

# **CHAPTER-3**

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### WORK AND MODERN MANAGEMENT: LITERATURE REVIEW

Life and work are inseparable. Work signifies life. Ever since birth till death, work is inevitable. The motive, quality and quantum of work do undergo a change for each individual and from individual to individual even under similar set of circumstances. This makes it an interesting field of study for understanding human motivations and behaviour. Meaning making is intrinsic to all human beings. The template is provided by the persona or self.

There are several ways and dimensions which may define the context in which the meaning of 'work' could be searched. From an individual's view point the issues could reflect quite different perspective as compared to societal contexts.

Typically work has been defined as effort necessary for production. Family and community are identified with social functions of reproductions, nurturing and consumption. Education is associated with children and youth. Leisure is dominated by attention to relative freedom and intrinsic meaning. Life thus gets divided into demarcated domains and illusory areas for intellectual enquiry.

In an interesting research done in 1955, posing "the lottery question"<sup>101</sup> on the function and meaning of work in USA, 80% of the employed respondents indicated that they would continue to work even in the absence of any further need to earn money (Morse & Weiss, 1955). It could be expected that men, older individuals, those with high educational level, those with high work centrality, high obligation norm, low instrumental orientation, high interpersonal relations and high occupational satisfaction will tend to continue working in the case of 'winning' the lottery.

In contrast women, younger individuals, those with low educational level, individuals with low work centrality, low obligation norm, low instrumental orientation, low interpersonal relations and low occupational satisfaction will tend to quit working in the event of 'winning' the lottery. Subsequent studies conducted by others among different occupational groups also confirmed the same. (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976; Kaplan & Tausky, 1974; Tausky, 1969; Vecchio, 1980).

Even to address the hypothetical situation and its consequences on responses, Kaplan, (1985) reports that in his study of 576 'actual' lottery winners in USA only 11% of them 'ceased' working.

Work meanings have a dynamic and reversible interaction between the person and the work environment. Meaning patterns help us to study major meaning dimension; for instance, work centrality, work goals and societal norms about working (MOW International Research Team, 1987)<sup>102</sup>.

### 3.1 MEANING OF WORK (MOW) STUDY<sup>103</sup>

Work and human existence, thus, are so closely interconnected that they become critical for developing strategies for organizing human resources at operational and organizational levels. The behavior of individuals and groups to a large extent is determined by the 'meaning of work' that they hold.

Why people work has been extensively researched but changing contexts also keep the meanings of 'work' also changing. In the wake of globalization it becomes necessary to understand economic, cultural and social perspectives of work which impinges on the meaning of 'work' in India.

Psychology, sociology, economics, politics, science and religion--all provide the wide canvass, warp and weft of life that define the expanse of issues involved. It is not uncommon to come across phrase like – work is worship. This takes the whole issue on a much higher plane of discussion. Other perspectives could be-'work and worship' or 'work as worship'. Therefore, there exists ample opportunity to deal with the subject of 'work' from stand points of body, mind and intellect (physical body, intelligence, emotions and spirituality).

Extrinsic and Intrinsic motivators have been listed to prepare a person for enhanced productivity and output. These are primarily based on the drivers as propounded in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is a curious phenomenon that existence of a "hierarchy" in respect of 'needs' is itself open to question and debate – does a human mind work based on any 'hierarchy' of needs. or that there is a 'simultaneous' existence of a set of needs. These may be pertaining to safety, security, prosperity,

growth and happiness. Economic, physical, psychological and emotional needs of building relationships or even searching for a 'true' meaning in individuals' work falling in the domain of spirituality may simultaneously exist.



The fundamental issue, therefore, which has to be addressed, is developing an understanding of 'meaning of work' without which a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of why people work is not feasible. The context, thus assumes importance.

Therefore, if the context is **intellectual**, one set of meaning would emerge. Similarly, if the context is **emotional**, it would lead to another set of meaning. Further, driven by **spiritual** pursuits, the meaning of work may assume a dimension which is vitally different from the previous two yet none may be complete, needing yet another **integrated** perspective.

An attempt is made in this chapter to capture some of the salient viewpoints that emanate from the body of specific researches and explorations conducted in the backdrop of different cultural milieus which help in developing an understanding of the meaning of 'work' and have relevance in the field of management.

### 3.2 WORK AND MANAGEMENT

While multifunctional analysis covering the fields of psychology, sociology, economics and political philosophy may help in gaining insights into meaning of work that may help management to develop strategies, systems and processes yet these will have obvious limitations as the issues involved are not mere transformation of leisure into commodity or treating human being as programmable creature worthy of perpetual exploitation but are based on foundation of thinking and idea nurtured by each individual on the aspect of 'work'.

