian context, John (2010) states that with the adoption of the New Economic Policy followed by a major restructuring of the economy, the developmental planning of the past forty years got fundamentally altered. With adoption and acceptance of liberalization and globalization, the welfarist dimension of the State led way to a market-based economy, substantiated with a growing culture of consumption amongst the middle classes and the elite. This renewed identity of being an Indian is aptly supported by the media. In the feminist voices in India critiquing these new economic policies, one of the most prominent arguments has been that these policies affect the poor women the most. With reduced wages and welfare benefits along with the growing cost of basic necessities, it is the poor women who suffer the most. To negotiate with these new contexts, women take up more

than one job, largely manual and low paying, often resulting in their daughters either following their mothers' footsteps or dropping out of school to take care of the household in the absence of the mothers. These situations do not in any way seem to better women's lives. Other arguments from eco-feminists like Vandana Shiva oppose globalization to protect indigenous knowledge from being exploited. There are also voices like that of Madhu Kishwar which support the generally held notion globalization and capitalism can free the entrepreneurial capacities of women and break free from the shackles of patriarchy. Gail Omvedt argues for globalisation in a different way. She states that probably globalisation has the capacity to control Indian bourgeoisie and it can benefit those groups who were left at the margins in the phase of planned developments.

Chaudhuri (2017) considers three bases on which the development of both neoliberal capitalism and post-feminism can be understood specifically in the Indian context- the economic policies of the nineties, the Indian feminist movements and the intensive and extensive media reach. In the present, both self-realization and an enterprise culture for personal development is vivid in the public discourse, aggravated by the media. Images of women's success, assertion of their choice, having careers have significantly entered the media. Chaudhuri asserts that in the context of globalisation, usually it is thought that images are free flowing. However, she cautions us by pointing out that these images are carefully constructed to build a new image of women in India. Giving examples of vagina bleaching products, she complicates the newly found power of choice amongst women, critiquing the process of choice formation in a capitalist context, that reinforces stereotypes of what it means to be beautiful and that it often leads to be successful.

Given the various arguments, how do we then understand gendered labour in a global city like Hyderabad, from the experiences of the retail shop floor employees, to make sense of the contemporary neoliberal, capitalist globalisation? In order to answer that, the thesis, adopts a neoliberal critique of capitalist urban spaces in order to contextualize the above-mentioned conditions. Labour is performed in these spaces, that are clearly hierarchical and exclusionary, that function on the principle of creating the 'other', this other might be a consumer who comes to the shopping mall, driving an auto or shop-floor employees having a starkly different work spaces from their customer's entertainment space, though both of them are in the same. Broadly, therefore, the principle of excluding the serving class in the discourse of the spaces of hyper consumption. The intersectional framework adopted to understand women's voices across the spectrum of caste, class, religion, region and other intersectionalities, made sure that the excluded had their own voices, instead of a single voice. This was evident in the women's attitudes towards grooming, reasons for joining the retail industry or aspirations. The chapters in the thesis describe and analyse the context and the conditions in which this form of labour operates and at the same also emphasize personal experiences of this labour.

The introductory chapter lays out the theoretical insights required to understand the nature of the space in which these changes take place. The spatiality thus looks at the city, its culture of consumption and the service class which is engaged in maintaining this culture of consumption through its rendering of services in various areas like beauty salons, security, chain of fast food restaurants or in the retail sector of apparels or cosmetics, to name a few. The chapter looks at Hyderabad as the larger site of the city and through review of literature tries to understand the various exclusions emerging

within the different parts of the city. From a feminist lens, it looks at the gendered expectations and the gendered relationships that women experience as part of this new labour force. These gendered expectations and experiences, as literature shows are rooted in the patriarchal understanding between gender and work. Talking about the growth of the retail sector in India since liberalization in the 1990s, the introductory chapter discusses the various types of organised retail in India and how they are different and affect the local *kirana* stores. The chapter also shows while around the world, many women as compared to men are employed in the retail sector, in the Indian context the reality is different. The number of women employed is still very low. However, as literature shows there is a preference for women employees because of their assumed innate qualities of politeness and obedience (Dubey, 2013).

The second chapter on the methodology adopted in this study starts with discussing the relevance of feminist methodologies to understand women's realities. Traditionally, social science research has focussed on men as bearers of knowledge, ignoring the fact that women's realities and experiences are different from men's, which need to be visibilized. However, merely adding women into the list of respondents is not enough and we need to go beyond that to accept that women's views, experiences and realities are authentic and can form bases of knowledge production. It is therefore important to listen to women's voices and represent their standpoints. The study emphasises the need for intersectionality thereby asserting that all women cannot be put together in a homogeneous group, just because they happen to be women. Women's differences in voices results from their diverse locations of class, caste, religion, ethnicity and education. The chapter then describes the field site of Cyberabad and explains why it is important to study a new form of labour in a site like Cyberabad, that is created as a

marker of a global city. The importance lies in the fact that in popular discourse, the privileged, either through their job positions and their capacity to consume, are always seen as interacting and participating in the global city. What often gets invisibilized is the fact that there are many people who sustain the global city through their services, be it through house-keeping, security or even the shop-floor services. It then discusses the Mosaic mall- the work-place of the retail shop-floor employees and describes how the structure of the mall is so different for the consumers and the employees. The chapter then discusses the various methods used in this mixed methods research for the collection of data and how the methods were important for each set of respondents. Finally, I try to locate myself as a researcher in the field. One of the most important lessons from the field has been that merely appearing to be a woman cannot break the ice with women respondents. It is rather conversations of what women do or what is expected from them, that can lead into familiarity and invitations to understand their realities and experiences.

Recently, Hochschild has lamented the usage of her now very popular concept 'emotional labour'. The popularity beyond the academic circles has led, according to Hochschild, to a blurring of the meaning of emotional labour (<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/03/college-admissions-scandal-what-meritocracy-really/584875/>). There have been many meanings attached to the concept which includes household chores as well. However, in this work, I stick to Hochschild's conceptualization which explains emotional labour as a particular feeling so as to produce desired feelings in others, in the context of a commercial setup (Hochschild, 1983), as opposed to emotion work, which often involves women suppressing their feelings in interpersonal relationships. Thus, the third chapter *Emotional Labour on the Shop-floor* uses the relationship between gender and labour

and tries to understand the relationship between self, interaction and structure through Hochschild's concept of emotional labour. Emotional labour which involves labouring on one's own emotion to produce favourable emotions in others forms the basis of the chapter. The chapter shows how emotional labour is used in a capitalist space as a resource for profits. To achieve the proper usage of emotions, the chapter talks about the various processes of manufacture of emotional labour on the shop-floor as well as the training centres. It argues that the shop-floor is not merely a site of monetary exchange where there is a mechanical exchange of merchandise for a price, but it is a socio-emotional economy where emotions form a resource for the sustenance of the economy. This resource has a language- English which is thought to be absolutely essential for personal growth. The chapter asserts that shop-floor employees can not only be seen as passive human beings, readily accepting the corporate dictates of performing emotional labour through manifest politeness. They express resistance in harmless and different ways by gossiping about customers and senior colleagues, rather than overtly defying the structure. Finally, the chapter talks about the employees' familial responsibilities of care and how they have to depend on their personal networks to take care of their children, indicating at the larger aspect of commercialization of care, which obviously these employees cannot afford.

