

Domestic help amid a pandemic – blessing or curse?

The dramatic turn of events we witnessed in the year 2020 was unlike any other. From having a hard time to figure out what a global pandemic is all about to quickly adjusting with the new normal, this year consisted of severe highs and lows.

While some days, we find ourselves bustling with activities and at other times, our everyday life seems humdrum and monotonous, life keeps going. The rapid and unprecedented spread of the novel coronavirus barely left any aspect of life untouched, and even house chores were not spared from this.

Our society is particularly habituated to the practice of seeking domestic helpers to complete chores with ease. To some extent, we are even dependent on such practices and this is seen as the norm.

With the growing number of nuclear families and working couples, the assistance these workers provide is crucial for a modern household, not to mention the general resistance towards the use of technology some of us retain. By creating a steady flow of income for the provider, it creates a win-win situation for both parties, after all.

However, along with several adjustments we were compelled to make in order to get acquainted to the current situation, we had to bid goodbye to this luxury as well, even if temporarily. Albeit it left a lingering impact on society as a whole, this of course, did not affect everyone in the same manner.

The humble homemaker

In an attempt to maintain the house immaculate even under such dire circumstances, this situation took a heavy toll, especially on the women. Needless to say, this dawned a much-needed realisation upon other members of the family, making them more appreciative of the huge contribution our mothers pay that is often taken for granted.

In light of this matter, Insiya Khan, research associate at BIGD, shares her personal



experience, stating, "When the pandemic was at its peak, unfortunately my mother fell ill. Having no access to domestic help that we once took for granted, we divided house chores among ourselves. It is then that we realised how altruistically mum performs all these tasks on a daily basis."

Tweaking our lifestyle

As for others who had no alternative helping hand, they were bound to find a way around this by bringing certain changes in their usual lifestyle, to the extent of developing unhealthy eating habits.

"Most days, I feel exhausted from completing all the housework and end up spontaneously ordering dinner online. My tendency to consume packed and processed food also increased during this time," says Sheuli Parvin, a homemaker.

Additionally, time management has also been a challenging issue. Struggling to complete house chores while adapting to the work-from-home regime, working couples were suddenly burdened with a frenzy of

tasks to accomplish. Being consumed with work throughout the day, only to become night owls later to finish remaining office work adversely affected productivity, as well as health.

Dissolving the attribution of roles

Amid all the negativity lurking around, fortunately this entire scenario brought about some positive changes as well. With the men of the family also lending a helping hand in getting house chores done, the line between who performs what task is gradually beginning to blur.

For a society that mostly adheres to a patriarchal belief, this change was much needed to alter our perspective for the better.

"Previously, my dad was reluctant to help with house chores, even during the weekend. But now, he willingly contributes to the completion of household tasks, and seems happy to do so!" says Samiya Irshad, a student at NSU.

Family bonding

Furthermore, accomplishing tasks together,

no matter how small, seems to improve family bonding. "It has become a norm in my family to prepare Friday lunch together. My mum cooks the meal with my dad shooting unwanted suggestions from the background, while my brother and I set the table and giggle at their affectionate altercation," laughs Sharose Islam, business intern at SELISE.

While most people acquired at least one new skill, many even discovered their true passion and zeal!

"Being thrown in at the deep end right after my graduation seems extremely unfair. However, I utilised the time to polish my baking skills and now I get regular orders from friends and acquaintances, with sufficient help and support from my family members to meet these demands," Armina Rahman, a fresh graduate, exclaims joyfully.

On the opposite end

But the question remains – what about the other side of the story?

As much as we faced turbulences while dealing with it all, the domestic workers also faced equal trouble, if not more, as this caused interference with their primary source of income. Even the ones considered to be a malingerer eventually became desperate to re-join work.

On the other hand, many were waiting to grab this opportunity when the situation finally alleviates. Needless to say, we have unknowingly become interdependent on each other for everyday survival and this situation came tagged with the realisation of our helplessness in several ways.

Albeit all the pessimism this pandemic brought upon all of us, it has also successfully taught us new ways of survival as we alter our lifestyle in some way or the other and learn to adjust. Maybe after all, it is a beacon of hope for a more independent and self-sufficient society.

By Fariha Amber

Photo: Collected

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Make changes to your living quarters. Find ways to enjoy yourself. Your knowledge will enhance your reputation. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Keep your temper in check. Travel should be on your agenda. Avoid making any changes this week. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Social events will be beneficial. Real estate decisions will be favourable. Work for some extra money. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

No one will stand in your way. Look into moneymaking ventures. Avoid big residential moves. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Don't let anyone take advantage of you. Talk to someone you trust. Romantic encounters are likely. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Don't start pointless arguments. Look into fitness programs. Loved ones may not understand your needs. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Changes at home can be disruptive. Romantic relationships should stabilise. Find the root of your problems. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Time will make things better. Minor accidents may happen. Travel could be plagued with issues. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Clear up any pending work. Ask for assistance. Take on home improvement projects. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Co-workers may deceive you. Don't pick problems with your partner. Don't get blindsided by others. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Enemies may be holding a grudge. Work can lead to new romantic opportunities. Don't jump to conclusions. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Spend quality time with your partner. Listen to other's problems. Help those less fortunate. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.