At the organizational level, for instance, 'spirituality' in the workplace may be viewed as an organizational culture that is guided by mission, leadership, and business practices that are value-driven; that recognizes the contributions that employees make to the organization; and that promotes personal spiritual development and well-being

of employees (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). Creativity in management becomes an imperative and integrally linked with work. It is interesting that if the economic perspective is accepted for defining the work, search of financial rewards becomes dominant strategy in a managerial context.

We have no coherent theory available to make sense of findings regarding influence of historical, social, political, economic, job and individual factors on the meaning of work (Brief and Nord, 1990). While a very rich domain of potential causal factors are captured and the meaning of work at various levels – individual, occupational and national- are analyzed, perhaps **no one single theory can provide** adequate explanation across levels of theory. Developing understanding about multiplicity of factors affecting meaning of ‘work’ thus assumes significance. Therefore we have different theories to help us to understand the meaning of work at various levels. Some of them are discussed here.

Management literature, while dealing with the subject of maximization of wealth, preferentially highlights the well being of workers as a constraint and not as a management objective per-se. The evolution of the management thought process, also travels along the trajectory sometimes initiated by earlier thinkers namely Elton Mayo (1949), who believed that enterprises should seek the cooperation of its workers which would lead to living with flatter organizations and the workers would also have substantial control over their jobs. Work thus, holds a socio-economic orientation.

Frederick Winslow Taylor (1964) highlighted reduction of emphasis on particular skill sets, a hierarchical structure and reduced participation of workers in management. The socio-technical dimension of work could also be appreciated. Critics have rejected the premise of both schools of thought.

Chris Argyris (1964) says that work-place conflict is normal and had caused managers to establish controls in the first place.

There is a great deal of concern for societies’ optimal allocation of resources, adherence to fundamental democratic tenets and securing social justice (Sen, A., 1977).

Those who own the economic resources are implicated positively or negatively by virtue of their legal ownership of work places to design the jobs, physical environment and organizational structure. In a managerial context, there are at least the following stake holders whose interests have to be served through the hands and minds of those who work for the enterprises:

Consumers	Shareholder	Suppliers
Creditors	Communities	Governments
	Employees	Researchers & Analysts

The satisfaction of the interest of one stakeholder may result into conflict with the interest of another stakeholder. For instance, maximization of earnings and declaration of dividends may be at the cost of customer's interests. Lack of corresponding increase in the wages of employees could lead to adverse impact on their interest. The question, therefore, would be as to which segment of these stakeholders is concerned with 'work' in enterprises. Does therefore, the 'meaning of work' undergo a change in respect of each?

Considerable amount of work has been done to address these issues in the context of managing conflict of interests but not underscoring the role of meaning of 'work' that impinges on conflict management process. Arthur Brief (1991) suggests that we should move towards multiple theory of the meaning of work that varies by level of analysis and in the competing causal mechanism.

Several theories of motivation therefore have been concerned with programmed tools and techniques of learning the skills – including at times becoming manipulative or Machiavellian – to develop deftness among managers for managing the tasks or people.

In view of human paucity of understanding of meaning of work, it may be useful that developmental effort be approached by attempt to discover grounded theories. He demonstrated as to how meaning affects processes and outcomes currently of interest within the community. The meaning of work, economically interpreted, influences the arousal of cognitive dissonance at work.

In a review, it is observed that meaningful work is discussed in relation to subjective concerns such as self-esteem as well as objective concerns such as the social contribution of one's work, and working conditions for the powerless. Similarly, meaningful work is also related to objective concerns such as security and dignity as well as subjective concerns such as caring relationships (Ayers et al. 2008).

Researchers have attempted to understand the determinants of work meaning patterns including work environment (organizational quality, occupational situation), the work behaviors, personal characteristics and also the outcomes like psychological well being and subsequent behaviors. Consequences of work meaning patterns may also influence organizational policies and can have societal implications (Brief and Nord, 1990: Shapira & Griffith, 1990: Brief 1991: Leibowitz, 1992: Aston, et al. 1990).

### 3.3 WORK CENTRALITY, LIFE AND VALUES

Work centrality is one of the most important concepts in the meanings that people attach to work. This becomes significant for organizations since it was found that work centrality is related to some important organizational variables; for instance, participation in decision making and job satisfaction resulted in longer job tenure (Kanungo, 1982., Dubin & Champoux, 1977). Work could be treated as one form of human activity and therefore the meaning of work has to be understood in terms of the relations of working sphere of activities to other spheres of activities in one's life (Heller et al. 1998).

Lee & Kanungo (1984), Super (1982) strongly agree that "research on molecular topics, like the work values and ethics should be conceptualized on the wider, molar level of human existence. **By integrating these two levels we substantially increase the policy relevance of research findings**".

Dissatisfying work setting will encourage individuals to withdraw from work either by absence or by changing jobs (Arnold & Feldman, 1982). The relationship between dissatisfaction with work and absenteeism and turnover has also been investigated by Carsten & Spector (1987) and Tett & Meyer (1993). Seashore (1973) finds an ultimate form of withdrawal from work without trying to secure other gainful employment. He maintains that individuals can escape psychologically from an

unsatisfying job by changing their value structure regarding important values such as skill usage and the function of income or by seeking primary value realization of the job.