The fourth chapter *Body(ies) on the Shop-floor* is based on aesthetic labour of retail shop-floor employees. While emotional labour refers to working on one's emotion to produce favourable emotions in others, in a commercial set up, aesthetic labour requires one to work on one's appearance to look appropriately pleasing. This appropriateness is demanded both by the site in which the labour operates- the retail shop-floor in the service industry and the time of neoliberal cultures of consumption. Towards achieving

that appropriateness, the process of grooming becomes extremely important. Its end product presentability, becomes an important criteria of retail shop-floor employment. This presentability is determined by contemporary notions of beauty, which is further influenced or determined by the patriarchal, capitalist male gaze. The achievement of presentability is done through a series of training procedures, which I discuss in the section on characteristics of grooming. The emphasis is on presenting desirable bodies which can entice consumers to buy more products. This desirable body seen through a consumer gaze, is largely a masculine representation of what the serving body should look like. Although the elaborate grooming mechanisms produce tight compartments of notions of presentability, with the employees and the corporate structure turning into panopticons, yet the employees find ways to subvert the requirement through small measures. An example of subversion is not to be in front of one's department manager on a particular day without makeup to avoid reprimands. The act of grooming and its end product thus aim at aesthetic entrepreneurship. Both the performances of emotional and aesthetic labour aim at the creation of uniform labour force, indicating the deliberate mechanisms of its creation.

The fifth chapter on *Layered Spaces: Processes and Ramifications* is an attempt to understand the shopping mall as a work place, instead of only a site of consumption. In doing that, it uses the concept of 'layered space' to understand the nature and processes of stratification and exclusions, that the shopping mall produces. The concept of layered space is useful in understanding the characteristics of a place which is shared by people of different social strata, yet there are differences and hierarchies in the nature of their relation to that place. The layers formed, as a result, are fluid with varied acts of constructing physical and social boundaries, thus generating unequal spaces under the

overarching structure of the rules of the mall. These are evident in the difference and inequality between the customer areas and the employee-only areas, as well as the layers amongst the employees on the basis of position in the job hierarchy and gender. Unpacking these layers, shows how the *spectacular* mall, which is a product of neo-liberal economic policies and consumer culture in India, relegates those who create and maintain the spectacle, to the background. These are manifested in the relationship that the retail shop-floor employees have a) with the customers, visible in the starkly different customer areas and employee areas within the mall b) amongst themselves on the basis of position in the job hierarchy, caste and gender. Talking from the perspective of women's experiences as employees in the shopping mall, the chapter shows the gendered nature of the layers within the space of the mall as well as the larger space of the city where the mall is located in. Finally, the chapter ends with discussing the concept of devalorisation, often associated with the low waged labour in the global network and valorisation, associated with highly waged jobs, which are visible in the global network of massive capital and people occupying positions of power. In the context of the retail employees in this study, I try to show that although structurally there is devalorisation of certain categories job, the valorisation of these labours comes from the shop-floor employees themselves, for example, preferring to be called an employee instead of workers or labourers. This I argue is the development of a neoliberal subjectivity, that is the product of labouring in spectacular sites, wearing uniforms or following dress-codes, getting 'ready' for work or even speaking in English. As seen in the works of Fraser (2013), Harris (2003), amongst others, young women become ideal subjects of neoliberalism, as global capitalism usurps feminist ideals of securing waged employment for women, and creates in women a labour, willing to submit to capitalist forces, in order to fight every day patriarchy. Although, this logic does not seem to work at the structural

level, as capitalism in itself is patriarchal, yet at the individual level it does bring in material change in the lives of these shop floor employees, which in turn slowly enhances their participation in the ever-growing culture of consumption, that we are witnessing today.

### **SCOPE, LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The changing nature of labour and the various contexts from which it is operating forms the basis for this study. Sociologically, these contexts are constitutive of gender, class, and other marginalities evident in the larger space of the city whose landscape is itself producing exclusions and inequalities, due to the capitalist processes. These global cities cannot function without creation of a class which serves its elite. The production of this class has its basis in creating non-people (Ritzer, 2004) globally as an over-arching category yet having local specificities and versions of the global homogeneity. Further, through the study, we can see, how globalisation acts on an individual level. While it is true that capitalist globalisation has created more inequalities than ever, it is also true that those who are able to participate in these new structures, do experience concrete material changes in their lives. The study shows an understanding of new places of work and the spaces produced, for example physical inclusion occurring simultaneously with spatial exclusion. The study can be located in the sociological literature on work and labour and provide a starting point to understand the increasing importance of emotional and aesthetic labour in the work place. The deeper proliferation of these forms of labour in the service sectors, for example in the house-keeping and their constant need for assessment, seen in the elaborate 'feedback system' reasserts the need to understand labour in spaces designed for consumption.

One of the limitations of the present study has been the absence of my knowledge of Telugu. As a researcher, the language would have helped me immensely to not only understand the conversations amongst the employees over lunch but also to get an insight into the nuances of the language in colloquiality. Although most of my respondents were comfortable in Hindi and English, yet through conversations it appeared to me that some of them were putting an effort into forming sentences. This is here that I experienced the deprivation. This was apparent from one of the interviews that I conducted in Oriya, where my respondent was from Odisha. In the conversations, I could gauge the job-dissatisfaction through non-verbal gestures like '*tch*'.

I think the study could have gained immensely had I gone to the training camps across various districts of Telangana. This could have given a dimension to the manufacture of attitudes of success, growth, need for employment in the level of the towns and villages, instead of a global city. It is interesting, as my study has shown, that many of these students of the training programmes, do not have any idea of a shopping mall, beyond a few images from popular media.

A further limitation arises from my lack of accessibility to certain brands of cosmetics which have employed men as their make-up artistes. Even after repeated requests to the Human Resources manager, I could not get a permission to interview them. I think having access to men employed as make-up artistes who themselves make-up on their faces, would have given a different perspective to masculinity, grooming and presentability. In the course of the study also, my lack of access to men's tables during lunch breaks deprived me from their mundane conversation. Even though the focus of

my study is women's voices, men's mundane, every day conversations could have helped build a parallel with that of the women.

These limitations of the study point at the direction of further research in the area. An urgent need is for a sociological study of new forms of labour, the thousands of cab-drivers in the city, mostly employed by international firms like Uber or national ones like Ola. While these cabs mark the global city, getting booked through digital applications and getting paid digitally, thereby getting projected as success stories of boom in the story of local transportation, there is a need to understand their structure of the organisation they work, the rating system which is supposed to be indicative of their efficiency and the training they receive to deal with customers. Secondly, with the growth of e-commerce and increasing employment opportunities for men and women, in warehouses for example, without any or limited customer interaction, there is a need to understand the changing nature of the service sector. Retail e-commerce web sites have been a huge recipient of investments. It will be interesting to observe, how they affect the mall culture in a country like India. Thirdly, further studies can be taken up in the beauty industry which has expanded enormously in terms of market share. The number of women in beauty and the wellness industry, emphasizing the need for a desirable body through exercise, yoga beauty products to conceal age shows the marked difference between the inner body and the outer body and how there is a need for a constant working out on the outer body to be a part of this new capitalist culture which thrives on injecting insecurities into people about their own bodies. Further, studies in the area of commodification of care can go beyond looking at the emergence of creches, which is anyway catering to the needs of the elite, to an understanding of how care-givers at these places carry out their own care-giving responsibilities in their domestic lives.

The diverse forms of care work that have emerged with the neoliberal city, for example, pet spas or dog-walkers can not only throw light on new dimensions of care but also complicate the concept of emotional labour. The above forms of labour point at the increasing feminization of labour, engaging both men and women, yet are increasingly low-waged. These phenomena can be understood in the larger context of capitalist cultures of consumption in a neoliberal regime.

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## **APPENDIX- A**

The following questionnaire was used to gain entry into the field. The respondents are the retail shop floor employees working in the Mosaic Mall. The table (Table 1) that follows the questionnaire shows the responses.

