

Sarita Devi Pal

Sarita Devi Pal, a 30-year-old domestic help from Ghazipur, Delhi, spends her days moving through the kitchen, her hands moving deftly as she chops vegetables, stirs pots, and cooks meals for her clients at their home. Pal is a domestic helper and a mother of two boys— 10 and 12. She works in different houses (she comes on call) and helps women with cooking and organizing in different houses.

Pal is a whirlwind of activity throughout the day, taking care of everything from meal prep to cleaning and organizing spaces. She moves effortlessly between tasks, never missing a beat or slowing down momentarily.

"I may not have a fancy job, but my work is just as important as anyone else's," Pal said.

As the day wears on, Pal's movements become more frenzied, her pace quickening as she strives to get everything done before the day is done. But even amid this feverish rush, she never loses her calm or focus, remaining steady and centered in the face of even the most daunting challenges.

At another client's home, Pal sits on a stool in the kitchen, focusing intently on the pile of tomatoes in front of her. With a quick flick of her wrist, she expertly slices through the vegetable, her hands moving with a practiced ease that speaks to years of experience and dedication.

Despite the injury to her foot, Pal refuses to let it slow her down. She is determined to provide her children with a better life and a brighter future, and her commitment to that goal is evident in every aspect of her work. Now, around noon, Sarita starts wrapping things up and goes to pick up her children from school, and arrives home.

Pal and her family reside in a compact, one-room dwelling that serves as both their refuge and confinement. The room is minimally furnished, containing only a solitary bed pushed against a wall and two chairs huddled together in a corner. However, despite the limited space and resources, Pal and her husband have created a cozy and hospitable atmosphere for their children. The walls are embellished with vibrant posters and images, and the air is infused with joyous laughter and affectionate affection.

She speaks of her children with fierce pride and determination as she chops tomatoes. "I work hard so my children can have a better life and a brighter future," she said, her voice ringing with conviction. "I want them to have opportunities I never had, to go to private schools and access better jobs and a more comfortable lifestyle," she said.

Her husband works as a security guard at night, taking care of their children during the day, while Sarita is out working in the day as domestic help. It is a partnership that is both rare and admirable, a testament to their shared commitment to creating a more equal and just world for themselves and their children. Despite their challenges, she and her husband remain dedicated to their children's education and well-being. They work tirelessly to provide for them, sacrificing their needs and desires to ensure their children have a brighter future.

As the day drew to a close, Pal and her family gathered around in the center of the bed, sharing a simple meal and discussing the day's events. Pal stands and prepares the Indian bread and serves it fresh in the small, cramped room that is her home. Now, her second shift begins at home. At her home, her hands move with practiced ease as she goes about her daily tasks, whether cooking a simple meal on the small stove or folding clothes on the single chair that doubles as a workspace. Despite the challenges of living in such close quarters, everything she does has a sense of order and purpose.

Pal's husband and two sons are also present in the room, and their shared love and commitment to one another are evident in how they interact. They move around each other quickly, their bodies unconsciously shifting to make space for one another in the tiny room. A palpable sense of warmth and connection fills the air as they talk and laugh. They are filled with hope and the possibility of a brighter tomorrow.