Economic instrumental and social or intrinsic reasons exist for centrality of work. It is emphasized that people work for satisfying their material and the tenability needs. Concurrently the importance of work is also viewed as a socio-psychological or intrinsic requirement. Is work really central to life? Dubin (1956) and associates found evidence that work is not universally central. One neo Marxist, Andre Gorz (1971) proposed that skill and craft have become so foreign to the work place that the workers are best served by repudiating any work ethic and idea of work as enriching and meaningful.

The motivational meaning of work can be revealed by empirical association with the integrated system of basic values.

Basic values --classified as intrinsic, extrinsic, social and prestige-- are typically in response to:

- needs of individuals as biological organisms,
- requirements of social existence ; and
- survival and growth needs of groups.

Elizur, 1984; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Super, 1980 ,have attempted to explore the ways in which individuals' value- priorities relate to their attitudes, behavior and social experiences and roles. One branch of this research has focused primarily on work.

The values also may result in conflicts of various kinds. For instance pursuits of achievement values could conflict with pursuits of benevolent values, seeking individual success for oneself may conflict with enhancing the welfare of those in need of help, pursuit of traditional values may conflict with pursuit of stimulation values, cultural and religious customs may inhibit innovation and excitement. Similarly benevolence and conformity may be compatible with each other.



Studies that examined association between work values and basic individual values reveal that intrinsic work values opposed extrinsic work values. Likewise prestige work values opposed social work values.

There has been divergence of views on expansions of the theoretical frame work where researchers have made an attempt to correlate work -values with basic human values along the following lines: -

- Intrinsic: work -value – openness to change values (autonomy, interest, growth, creativity in work)
- Extrinsic: conservation values – (job security, maintenance of orderly life)
- Social values: self- transcendence values (social relations and contribution to society).

A fourth distinctive type of work value—self enhancement- concerned with prestige or power signifying achievement, advancement, status, recognition, and influence in the organization implies personal superiority.

Elizur (1984) gave trichotomous classification of work-values by considering the modality of their outcomes, such as work condition and benefits, cognitive out comes such as interest and achievement, affective outcome such as relations with associates. This classification largely overlaps extrinsic, intrinsic and social values respectively.

The famous MOW (1987) project team conceptualized the meaning of work on multiple dimensions, namely;

- centrality in people's life,
- importance both in itself and relative to other life areas,
- the goals it promotes; and
- societal norms that define it.

The following components of the meaning of work – although theoretically distinct dimensions– are thought to function as **multidimensional** construct in categories of social, expressive and instrumental domains (Ruiz Quintanilla 1991):

**Work centrality** – defined as the degree of general importance that working has in the life of an individual at any point of time. The concept is derived from Dubin's (1956) central life interest, Lodahl & Kegner's (1965) work involvement and Rabinowitz & Hall's (1977) approach of an individual identification with the work role.

**Work goals** – defined as the relative importance of eleven work goals and values that are sought or preferred by individuals in their work life. (Rokeach, 1973)

**Societal norms**–Entitlement norms represent rights of an individual and work related responsibilities of society and organization and the obligation norms represent the duties of all individuals to organization and to society.

**Work definitions** – reasons for doing or working, personal outcomes resulting from engagement and constraints related to performance as work.

Ruiz Quintanilla & Wilpert (1991) suggested that “work centrality” construct is more determined by individual's past socialization whereas job involvement is more determined by the present situational forces operating on the individual. **Longitudinal studies therefore are required to resolve issues in such cases.**

Work meanings are values, belief and expectation that individuals hold. They are influenced by society through institutions, socialization agents such as the family, work organizations and society at large. Work meanings, function as a kind of reference frame- work for action through holding individual belief on what outcome should be expected and desired from work (work goals), what one has to give or wants to give in the work situation (societal norms about working) to achieve those outcomes and to what degree one identifies with work, one's self image. One way to understand the meaning of work for individuals is to identify the basic values that people associate with work. Values influence what people believe to be legitimate and hence define what they will tolerate. Work meanings can be seen as shared interpretation of what people want and expect from work. This influences individual action and nature of society.

Values of life lie at the foundation of human conduct and action. Work –more importantly human disposition towards work--is also one set of values. Hence, work itself can be included in the list of values to which people respond. Work-value researchers have assumed that a limited number of broad orientations towards work underlie peoples' ideas of what is important to them when making occupational choices.