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **Personal Information**

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Contact No:

Email Id:

Educational Qualification:

Medium Of Instruction At School

Other Qualifications (Ex: Computer Courses)

Skills Related Or Unrelated To Your Job

No. Of Family Members

Parents' Occupation:

A) Father:

B) Mother:

Are Your Siblings Employed:

If Yes, Where? (I)

(Ii)

(Iii)

State of Domicile:

Reason for Migrating to Hyderabad

Place of Stay

Marital Status

Religion:

### **Information Related to Employment**

Employer:

Designation at Job:

Salary:

Incentives:

Did You Go Through Any Special Training For The Current Job:

Duration of Employment with The Present Employer:

Hours of Work in A Day:

Do You Get Lunch Breaks During the Day?

Do You Get Weekly Off Days?

What Do You Wear to Job:

How Do You Travel to Your Place of Work?

Are You Satisfied with Your Job?

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Who Do You Go to in case You Have Some Complaints Related to Your Work Place:

Are Your Complaints Paid Attention?

How Many Others from Your Home Town Are There in Your Work Place?

Do You Have A Peer Group?

TABLE 1

SL.NO	AGE	GEN DER	MoI	DESIGNATION	SALAR Y	HOMETOW N/ STATE	WOR K HOUR S	EDUCATIO N	ECONOMIC BACKGROU ND
1	25	F	E	F.A	18000+	HYDERAB AD, TELANGA NA	9	I	SOLE EARNER
2	25	F	-	F.A	12000+ H	-	9	I	
3	22	F	T	F.A*	7400+	-	9	I	-
4	20	F		F.A*	8530+	WARANGA L, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	I	FARMER
5	29	F	T	B.A*	18000+	HYDERAB AD, TELANGA NA	9	G	F:BUSINESS H: CLERK
6	20	F	T	C.C.E	8050+	ANDHRA PRADESH	9	I	F: FARMER
7	23	F	T	C.R.E	12000+	HYDERAB AD, TELANGA NA	9	P G	F: WATCHMA N, H:BUSINESS
8	21	F	T	B.A	9000+	ANDHRA PRADESH	9	I	FATHER: SUPERVISO R IN A COMPANY
9	22	F	O	C.C.E	12000	BHUBANES HWAR, ODISHA	10	M	F: GOVT. EMPLOYEE
10	23	F	T	SENIOR C.R.E	10000+	HYDERAB AD, TELANAG ANA	9	PG	F: SECURITY GUARD
11	19	F	T	C.C.A	-	-	9	I	SOLE EARNER
12	19	F	E	C.S.R	-	MUMBAL, MAHARAS HTRA	9	P I	F: CONTRACT OR
13	22	F	E	C.C.A	8500+	ANDHRA PRADESH	9	G	F: FARMER
14	22	F	T	SR. C.R.E	11000+	HYDERAB AD, TELANGA NA	9-9.5	I	B: RETAIL EMPLOYEE
15	19	F	T	C.S.R	8000+	WARANGA L, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	G	F&M: FARMER
16	21	F	T	C.C.A	-	HYDERAB AD, TELANGA NA	8	G	F: FARMER
17	22	F	T	C.C.E	7000+	GUNTUR, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	P G	M: FARMER
18	21	F	E	B.A	-	MANIPUR	8	G	F: FARMER
19	23	F	T	C.C.E	7000+	TELANGA NA	9.5	I	F: BUSINESS
20	21	F	T	SALE ADVISOR	9800+	HYDERAB AD, TELANGA NA	9.5	I- DISCONN EC T	SOLE EARNER
21	23	F	T	CRE	8000+	TELANGA NA	9.5	G	B: EMPLOYED

22	22	F	T	SR. CRE	12000+	WARANGAL, ANDHRA PRADESH	8	G	F: FARMER
23	20	F	T	C.C.A	8500+	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	8	G	F: PAI
24	24	M	E	SR. CSR	-	BIHAR	9	G	F: CAR DRIVER
25	24	M	T	SR. CRE	10500+	ANDHRA PRADESH	8	P G	F&M: FARMER
26	26	M	E	TEAM LEADER	17000	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	8	DCE	SOLE EARNER
27	21	M	T	CSR	-	WARANGAL, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	-	F: FARMER
28	28	M	H	CASHIER	9000	BIHAR	10	G	F:FARMER
29	20	M	T	CSR	-	MAHBOOB NAGAR, TELANGANA	-	MATRICULATION	F:MECHANIC
30	21	M	E	F.C	-	KOLKATA, WEST BENGAL	-	DEGREE 2 <sup>ND</sup> YEAR	F: CONTRACTOR
31	22	M	T	SALES MAN	7700	WARANGAL	9	M	F&M: FARMER
32	21	M	E	CSR	-	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	-	DEGREE 2 <sup>ND</sup> YEAR	F: BUSINESS
33	23	M	E	SR F.C	12000	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	10	I	F:SELF-EMPLOYED
34	27	M	E	TEAM LEADER	17000	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	8	G	F: NOT EMPLOYED
35	26	M	T	CSD	-	ANDHRA PRADESH	9	M	F: SELF EMPLOYED
36	23	M	T	F.A	-	ANDHRA PRADESH	10	G	F&M: LABOURER
37	22	M	E	SALES MAN	-	GUNTUR, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	B.TECH	F: SELF-EMPLOYED
38	21	M	T	CASHIER	8100	TELANGANA	9	G	F: FARMER
39	24	M	T	BACK-END CASHIER	-	ANDHRA PRDESH	9	M	F:SELF-EMPLOYED
40	27	M	E	CSR	18500	KENDRAPARA, ODISHA	9+	PG	F: SARPANCH

\* In the above table, F or M in the Gender column represents Female or Male. The MoI column refers to the Medium of Instruction in school which is represented by E for English and T for Telugu. In the Education column, M refers to Matriculate level, I refer to Intermediate level, G refers to Graduation, PG refers to Post Graduation, DCE refers to Diploma in Computer Education. The Economic Background shows the livelihood of family members. F represents Father, H represents Husband while B represents brother. In most cases M has not been mentioned because of space constraints. In those cases, M's occupation has been mentioned as housewife/home maker. In cases where the respondent is the sole earner, either the F is dead or not employed. In those cases, also, M is the housewife/home maker. In one case, SL. No 1, the husband is not employed and the respondent did not answer about her parents.

## APPENDIX- A

The following questionnaire was used to gain entry into the field. The respondents are the retail shop floor employees working in the Mosaic Mall. The table (Table 1) that follows the questionnaire shows the responses.

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15	19	F	T	C.S.R	8000+	WARANGA L, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	G	F&M: FARMER
16	21	F	T	C.C.A	-	HYDERAB AD, TELANGA NA	8	G	F: FARMER
17	22	F	T	C.C.E	7000+	GUNTUR, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	P G	M: FARMER
18	21	F	E	B.A	-	MANIPUR	8	G	F: FARMER
19	23	F	T	C.C.E	7000+	TELANGA NA	9.5	I	F: BUSINESS
20	21	F	T	SALE ADVISOR	9800+	HYDERAB AD, TELANGA NA	9.5	I- DISCONN EC T	SOLE EARNER
21	23	F	T	CRE	8000+	TELANGA NA	9.5	G	B: EMPLOYED

