

Seminar: Conversations on Social Reproduction

TITLE: Valuing unpaid domestic labour in maintenance and alimony claims

SPEAKER: Saumya Maheshwari, Assistant Professor at BML Munjal University

WHEN: Monday, October 3rd, 12 - 1.00pm BST/4:30-5.30pm IST

WHERE: Teams; [Follow the link to join](#)



Saumya Maheshwari teaches law at the School of Law, BML Munjal University in Haryana, India. In the past, she has worked as a matrimonial disputes lawyer before courts in Delhi and as a researcher with domestic and international organizations advocating for women's and queer people's rights. Presently, her research interests focus on economic entitlements within marriage and family and the processes involved in their adjudication before family courts.

Saumya will present her research findings on whether domestic labour performance influences the quantum of maintenance (spousal support) awarded by courts in Delhi, India at the time of divorce. This research is based on a close analysis of relevant case law along with the case study of a recently divorced woman. It asks whether Indian family law can be reformed to value and quantify domestic and care work (DCW) upon marital breakdown to determine the wife's financial entitlements and whether such reform is desirable. Finally, it raises fundamental questions about family law as a site for solutions, and as a tool for redistribution of resources.

SEMINAR SERIES: This social reproduction seminar series is part of the Laws of Social Reproduction project led by Prof. Prabha Kotiswaran, and based at King's College London and IWWAGE Delhi.

Feminist scholars have long demonstrated the invisibility of women's reproductive labour, with feminist economists striving to get international agencies and national governments to redraw the "production boundary" to ensure the recognition of women's unpaid labour. Today mainstream international institutions acknowledge that women's unpaid labour hinders their participation in the formal economy, particularly in the Global South. Nonetheless, there remains an absence of commitment from states and international institutions to such systemic reforms. Anchored in the context of India, our project thus conceptualises women's reproductive labour to include unpaid domestic work, but also abject forms of labour performed by women outside of the institutional domain of marriage and for the market, namely, sex work, erotic dancing, commercial surrogacy and paid domestic work.

The Laws of Social Reproduction project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (under grant agreement No. 772946). For more information about the project, please email Prabha.kotiswaran@kcl.ac.uk.



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