Extrinsic work values correlated positively with conservation values and negatively with openness to change values whereas intrinsic work values correlated negatively with conservation values and positively to openness to change values. The social work values correlated positively with self transcendent values and negatively with self enhancement values. Prestige work values correlated negatively with self transcendence value and positively with self enhancement values. Social values correlated positively with conservatism and negatively with openness to change basic values whereas prestige work values showed the opposite pattern of correlations. This finding suggests that **social and prestige work values** are also expression of additional basic values in the work setting. Inglehart (1990) and Yankelovich (1981) have argued that changes in social values are accompanied by changes in the meaning that are attached to work. Autonomy to interesting work become more important, than the moral importance to hard work and craftsmanship resulting in to at least partly being responsible for decrease in productivity (Cherrington, 1980).

To address this problem, social scientist came up with the **technique of job enrichment** by providing higher levels of autonomy, variety and responsibility to employees. Other approaches try to utilize training and education to re-establish values.

### 3.4 WORK, LEISURE, ECONOMICS and FAMILY

Economists have been concerned with looking at the positive or negative aspects of paid work in the context of opportunity to generate wealth. It is here that classical economics has propounded that a worker tries to look at an optimal solution between work and leisure. This trade-off becomes important from an economic stand point in organizations and has been an important driver of developing management tools and techniques, policies, systems and processes to help optimization. The value changes

are also affected by economic conditions: East Germany saw this phenomenon with a striking increase in the importance of materialistic values (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995) when unemployment from an official rate of close to Zero in 1990, rose to 30% within two years. Purely from economic consideration, the positive aspect of paid work implies opportunities to make more money. Another trade -off in this regard is the loss of leisure. Leisure has been said to be distinguished by purely intrinsic motivations (Neulinger, 1974).

A study in Israel reveals that early 1980s signified an end of an era when extrinsic values and altruism were part of Judeo – Protestant work ethic and provided the work centrality. Due to change in values, relative job insecurity and strengthening of materialistic values, work became conceivably central to individuals, primarily because of its instrumentality in their lives (Harpaz, 1999).

Addressing the distinction between interest and wants, Caporaso & Levine (1992) suggested that these are “clearly in the purview of choosing agents (that is when they consciously pursue their interest) when they are not consciously aware of the importance of various out comes but where those out comes can be demonstrated to affect welfare of a person, we speak of interest”.

The common work-leisure dichotomy (Parker, 1971) with work presumed to be primary was expanded to include family life as a third domain in which centrality might be found. Leisure itself may be alienated as well as expressive, repressed as well as free (Kelly, 1992).

Community and intimacy are opposed by separation and alienation, productivity by worthlessness and development by a lack of challenge. Engagement in work may be only instrumental. The action basis of leisure may be truncated into mere consumption (Kelly, 1987a).<sup>104</sup>

Leisure may be an extrinsic reward for alienated work. “Each day men sell little pieces of themselves in order to buy them back each night and weekend with the coin of fun” (Mills, 1951).

Leisure may thus be instrumental and repressed rather than a domain of unlimited freedom and intrinsic meaning. Such repression is accentuated by gender, race and social class in ways that not only limit opportunities and resources for meaningful action (Allison & Duncan, 1987) but also define meanings in ways that constrict what is seen as possible, acceptable and desirable (Kelly & Godbey, 1992). This makes it interesting.

Learning is a major dimension of leisure that has a continuity of development and the challenge of standards of excellence and competence (Stebbins, 1979). The satisfactions of leisure are more than immediate pleasure and involve a sense of becoming a person more competent and more connected with other persons (Kelly, 1987 a).

Life contexts are interwoven. Life contrasts are equally appreciable. The outcome of work has many hues. Freud (1930) proposed that to be human is to work and to love.

Abramson and Inglehart (1995) found that increasing rates of inflation and unemployment led to a marked increase in materialistic value. Economic condition led to a rise in importance attributed to earnings, money and other subsistence and material values including job security (Harpaz, 1999).

Social, political and economic changes from a highly collectivist society to a relatively individualist society, negative labour market condition, and high unemployment and inflation may explain to some extent the increase in the importance of typical instrumental aspect of work such as good pay and job security (Harpaz, 1999).

Jahoda (1982) offered a conceptual frame work, whose starting point was her observation that in modern advanced industrial societies paid work, must be understood not merely as a vital economic organ but also as a central social institution. She identified two major functions of paid employment – “manifest” & “latent”. The manifest function deals with the financial reward – financial deprivation and its impact on the psychological well being of the family. The latent function is

associated with paid work as an institution – defense of participation in a collective purpose and effort.

#### **3.4.1 Roles, health and stress**

Conservation theory assumes that people strive to obtain and maintain that which they value (their resources). Negative outcome occurs when these resources are lost or become inadequate. Work demands include role ambiguity, work pressure and workload and resources include control, participation in decision making and job autonomy (Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Job demands threaten one's resources and trigger stress in the form of exhaustion.

Abouserie (1996) found that the participants in her study – university academic staff – considered “conducting research” and not “teaching” as the main cause of stress at work. Teachers who experience greater demands on their time, attention and energy than others while receiving fewer rewards and recognition run the risk of becoming exhausted and alienated from their work life (Burke, Greenglass and Schwarzer, (1996), Maslach and Leiter (1997), Van Horn, Schaufell and Enzmann, 1999 ).