22	22	F	T	SR. CRE	12000+	WARANGAL, ANDHRA PRADESH	8	G	F: FARMER
23	20	F	T	C.C.A	8500+	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	8	G	F: PAI
24	24	M	E	SR. CSR	-	BIHAR	9	G	F: CAR DRIVER
25	24	M	T	SR. CRE	10500+	ANDHRA PRADESH	8	P G	F&M: FARMER
26	26	M	E	TEAM LEADER	17000	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	8	DCE	SOLE EARNER
27	21	M	T	CSR	-	WARANGAL, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	-	F: FARMER
28	28	M	H	CASHIER	9000	BIHAR	10	G	F:FARMER
29	20	M	T	CSR	-	MAHBOOB NAGAR, TELANGANA	-	MATRICULATION	F:MECHANIC
30	21	M	E	F.C	-	KOLKATA, WEST BENGAL	-	DEGREE 2 <sup>ND</sup> YEAR	F: CONTRACTOR
31	22	M	T	SALES MAN	7700	WARANGAL	9	M	F&M: FARMER
32	21	M	E	CSR	-	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	-	DEGREE 2 <sup>ND</sup> YEAR	F: BUSINESS
33	23	M	E	SR F.C	12000	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	10	I	F:SELF-EMPLOYED
34	27	M	E	TEAM LEADER	17000	HYDERABAD, TELANGANA	8	G	F: NOT EMPLOYED
35	26	M	T	CSD	-	ANDHRA PRADESH	9	M	F: SELF EMPLOYED
36	23	M	T	F.A	-	ANDHRA PRADESH	10	G	F&M: LABOURER
37	22	M	E	SALES MAN	-	GUNTUR, ANDHRA PRADESH	9	B.TECH	F: SELF-EMPLOYED
38	21	M	T	CASHIER	8100	TELANGANA	9	G	F: FARMER
39	24	M	T	BACK-END CASHIER	-	ANDHRA PRDESH	9	M	F:SELF-EMPLOYED
40	27	M	E	CSR	18500	KENDRAPARA, ODISHA	9+	PG	F: SARPANCH

\* In the above table, F or M in the Gender column represents Female or Male. The MoI column refers to the Medium of Instruction in school which is represented by E for English and T for Telugu. In the Education column, M refers to Matriculate level, I refer to Intermediate level, G refers to Graduation, PG refers to Post Graduation, DCE refers to Diploma in Computer Education. The Economic Background shows the livelihood of family members. F represents Father, H represents Husband while B represents brother. In most cases M has not been mentioned because of space constraints. In those cases, M's occupation has been mentioned as housewife/home maker. In cases where the respondent is the sole earner, either the F is dead or not employed. In those cases, also, M is the housewife/home maker. In one case, SL. No 1, the husband is not employed and the respondent did not answer about her parents.

## **APPENDIX- B**

The following questionnaire was answered by students of the English Work Readiness and Computers Programme (EWRC). The table (Table 2) that follows the questionnaire shows the responses.

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **Personal Information**

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Religion:

Caste:

Contact no:

Email id:

Educational qualification:

Medium of instruction at school

Other qualifications (ex: computer courses)

No. Of family members:

Parents' occupation:

A) Father:

B) Mother:

Are your siblings employed:

If yes, where? (i)

(ii)

(iii)

Place of stay

Marital status:

**Questions related to the Course**

Hours of training in a day:

Do you get lunch breaks during the day?

Do you get weekly off days?

What do you wear to the training?

Are you satisfied with your course?

What have you learnt during the course?

Why did you join the course?

What is your expectation from the job?

TABLE 2

SL. NO	AGE	GENDER	CASTE	DISTRICT	EDUCATION	MoI	ECONOMIC BACKGROUND	REASON FOR JOINING THE COURSE	FOR THE	LEARNINGS DURING THE COURSE
1.	20	F	OC-REDDY	MAHABOBNAGAR	GRADUATION	TELU GU	F: FARMER	ANY JOB, SALARY- 8000-10000		BASIC ENGLISH, BASIC COMPUTERS, GROOMING SKILLS, SOFT SKILLS
2	21	F	SC	MAHABU BNAGAR	INTERMEDIATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER	ANY JOB WITH GOOD SALARY		COMMUNICATION SKILLS, SOFT SKILLS, COMPUTER SKILLS
3	21	F	SC	MAHBOO BNAGAR	DEGREE	TELU GU	-	ANY JOB		COMMUNICATION SKILLS, SOFT SKILLS, COMPUTER SKILLS
4	19	F	REDDY(OC)	YADADDRI	INTERMEDIATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER	GET JOB		DEVELOPING SKILLS, TYPING MS-WORD, MS-EXCEL, MS-POWER POINT, RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY DOMAIN
5	20	F	BC-B	NALGON DLA	INTERMEDIATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER M: LABOURER	GET JOB, SUPPORT FAMILY FINANCIALLY, CONTINUE STUDIES		TYPING, VALUES, ATTITUDES RESPECTING OTHERS
6	20	F	BC	NALGON DLA	INTERMEDIATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER M: LABOURER	GET 1ST POSITION I JOB, SUPPORT FAMILY WITH GOOD SALARY, BETTER EXPERIENCE		SOFT SKILLS, INTERVIEW SKILLS, GOOD COMMUNICATION, BASIC ARITHMATIC
7	23	F	SC	MAHBOO BNAGAR	MATRICULATION	TELU GU	F: FARMER M: FARMER	"MY SISTER JOINED THE COURSE, SO MY FAMILY ASKED ME TO JOIN THE COURSE". GET JOB AND SUPPORT MY FAMILY FINANCIALLY		SOFT SKILLS, COMMUNICATION SKILLS, COMMUNICATION SKILLS, GROOMING SKILLS, RETAIL SKILLS, HOSPITALITY, PRESENTATION SKILLS
8	18	F	BC-B	YADADRI	INTERMEDIATE	TELU GU, ENGLISH	M: LABOURER	I DO NOT LIKE THIS COURSE. I JOINED THIS COURSE BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL PROBLEMS IN THE FAMILY, I WANTED TO CONTINUE MY STUDIES		SOFT SKILLS, BASIC ENGLISH, COMPUTER, RETAIL, HOSPITALITY
9	20	F	BC-D	MAHBOO BNAGAR	DEGREE	TELU GU	F: FARMER M: ANGANWADI TEACHER	GOOD JOB, GOOD POSITION, GOOD SALARY		GROOMING, COMPUTER SKILLS, COMMUNICATION

10	22	F	BC-B	MAHBOO BNAGAR	DEGREE	TELU GU	M: ANGANW ADI HELPER	GOOD JOB, GOOD SALARY, MORE SALARY	SKILL DEVELOPMENT, MORE SALARY
11	20	F	BC-D	MAHBOO BNAGAR	INTERMEDI ATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER	JOB, TO BECOME A MANAGER AND GET GOOD SALARY	GROOMING, COMMUNICATI ON SKILLS, COMPUTERS
12	22	M	ST	NALGON DLA	INTERMEDI ATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER	JOB TO SUPPORT MY FAMILY, AND STAND ON MY FEET, SALARY EXPECTATIONS: 10000 PER MONTH	BASIC SKILLS- ENGLISH, COMPUTERS
13	19	F	BC-B	NAGARK URNOOL	INTERMEDI ATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER M: FARMER	GOOD JOB, WITH GOOD SALARY	COMMUNICATI ON, GROOMING. COMPUTERS AND SOFT SKILLS
14	19	F	OC	-	INTERMEDI ATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER	GET JOB, CONTINUE MY STUDIES, SUPPORT MY FAMILY FINANCIALLY. EXPECT TO GET MANAGER POSITION AFTER 3 YEARS	RETAIL, TYPING SPEED, MS- WORD, MS- EXCEL
15	19	F	SC	MAHBOO BNAGAR	MATRICULA TE	-	M: FARMER	GOOD JOB, WANT TO BE MANAGER	RETAIL, HOSPITALITY, COMMUNICATI ON, GOOD GROOMING
16	21	F	BC-D	MAHBOO BNAGAR	DEGREE	TELU GU	F: FARMER	JOB, SALARY EXPECTATION- 9000	COMPUTERS, SOFT SKILLS, GROOMING, RETAIL, HOSPITALITY
17	19	F	SC	NALGON DLA	INTERMEDI ATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER	GET JOB AND SUPPORT MY FAMILY FINANCIALLY. EXPECT HIGH POSITION.	SOFT SKILLS, INTERVIEW SKILLS, BASIC ENGLISH
18	20	F	OC	YADADRI	DEGREE	TELU GU	F: FARMER	GET JOB, SUPPORT FAMILY FINANCIALLY SALARY EXPECTATION: 10000 PER MONTH , HIGH POSITION	SOFT SKILLS, INTERVIEW SKILLS, BASIC COMMUNICATI ON, TYPING, ARITHMATIC
19	23	F	BC-D	MAHBOO BNAGAR	INTERMEDI ATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER M: FARMER	MY FIREND JOINED THE COURSE FOR A JOB, SO I ALSON JOINED. I EXPECT A GOOD POSITION	COMPUTERS, COMMUNICATI ON AND GROOMING SKILLS
20	20	F	BC-D	YADADRI	DEGREE	TELU GU	F: FARMER M: LABOURE R	GET A JOB, SUPPORT MY FAMILY, CONTINUE STUDIES	MS-WORD, MS- EXCEL, SPOKEN ENGLISH,
21	20	F	BC	NALGON DLA	INTERMEDI ATE	TELU GU	F: FARMER M: FARMER	GET JOB AND SUPPORT MY FAMILY. EXPECT A SALARY OF	TYPING, MS- WORD, POWER POINT, SOFT SKILLS, INTERVIEW SKILLS

								<b>10000</b>	<b>PER</b>	
								<b>MONTH</b>		

\* In the above table, F or M IN THE Gender column represents Female or Male. The MoI column refers to the Medium of Instruction in school which is represented by E for English and T for Telugu. The Economic Background shows the livelihood of family members. F represents Father, H represents Husband while B represents brother. In most cases M has not been mentioned because of space constraints. In those cases, M's occupation has been mentioned as housewife/home maker.

### Appendix C

The Table 3 below shows the details of the respondents who were interviewed. The respondents are from different categories: shop-floor employees, managers and consultants. The interviews were shaped by their responses, although certain fixed questions surrounding work conditions, rules, aspirations, importance of grooming were common across all the respondents.

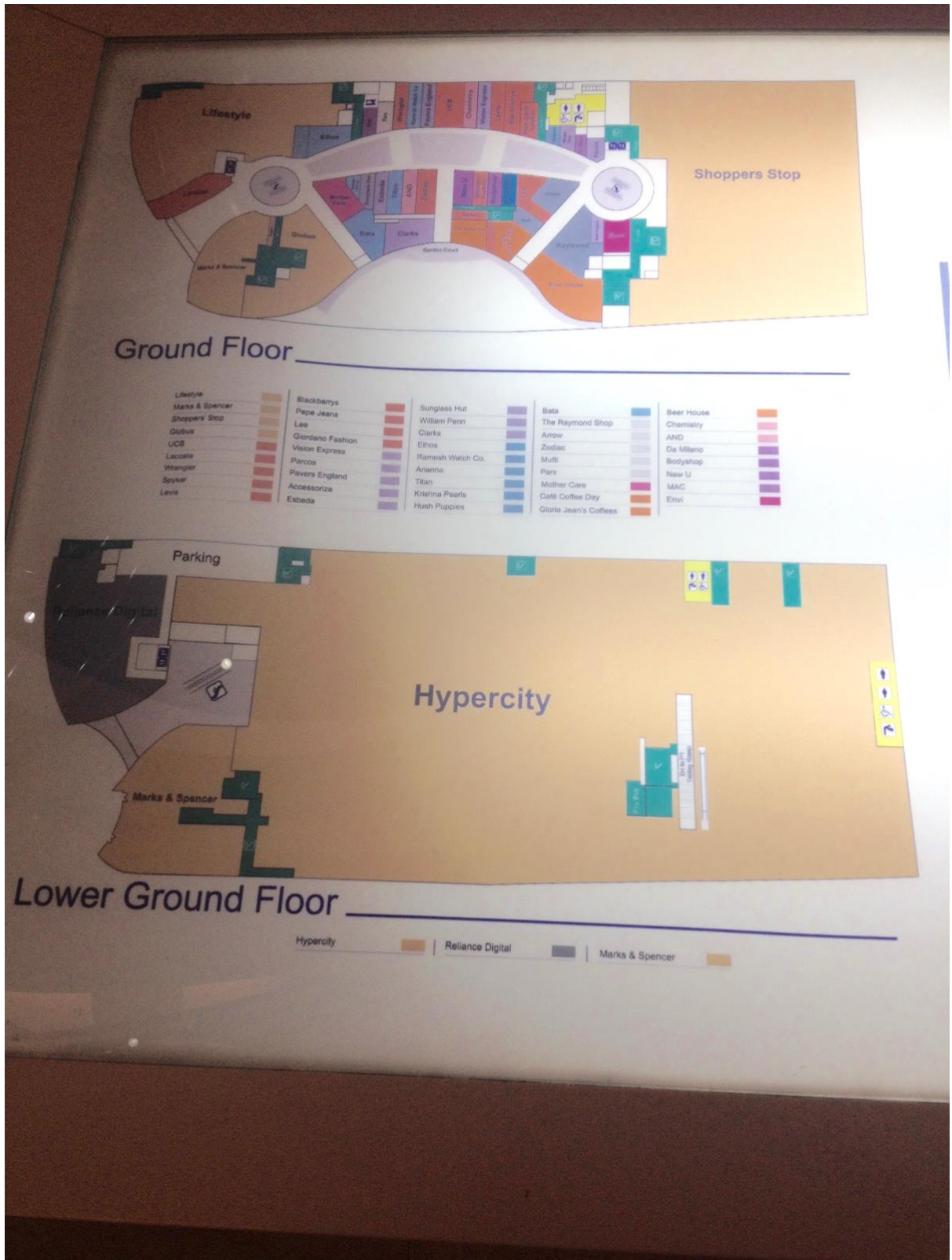
**TABLE 3**

SL.NO	NAME	DESIGNATION	EMPLOYER	GENDER	CASTE
1	C.M. V	ASST. STORE MANAGER	MAXIMUM	M	-
2	A G	ASST. STORE MANAGER	MAXIMUM	M	-
3	Mary	TRAINER	MAXIMUM	F	-
4	K	CRE	MAXIMUM	M	-
5	A	LEASING MANAGER, INORBIT MALL	MOSAIC MALL, HYDERABAD	M	-
6	P	CRE	MAXIMUM	F	KOPPULA VELAMA, BCD
7	S1	CCA	SPOT	F	MADIGA SC
8	S2	CRE, TRAINEE	MAXIMUM	F	PADMASHALI
9	SG	RETAIL OPERATION MANAGER	SPOT	F	-
10	S3	CCA, TRAINEE	SPOT	F	KARANA, GENERAL
11	S4	CCA	SPOT	F	MALA, SC
12	S5	B.A	SPOT	F	-
13	G	CCA	SPOT	F	-
14	N1	FA	POST	F	-
15	LAXMI	DM	POST	F	-
16	V	BA	VANITY	F	-
17	S6	BA	VANITY	F	-
18	M	BA	VANITY	F	-
19	R	CCA	SPOT	F	BATTA RAJULU, BCD
20	S7	CCA	ELLE	F	SC ENDU MALA
21	A.K	Senior Consultant	EWRC, EGMM	M	-
22	K.R	Runs a Manpower Agency	DDUGKY	M	-

\*In the above table, F or M in the Gender column represents Female or Male. All names are pseudonyms.

# Appendix D

## PHOTOGRAPHS



Map showing the layout of the lower ground floor and ground floor of the Mosaic Mall.



Map showing the layout of the first floor and the services available in Mosaic Mall



Map showing the second and the third floors of the mall.



Locker room of the shop-floor employees which doubles up as the stock room, due to lack of space.