According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), stress arises when individuals perceive themselves as unable to meet environmental demands (appraisal). Thus cognitive processes linked with environmental demands get connected to the outcomes. Meaning of work thus plays significant role in determining impact on individuals' level of stress.

Conservation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989., Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993) & Appraisal theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) provide a good theoretical background for study of stresses and psychological impact in a work situation.

### **3.5 WORK -LIFE BALANCE AND GENDER ROLES**

The meaning that people ascribe to work and home can vary by gender. Individuals reported differences in desired means at home and work: ‘responsible’ and ‘capable’ were ranked the most important means to achieve ends at work, and ‘loving’ and ‘giving’ were ranked the most important means at home. Therefore, while the different domains of work and home are interdependent, they do have different

cultures or rules. The increase in the number of families with working parents has made the old models of co-ordinating work and home-life inappropriate for the majority of the workforce (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1999). Although most men and women report that they value their family more than their work, different gender roles prescribe different emphasis for men and women (Gutek, Nakamura, & Nieva, 1981).

Thus it is plausible that gender roles will affect the way women and men perceive the domains of work and home. It is possible to speculate that demands in the same-sex role domain (i.e. work for men, home for women) may be felt more strongly, and that consequently demands in the opposite role domain will be felt as more of an imposition.

Women reported significantly greater levels of stress in the workplace compared to men. For example, men are frequently older, have been on the job longer, and make more money than women even when they occupy similar positions (McDonald & Korabik, 1991; Murphy, Beaton, Cain, & Pike, 1994; Scott, et al. 2000).

An important aspect of understanding the language that people use to describe their work and non-work-lives is that it can help us to understand how people experience stress associated with both domains. A consistent finding in stress research is that individuals and groups can differ in their response to certain roles and types of stress. The meanings individuals attached to role identities had implications for their mental health (Simon, 1995). Although different explanations have been suggested for this phenomenon, an increasingly recognized one is the meaning that a role (or stressor) or the 'work' has for a person.

Maslow (1954) defined 'healthy' people as those who were motivated primarily by achievement of self actualization which he thought was the force creating dynamism and remains active through-out one's life. He saw following characteristics as integral to health:

- Superior perception of reality.
- Increased acceptance of self, of others and nature.
- Increased spontaneity.

- Increased problem centering.
- Increased detachment and desire for privacy.
- Increased autonomy.
- Appreciation of emotional reaction.
- Higher frequency of peak experiences.
- Increased identification with human species.
- Improved inter-personal relations.
- Democratic character.
- Increased creativity.
- Changes in value system.

### 3.5 WORK, SELF- MOTIVATION AND BEHAVIOUR

In the work domain, two conflicting themes have been counter posed. One is the “Work ethic” theme that presumes that a fundamental values commitment to work and the centrality of economic roles in the life of the employee. The second is the alienation theme that focuses on the “Iron cage” of control over the worker and consequent destruction of both community and a sense of worthwhile productivity (Andrew,1981).

There have been several interpretations of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (model of motivation) in the form of pyramid diagrams<sup>105</sup>. Generally accepted hierarchy – in pyramidal form – is as follows (beginning from the top of the pyramid):

- Self actualization – personal growth and fulfillment.
- Esteem – Status, responsibility, reputation and achievement.
- Belongingness and love – relationships, family, groups.
- Safety – security, order, stability.
- Biological and physiological – food, shelter, sex, sleep.

One of the interesting issues of this theory on motivation which makes it a subject of interest and exploration is – whether a person is motivated to work exactly for the needs in the ‘given order’ or that even though the lower order needs may not be satisfied still the driving force for ‘work’ in the minds of individuals could be the higher order needs.



What motivated workers on the job? Wages and security are certainly factors in gaining an acceptable level of performance. Kanter (1990), Vallas (1990) found that communication, challenge and opportunity are related to level of effort and attention. Kohn (1990) refers to multiple aspects of development as well as skill acquisition as learning that is one element in job satisfaction and is fostered by complexity and diversity. Epstein (1977) finds that home and work overlap and affect each other.

Behavioural scientists have found that high employee morale does not necessarily result in greater productivity as man's motivations are vastly more complex than can be explained in economic and social terms alone. The psychological contract implies that effort can be exchanged not only for money and social contact but for self esteem, autonomy, degrees of freedom and self actualization.

Sometimes even a change for better is experienced as a psychological loss. For instance, a promotion to top most level in an organization could result in a person becoming isolated and loner. Fear of failure and guilt of undue success – both substantially contribute towards thinking and articulating meaning out of 'work'.

From the psychological perspective (considering extrinsic as well as intrinsic needs of an individual), the literature emphasizes psychological significance of paid work and does not deny the direct psychological impact of financial state of individual.