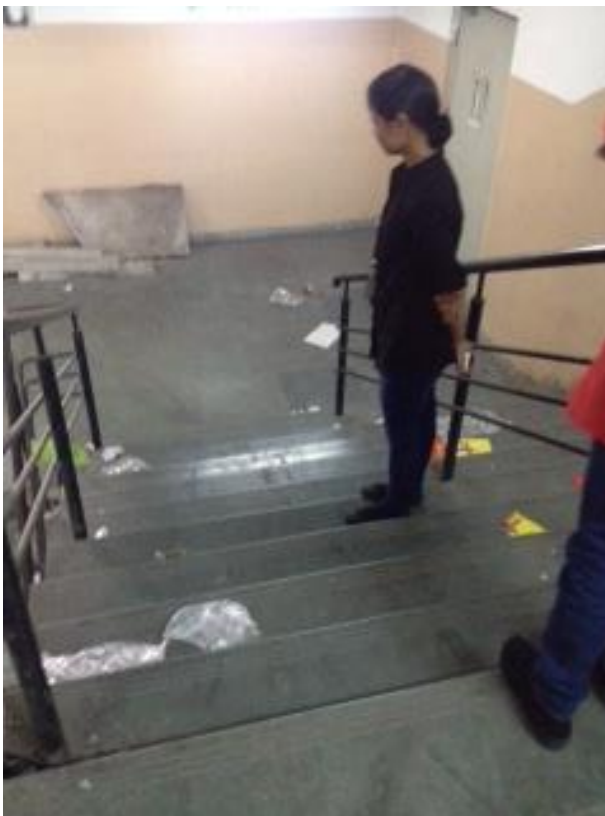


Water dispenser for the employees, next to the washroom. The way to the washroom is blocked by some packages.





The security guard's room, which also acts as a deposit room for the shop-floor employees' phones, as well as the store room for old and current records (in the registers) of the employees coming in and going out.



N looks for a place to sit and relax during her lunch break.

OUT PASS/  
PERMISSION SLIP

Date 14/3/16

Name Nusrath

Department W/E (G.D)

Place of Visit \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose lunch

Time Out 2:15 In \_\_\_\_\_

Ind Signature Ahy DM/ADM HR/ADM

Permission Slip required to be filled up in order to leave the store, and has to be signed by the either the department manager or the store manager.



Inside the elevator meant for use by the staff.



Poster put in one of the EWRC's training centres.



Instruction for the students to not to use the elevator. This is outside an institute which has tie up with EWRC for training in retail skills.



The reception area of the back office of a store, highlighting the performance of each of the shop floor employees. The red marks indicate bad performance (80% of the target) while the yellow indicates 90% achievement of the target.



Repair work going on at the mall, after the last movie show of the day, around 1am.

The pictures below are from EWRC's training booklet.

**MIND.**

### Grooming for the Job



### What is Grooming?

The activities performed in order to present or make one self better in appearance

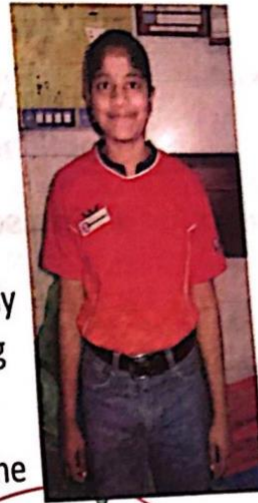


**"Grooming creates the difference between a rock and a diamond"**

### Tip

#### ID (Name) Tags

- A name tag to be worn at all times.
- Notify your supervisor immediately incase of loss or breakage of name tag
- The name tag pinned firmly to the right side of your T shirt



Lova lakshmi

### Grooming Standards

Brush your teeth twice daily



Have a bath daily with soap  
clean shaved everyday



Trim hair to look neat

Overall clean appearance



**Do not lick your fingers while trying to separate carry bags**



**Do not stroke beard or moustache**



**Do not rub finger along your nose**



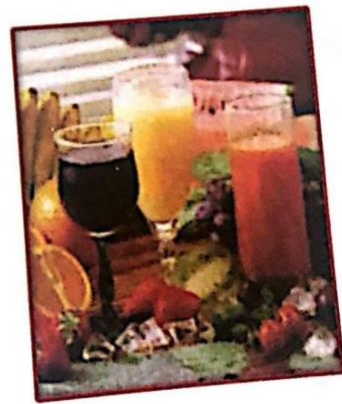
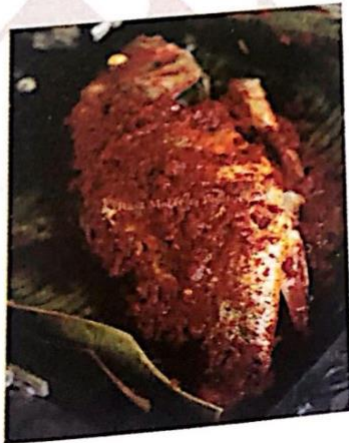
**Do not cough or sneeze into your hands. Use a handkerchief**



**Do not pick pimples on face**



B. Name the following eateries.



# Understanding Gendered Labour in a 'Global City': A Study of Women Shop-floor Employees in a Shopping Mall in Hyderabad

*by* Ipsita Pradhan

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**Submission date:** 28-Mar-2019 12:40PM (UTC+0530)  
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# Understanding Gendered Labour in a 'Global City': A Study of Women Shop-floor Employees in a Shopping Mall in Hyderabad

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**National Seminar on  
Globalization and Women:  
Issues and Concerns**

September 14-15, 2016

*Jointly Organised by :*

Department of Sociology | RC 10 ( Gender Studies)  
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi | Indian Sociological Society

**Certified that**

Prof./Dr./Ms./Mr. Ipsita Pradhan  
has attended the seminar.

He/She **chaired a technical session** No. \_\_\_\_ /

**delivered a special lecture / presented a paper** titled

The Body on the Shop Floor: A Study of Retail  
Shop Floor Employees in a Shopping Mall

Dr. Shweta Prasad  
Convener

RC 10, Indian Sociological Society

Prof. Arvind K. Joshi  
Head, Dept. of Sociology  
Faculty of Social Sciences, BHU

*Certificate of Participation*



The International Conference on Gender Equality 2015 (ICGE-1)  
organised by The Gender Park, Department of Social Justice,  
Government of Kerala,  
12, 13, 14th November 2015, Kerala, India

# CERTIFICATE

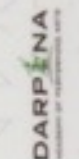
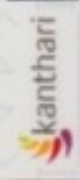
We very much appreciate that Ms. IPSITA PRADHAN

has participated in the International Conference on Gender Equality 2015 (ICGE-1). He/She has also made a presentation entitled

GROOMED BODIES AT WORK as part of the conference.



**Dr. PTM Sunish**  
CEO, The Gender Park





## Presentation of Aesthetic Bodies and Emotional Labour: A Study of Women Employees in Organised Retail

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### Abstract

The paper studies the labour force in the organised retail chain in shopping malls by focussing on their job training process. Limiting the study to the women employees in the organised retail sector, it shows how there is an attempt to use women's bodies as a site for the production that assimilates with the spectacle that the shopping mall constructs. Linking these modern spaces of work, the paper also attempts to look at these women in the spaces of their personal lives and what are the negotiations that they have to make to be a part of these new emerging work opportunities.

**Keywords:** Emotional Labour, Aesthetic Labour, Grooming, Presentability, Retail.

### 1. Introduction

The present age of Consumerism has opened up new and never ending ways of consumption of goods which are made available through mass production and their consequent display at the many shopping malls that are mushrooming in the cities. But how do we acquire those goods? It is not by merely going to a mall and buying something of one's choice and according to one's affordability. The conduit between the act of going into a shop and finally purchasing it, is a person we usually refer to as shop floor assistant, staff or customer care executive in common parlance. This conduit is not necessarily an invention of the neo liberal regime, but a relatively newer format of retailing emerging with neoliberal market policies unlike the unorganised retailing which has had a much longer existence in India (Shabnam& Paul, 2008). This conduit whom I refer to as retail shop floor



**Jindal School of  
Liberal Arts & Humanities**  
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To Whom It May Concern

Dear sir/madam,

This is to inform you that **Ms. Ipsita Pradhan** has contributed an article titled **“Production of Neoliberal Subjectivity(ies) on the Shop-floor: A Study of Women Shop-floor Employees in a Shopping Mall”** for the co-edited volume *Contemporary Gender Movements in India: Space, Conformity, Dissent and New Temporalities*, under contract with Bloomsbury, India. This work-in-progress volume is being co-edited by me and my colleague Peerzada Raouf Ahmad, who happens to be a PhD Candidate in Geography at Delhi School of Economics, and a Research Associate at Jindal Global Law School at OP Jindal Global University. I work for the same institution as an Associate Professor of Literary Studies.