Warr (1987) described important features of a good job proposing and stating following factors for individual well-being:

- Opportunity for control
- Opportunity for skill use
- Externally generated goals
- Variety
- Environmental clarity (presence of transparency and productive feed-back)
- Opportunity for inter-personal contacts (socialization)

He identified only three major job-traits, as linearly related to individual happiness:

- Valued social position
- Money

- Physical security

Exploring the psychological functions of paid work and the consequences of job loss, several authors have argued to support the proposition that psychological concept of self is significantly shaped by social interaction and impact of unemployment varies according to whether or not social stigma is attached to the unemployed (Rosenberg, 1979, 1981, Bandura, 1986, Kelvin & Jarrett, 1985, Silver & Wartman, 1980).

Self-concept also has a great bearing on how we perceive work. We perceive things sometimes not as they are but as we think they are. This is also affected by the role that we are required to perform. An individual tends to become a kind of person that a situation demands. Attitudes affect behaviour as much as attitude is shaped by behaviour.

There may be individuals with the capacity to cope up with job loss challenges and at the same time there could be fragile personalities who may not be in a position to withstand economic distress. For them meaning of work will be altogether different.

The literature provides evidence for relationship between work meanings and work behavior.

- Relationship between values and managerial success (England, 1975).
- Superior work- ethic values showed higher performance (Greenberg, 1977).
- Those with intrinsic orientation had a higher productivity (Kazanas, 1978).

Roberson (1990) mentions a variety of hypotheses of how work meanings influence the motivation process through their impact on environmental perception:-

- Work meanings influence expectancies (Naylor et al., 1980), instrumentalities (Lied & Pritchard, 1976) and the perception of fairness (Adams, 1965; Greenberg, 1979).
- Work meanings have an impact on goal setting and goal acceptance (Ryan 1970; Pinder 1984).
- Work meanings mediate a response to feed back. (Peace, 1987).

### 3.6 WORK AND WORK-PLACE SOCIETY

There are strong reasons to believe that human resources at the work place, at times, fall short of getting to a desirable social optimum. Prominent reasons could be:

- The conflict of profit maximization as opposed to the quest for power;
- Resource allocation not addressing fundamental social concerns;
- Mental and emotional welfare of workers gets sub-optimally addressed in the design of work at the work place.

Adam Smith envisaged that through market mechanism it was possible to secure higher wages for those engaged in less pleasant, less safe and more transient jobs. Bakke (1993) linked the capacity to withstand the psychological rigors of the job loss with the degree of control entrusted to the worker in their (now defunct) job. Little or no control, he observed, was associated with an essence of having little control on their own destiny. Jahoda (1982) argues that job loss creates a psychological deprivation. Psychologically bad jobs rely on external loci of control, undermining rather than nurturing workers.

Sociology challenges the concept of atomistic conduct and emphasises centrality of social action. It suggests that individual choices are critically affected by the cultural context, set of social controls, social networks, ethnicity and gender affiliations (Markus, 1987; Smelser & Swedberg, 1994). If the job content and the human relations in the work environment are in dissonance with social norms, then unhappiness at work is predictable, especially if employees are restricted in their ability to act as authentic individuals.

History of the ethnography of men's work has focused on the importance of informal relationships at the workplace (Hughes, 1958, Whyte, 1961). Such social interaction contributes to work satisfaction and provides informal communication about the nature of work itself (Granovetter, 1985). Torbert (1973), Halle (1984) and others have demonstrated that life at work has many connections with life at home and in the community.

### 3.7 WORK, LEADERSHIP, POLITICS AND POWER

The theory, while looking at work from the view point of political scientist, attempts to synthesise the design of jobs and interactions between management and employee as is obtained in a polity. Thus, in this context, managements do not get motivated only by the simple goal of profit maximization and the employees at the same time are not focused only on striking a trade-off of leisure for commodity but both look at 'work' from the view point of 'purpose' much higher that concerns sustainability of society and not merely their own organisations.

It is clear that an 'either/or' framework does not adequately explain the dynamic processes as much as a dialectical perspective becomes necessary for understanding the realities of life in society. This influences meaning of work. Marxist literature emphasizes class. Social scientists focus on socially privileged groups and political citizenship with governing a civil society.

What makes the society 'dynamic' is an area which has been explored from various dimensions. Freud identified 'sex' as major driver of society. Karl Marx propounded that pursuit of acquisition of 'wealth' was one of the important factors that made society dynamic. Bertrand Russel argued that both 'sex' and 'wealth' was not an end in themselves. Actually, it was pursuit of 'power' which led people to work where both 'sex' and 'wealth' was only a means to achieve that end of acquiring power.