While me and my co-editor and colleague are working on reading and commenting on the contributions, we want to convey that Ms. Pradhan’s article is an invaluable contribution to our volume, which seeks to represent questions pertaining to contemporary feminist movements in India in all its complexities. We are extremely grateful that Ms. Pradhan submitted her article to our volume as a potential site for publication.

Currently, we have suggested that Ms. Pradhan turn in the article with certain minor revisions. We are looking forward to receiving the revised article, and to continue to work with her as we move towards the completion of this volume.

If you have any further questions about this project, or Ms. Pradhan’s article, please feel free to email me at either [ndhar@jgu.edu.in](mailto:ndhar@jgu.edu.in) or [nandinidhar2112@gmail.com](mailto:nandinidhar2112@gmail.com).

Thanking you,

Dr.Nandini Dhar

Associate

Professor,

Literary Studies,  
JSLH,

O.P. Jindal Global  
University,  
Sonapat, Haryana,  
India

## **Production of Neoliberal Subjectivity(ies) on the Shop-floor: A Study of Women Shop-floor Employees in a Shopping Mall**

Today, as shopping malls mushroom the cities, young women occupy these malls by working in stores as shop-floor employees. Uniformed or dress-coded, smiling faces, ready to help out the customer in distress, the women shop-floor employees in an organised, branded, retail outlet in India are a relatively new labour force which has been manufactured by the capitalist system. Their purpose is to serve the ever growing consumers of goods and services, engulfed by the neoliberal regime that demands an active and expanding culture of consumption for its sustenance. These women, who are a part of the regime as well as its culture, have imbibed its manual to sustain themselves in the workforce and to look for upward mobility in their jobs. This sustenance is through processes of labour and obedience that produce neoliberal subjectivities in these women. To understand these varied processes, the paper draws on ethnographic study of shop-floor employees conducted in a shopping mall in Hyderabad, for an ongoing doctoral research. It begins with an understanding of the concept of neoliberal subjectivity. To understand its ramifications on the shop-floor in a shopping mall, it proceeds to look at two sites of labour on the shop-floor where this neoliberal regime acts. These sites are the emotions and the bodies of the employees, to produce favourable neoliberal subjects who care for their careers, and negotiate with different relationships and situations to achieve upward economic mobility. However, the desired subject is not always achievable, evident in the operation of a systemic surveillance and the simultaneous individual resistance, which is discussed in the concluding part of the essay.

**UNDERSTANDING GENDERED LABOUR IN A ‘GLOBAL CITY’: A STUDY OF WOMEN SHOP-FLOOR EMPLOYEES IN A SHOPPING MALL IN HYDERABAD**

*A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**in**

**SOCIOLOGY**

**by**

**IPSITA PRADHAN**

**[12SSPH11]**

**SYNOPSIS**



**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD**

**HYDERABAD-500046**

**MARCH 2019**

## Understanding Gendered Labour in a ‘Global City’: A Study of Women Shop-floor Employees in a Shopping Mall in Hyderabad- Synopsis

*It is around 9 am. As on one gate, bikers and car-drivers wait impatiently for the security guard to open the mall gate for the first movie-show of the day, quietly some others, mostly women walk towards the adjacent gate. With phones in their hands and ear-phones plugged into their ears, with bag-packs these women walk towards the other gate of the mall which leads them to their work place- the Mosaic mall. Dressed mostly in comfortable Indo-western jeans and t-shirts/ kurtis or chudidaars with kurtis, young women get ready to start their work-day just as some others get ready to watch a movie.*

The focus in this thesis is on these women, whose entry to the mall is through the adjacent gate. The gate which allows entry only by the production of a valid identity-card. The gate which opens to a work-place and not a place of consumption or recreation. Is the mall as spectacular through the second gate as is promised to be in the commercial hoardings just outside the mall? These women, the retail shop-floor employees, commonly called as customer service assistants occupy the shopping mall in exchange of their labour. What then, is the nature of the labour? What is the nature of the space<sup>1</sup> in which their labour takes place? Does it have meaning only in the physical structure of the mall or does it have a story to tell in the larger context of capitalist globalization, gendered labour and the city? In attempting to answer the above the questions, the thesis aims to look at the marginalities, inclusions and

---

<sup>1</sup> I use the term space when I refer to processes and meanings in the physical site, while I use the term place to refer to the structure of the mall.

exclusions that are ramifications of the space in which this labour is performed. This thesis is a study of the way in which the shopping mall is layered sociologically and presents a different side to the people who work in them.

Broadly the intersectionality framework and the critique of neoliberal capitalist urban spaces guide the analysis. The theory of intersectionality grounds the idea that all women do not have similar experiences. Even when working in the retail space, their experiences are separated by their class, caste, nature of labour, the brands they work for and their socio-economic background. The next broader theme of the critique of neoliberal capitalist urban spaces, specifically the spaces of consumption as spaces of labour, directs the way in which my thesis looks the city space and the nature of shopping malls, where different forms of exclusions and inequalities interact and produce newer patterns which are specific to neoliberal spaces, aggravated by the inherent principle of capitalism which is to produce inequalities.

The first theoretical lens therefore comes from sociology's long engagement with the urban, from a political economy perspective. The global city in the twenty first century is the site where globalization, which has implications for consumption, labour and gender issues, is manifested structurally through shopping malls, amusement parks, fast-food chains or specially created technological parks. The expansion of cultures of consumption calls for an understanding of the new forms of labour. Taking gender as the axis, in the larger spatial context of the city, I try to understand the relationship and between gender and new forms of labour. The relationship between gender and labour and the specific ways in which emotional and aesthetic labour in the service sector, takes place is one of the next focal

points of the thesis. These frameworks, although laid out neatly, are in fact intricately bound up with each other and produce new patterns as a result of their intertwined nature.

### **OBJECTIVES AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Having laid out the theoretical frameworks in which the thesis can be located, the objectives that have guided the research are as follows:

- To understand emotional and aesthetic labour in the context of the service sector, mostly in the apparel and cosmetic sectors in India.
- To explain how capitalist and patriarchal notions of politeness and beauty, aided with elaborate methods of surveillance aid in the production of desirable bodies and emotions.
- To understand how the shopping mall acts as a “layered space” for the retail shop floor employees, manifested in the difference between the mall as a site of consumption and as a place of work
- To understand the growth of a neoliberal, entrepreneur subjectivity in low waged service work.

A Google-Scholar search on the retail shop-floor employees in India will present results on the scholarly work done in this area from the Human Resources Management perspectives, often giving data on quantitative data on employment, on measures to improve performance, or how the retail industry has been a great generator of employment. Sociological studies that discuss aesthetic or emotional labour or feminization of labour in this sphere are often based in the United States, United Kingdom or Germany. This necessitates a sociological study on the emerging labour force in the service- sector in India, which is relatively very new as compared to other labourers in different spheres like that in the construction, health,

factories to name a few. These new jobs cater to the smooth functioning of the growing culture of consumption in a country like India, yet studies on their identity, emotional and aesthetic labour on the shop-floor and their perceptions of it and their social and economic relationship to the very place they work in are rarely there.

What further necessitates a study on retail shop-floor employees is the preference for women for employment in this sector. Although the data shows that women are still very few, yet the growing preference for women calls for an investigation, especially when the labour market, in the urban sector is deeply gendered. These new forms of labour market are interesting in other aspects as well. Not dependent on technical or professional academic qualifications, these jobs provide an opportunity to millions of people, often from weaker sections of the society to get into waged labour, thereby participating in the growing neoliberal globalization in the society. For a sociologist, it becomes pertinent to study the nature of this participation. It is further complicated by the fact that there are hardly any labour organisation that binds this labour force. Usually, any trade union activity is barred from these neoliberal spaces as conditions of employment. In trying to understand the nuances about conditions of employment and trying to address the above issues, my study, hopefully, can attempt to answer broader questions related to Neo-liberalism and its ramifications on the body engaged in service-oriented employment and broader issues related to the nature of modernity, work, consumption and the body in the present times.

Methodologically, the study stresses the importance of feminist methodologies which emphasize representation of women's voices. It asserts that studies of social realities can be more democratic in the nature of production of knowledge by listening to women's voices rather than invisibilizing them. An understanding of the lived realities of women, through the different intersectionalities of caste, class, gender, ethnicity, religion can render the

knowledge so produced as more holistic in nature. The study, which is based on mixed methods research, brings out why different methods were used in the study and how each of the methods helped in collecting different sets of data, at different stages of the research. It recognizes that belonging to the same sex category is not enough to build friendships on the field, rather it is the conversations around gendered roles that women were expected to perform that led have led to friendships beyond the duration of the study. The study makes it evident that the researcher had no intention of imposing her ideas of emancipation or feminism on the respondents. Doing so can at best be judgmental and detrimental to the aim of bringing out women's voices regarding their experiences of work, the personal lives and aspirations.

The study tries to understand the relationship between gender and work and its ramifications, by using Hochschild's concept of emotional labour (1983). Hochschild's feminist analysis of the self, interaction and structure can be useful to understand one of the most important requirements of labour on the shop-floor- emotional labour, which has become one of the absolute necessities of contemporary spaces of the service industry. The study focusses on the processes involved in the manufacture of emotional labour, which is often formatted and reinforced through constant training. It however asserts that in spite of the elaborate training mechanisms, the shop-floor employees cannot be seen as passive bodies on whom rules are enforced as is evident in the various ways of resistance on the shop floor. By conceiving the retail shop floor as a socio-emotional economy, as theorised by Clark (1997) the importance of certain form of the presentation of the self like smiling, politeness as valuable resources in capitalist economy is reiterated. These valuable resources are reproduced through the process of emotional labour, on the shop floor thereby making it more than a static site of economic exchange.

The study also points out the importance of the body and its appearance in interactive service work. By focusing on women retail shop floor employees in the Hyderabad mall, employed in the apparel and cosmetic sections of multi-national brands, the study argues that employment in this sector requires working on one's body to produce a "presentable" body by grooming so as to fit the larger image that the mall presents. The body, in the context of retail shop floor employees, becomes both a process as well as a site. The body as a process is never a finished product (Schilling, 2003) and needs constant care so as to attract more customers as well as to exhibit the goodness of the products that the employees have to sell. As a site, the body is the surface on which manufacturing of a particular image, which suits the brand, takes place. Aesthetic labour is thus performed by the shop assistants to personify the brands they are selling. And by personifying the brand, through clothing, behaviour and demeanour the workers create and enhance consumption. And thus, the workers become company representatives through the process of *corporate production of aesthetic labour* (Pettinger, 2005) by organisations that employ workers. By looking at the logic of corporate production of aesthetic labour functions, the study points at the prevalence of the male gaze through stylized uniforms and make-up. The presence of the mannequin and its dressing is also analysed to understand how it perpetuates stereotypes of the 'ideal' body through the apparent function of attracting customers or giving the customers an idea of the products on display. It then brings out the various ways of surveillance, enabled by technology, to maintain the image of the serving bodies on the shop-floor.

Through the concept of *layered space* (Sam, 2012), this study to understand the nature of a shopping mall both as a place of work and the space of work that it produces, and how there are multiple forms of *layering* within the shopping mall that is often seen as an important

site of consumption only. These different layering play out between customers and employees, and even amongst employees, based on their location on the different layers of differentiated spaces. In doing that it tries to show how hierarchies of caste, class and gender play out in the space that the mall produces. The analysis recognises that these different layers of the space, are never fixed and static, rather run into each other. It is this fluidity that makes it important to read the shopping mall as a place and a space of work vis-à-vis as a site of consumption. In trying to understand the different layers created by the shopping mall and its experience by the women employees, the thesis looks at the location of the mall in the city itself, which is an exclusive space by nature.

The study, thus is an attempt to understand labour in neoliberal spaces of consumption. It tries to understand through emerging work cultures, which are part of an internationally accepted culture of serving, the nuances of women's experience of working in these globally familiar work spaces. The nuances show the emergence of neoliberal subjectivities that capitalism seeks to boost at the individual level, especially women, through the ideals of being successful as a wage-earner, while at the same time continuing with its exploitative nature at the structural level.

### **SCOPE and DIRECTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH**

The changing nature of labour and the various contexts from which it is operating forms the basis for this study. Sociologically, these contexts are constitutive of gender, class, and other marginalities evident in the larger space of the city whose landscape is itself producing exclusions and inequalities, due to the capitalist processes. These global cities cannot function without creation of a class which serves its elite. The production of this class has its basis in creating non-people (Ritzer, 2004) globally as an over-arching category yet

having local specificities and versions of the global homogeneity. Further, through the study, we can see, how globalisation acts on an individual level. While it is true that capitalist globalisation has created more inequalities than ever, it is also true that those who are able to participate in these new structures, do experience concrete material changes in their lives. The study shows an understanding of new places of work and the spaces produced, for example physical inclusion occurring simultaneously with spatial exclusion. The study can be located in the sociological literature on work and labour and provide a starting point to understand the increasing importance of emotional and aesthetic labour in the work place. The deeper proliferation of these forms of labour in the service sectors, for example in the house-keeping and their constant need for assessment, seen in the elaborate 'feedback system' reasserts the need to understand labour in spaces designed for consumption.

An urgent need is for a sociological study of new forms of labour, the thousands of cab-drivers in the city, mostly employed by international firms like Uber or national ones like Ola. While these cabs mark the global city, getting booked through digital applications and getting paid digitally, thereby getting projected as success stories of boom in the story of local transportation, there is a need to understand their structure of the organisation they work, the rating system which is supposed to be indicative of their efficiency and the training they receive to deal with customers. Secondly, with the growth of e-commerce and increasing employment opportunities for men and women, in warehouses for example, without any or limited customer interaction, there is a need to understand the changing nature of the service sector. Retail e-commerce web sites have been a huge recipient of investments. It will be interesting to observe, how they affect the mall culture in a country like India. Thirdly, further studies can be taken up in the beauty industry which has expanded enormously in terms of market share. The number of women in beauty and the wellness

industry, emphasizing the need for a desirable body through exercise, yoga beauty products to conceal age shows the marked difference between the inner body and the outer body and how there is a need for a constant working out on the outer body to be a part of this new capitalist culture which thrives on injecting insecurities into people about their own bodies. Further, studies in the area of commodification of care can go beyond looking at the emergence of creches, which is anyway catering to the needs of the elite, to an understanding of how care-givers at these places carry out their own care-giving responsibilities in their domestic lives. The diverse forms of care work that have emerged with the neoliberal city, for example, pet spas or dog-walkers can not only throw light on new dimensions of care but also complicate the concept of emotional labour. The above forms of labour point at the increasing feminization of labour, engaging both men and women, yet are increasingly low-waged. These phenomena can be understood in the larger context of capitalist cultures of consumption in a neoliberal regime.

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