Some authors, however, have viewed 'power' in a framework of 'instrumental rationality'. Rothschild (1971) observed that economics does not adequately deal with the question of 'power'. Extensive set of literature shows that the concept of instrumental rationality and denial of role of passions in guiding human conduct is extremely narrow to describe actual conduct or act as a normative guide to individual fulfillment. (Hargreaves Heap, 1989; Sen 1977, 1987).

The theory of "power motivation" (McClelland, 1965) highlights following three factors which are important while pursuing acquisition of power by individuals:

- High need for power: It states that a power motivated person should have intrinsic need for acquiring power.

- High achievement motivation: This suggests that a power motivated person should also have an intrinsic need to achieve certain significant milestones in life.
- Low need for affiliation: A power motivated person should have reduced emotional attachment with persons and situations, in case he is to pursue his power acquisition goals.

The issue of power and the quest for power is complex. Researchers see quest for power as a derivative phenomena with power being sought only as a means to achieve other goals and thus forms part of instrumental rationality. Wrong (1979) argues that only psychopaths seek power for their own individual use and only leaders of non-democratic social movements seek power as a collective goal.

Focus on 'instrumental rationality' however, would be unable to deal with the subject of quest of 'power'. In organizations, it could be seen that managers exercise power consciously, wittingly or unwittingly on their subordinates. In such a situation, in the context of searching meaning of 'work', a question has to be addressed as to how this results into different perceptions or meaning of 'work' both at the level of manager and worker. Workers too exercise influence (power) on the managers. This reversible phenomenon confuses the meaning of 'work' at the work place in this context. Power may have significant presence even when those on the receiving end are unaware of the fact that power is being exerted over them (Galbraith, 1983).

Societal values and cultural variables also exercise influence on human minds and therefore, impact on achievement of power. Thus job contents, production process and the hierarchical structures found in the work place can not be fully explained by the profit-goal or even by a search for a mutual gain (Kochan & Osterman, 1994). Social customs and norms of behavior can explain the exercise of power even in the absence of a conscious attempt by those who exercise it.

'Power is subjective. Neither that exercising it nor that subject to it need always be aware that it was being exerted. The acceptance of authority, the submission to the will of others, becomes the higher preference of those submitting. This preference can

be deliberately cultivated – by persuasion or education. This is explicit conditioning. Or it can be dictated by culture itself; the submission is considered to be normal, proper or traditionally correct. This is implicit conditioning.’ (Galbraith, 1983: cited in Caporaso & Levine, 1992).

Leadership and organizational culture theorists assume that meaningfulness can be supplied and that the organization itself can be the ultimate cause from which the individual derives meaning. Leadership research from the mid-eighties until the present, argue that leadership is still ‘seen as a process whereby the leader identifies for subordinates a sense of what is important – defining organizational reality for others’ and where ‘the leader gives a sense of direction and of purpose through the articulation of a compelling worldview’. It stands in conflict where it is argued that subjective work meanings such as vision, values and principles can and should not be provided by those in positions of power, but rather should emerge from the collective being of everyone in the organization regardless of formal power positions.

### 3.8 DEMOGRAPHY and WORK: GENDER, AGE AND EDUCATION

Feminist writers argue that men are assigned a privileged social position as compared to women because the social values that governed the public fear are modeled after men (England 1993; Ferber & Nelson 1993; Folbre 1992). Demographics also affect the meaning of work. Baby boomers- the largest groups of US workers have now reached a tipping point where they have become more contemplative and spiritual. This is reflected in the boom in religious publications, new age spirituality, personal growth seminars and angel movies. College students frequently discuss work- life balance during interviews and also organizational values on work and family more often now than earlier. At the same time the elderly in the corporates prefer to go out of organizations because of lack of corporate stability, declining loyalty and loss of voice in decision making.

The life course provides a frame work for analyzing continuities and changes in roles and relationships that are associated with age. It also provides a context of expectations, resources and responsibilities (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975). Work, education and leisure also have their age related trajectories. Gender may accentuate conflicts between roles such as those between works and family for employed women (Pleck-1985, Googins-1991).

Students may be more occupied with school than with work. Young parents may concentrate on family roles and at the same time be oriented to development of work careers. What matters most to adults has been found to change with both roles and developmental tasks through adult life (Fiske and Chiriboga-1990).

The **gender** seems to be an important contributor to work centrality. Men exhibit a significantly higher work centrality regardless of country of origin or cultural orientation (Harpaz & Fu, 1997; Mannheim, Baruch & Tal, 1997).

The **education level** is positively related to centrality of work. Tausky(1969) found this in an early study. This was later confirmed by MOW research team (1987) and Harpaz, (1990) and Mannheim, (1993).

Thus, it becomes obvious that a set of variables namely sex, age and education have a great deal of relevance with the meaning of work, work attitudes and values.

Women believed they had a duty to support their children economically and also to provide them with safe care, education, and guidance. They saw work—as long as they had acceptable childcare arrangements—as important not only for the economic needs of their families, but also for their children’s socialization.

This is not to say that working comes without sacrifices and hardships. Numerous studies in developed world have shown the difficulties low-income women face as they leave their children for work, as well as the ambivalence many single mothers feel, especially when they are unable to locate quality child care or when they feel their work hours take them away from their children for too long (Scott et al. 2000; Weigt2006; Press et al. 2006). Women show a greater propensity than Men do to stop working, an account of work being less important for them than for Men (Harpaz, 1990; Mannheim, 1993; Misumi & Yamori, 1991).

Work is believed to “save the soul[s]” of poor women (DeParle,2004). Yet scholars have provided much evidence to show that poor women not only want to work, but they did work (Edin and Lein 1997.,Pavetti 1993). Most of this literature has

assumed—accurately—that poor women value work because it is economically essential.

### 3.9 MEANING OF WORK AS A VEHICLE FOR GOAL ATTAINMENT

Studies have also been carried out to expound the significance of work for people as a vehicle for reaching important goals.

One widely recognized and influential perspective distinguishes between work activities as means to attain goals extrinsic to the work itself (pay) and work activities as source of intrinsic satisfaction (interest), (Herzberg et al, 1959). The second perspective considers the social and psychological function of work (Jahoda 1981, 1982, Warr, 1987). Jahoda distinguished five functions in the context of work: -

- Structuring time
- Provide shared experiences and social contacts
- Promote social goals
- Grant status and identity
- Provide regular activities

Job enrichment theorists (Herzberg, etc) have argued that meaningful work (work that of itself has the power to engage an individual's attention, effort and persistence) possesses certain characteristics – varieties, significance and identity – to make the job enriched and meaningful. Match between individual desires and what the job delivers is also critical in developing 'meaningfulness'.

### 3.10 WORK, CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY

Are there common human aspirations which emerge that provide meaning to work and co-exist with divergent and multitudinous cultural milieu? Working with frameworks that shows commonality in human purpose and differences in cultural and spiritual belief will be increasingly relevant.

Drenth (1990) concluded from the MOW teams' initial data collected in seven countries that the way the work was conceived seems to be primarily a function of **cultural** factors rather than **demographic** factors.



The cross national comparative study data from eight countries helped to understand:

- Dynamics of work meanings in different cultural settings and countries' specific work meanings;
- Impact of macro variables (such as educational systems) (Ruiz Quintanilla, 1991);
- Validation of a cross national pattern oriented research strategy by addressing problems such as the similarity of patterns across countries and exploration of similarity of developmental implications of a given pattern in which ever country they were observed (Gustafson & Magnusson, 1991);and
- Stability and developmental process of work- meaning patterns and thus to clarify both their sources and outcomes.

In a study addressing work beliefs in three Arab countries – Oman, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia –it was found that the humanistic work ethic was the strongest (Roberson et al. 2002). Earlier studies in the US and Russia also found the humanistic system to rank the highest (Buchholz, 1977; Puffer et al., 1997).

### 3.11 AMERICAN AND JAPANESE PARADIGMS

Several studies in the past have focused on identifying the productivity gap between American and Japanese workers. They have attempted to uncover underlying causes for the same.

Some of the popular practices of Japanese Human Resource Management are:

- Team Work,
- Quality Circles,
- Life time employment,
- Consensus based decision making leading to higher individual productivity.

Typical American job-person fit is based on life-sciences principle of stimulus – organism – response (S – O – R) concept of behavior as against the Japanese concern of O – R. Thus, the environment supplies information about effort to performance and performance to reward connections (stimuli) which are evaluated by the individual organism who in turn develops a willingness to exert a certain degree of effort to accomplish a particular task (response).

The S – O – R model fits well with certain western philosophies. If individuals truly begin as blank slates then it makes sense to look to the environment – the source of external stimuli - for the ultimate cause of behavior. Secondly the attractiveness of S – O – R model is its emphasis on what Rychlak (1968) has termed the **extraspective** perspective. Given the difficulties of using an **introspective** perspective to develop an experimental science of psychology, this extraspective point of view gained importance. Lastly, S – O – R model appeals because it captures the meaning of causal linkages of existence.

Thus, the American approach has been to **modify the environment** in which the job incumbent carries out the assignment. For example, in complex work setting, misperception about job duties and expectations often occurs which can be changed through techniques like role analysis and role clarification. By tailoring the work environment it is expected that environmental stimuli will produce high commitment and productivity. .

Similarly, if low productivity is diagnosed as due to low motivation – mismatch between expectancy and instrumentality, a cafeteria benefit plan is considered as a response to this situation. Thus, the extraspective, antecedent-consequent efficient cause approach to work behavior has a long philosophical history and influence on American managements' preferred solutions.

Against, the above, the distinct influence of Eastern philosophy-Taoism, Confucianism and Zen Buddhism (Nakamura, 1970)- is visible in Japanese work settings where the philosophers have argued that the ultimate reality resides within the self and can be discovered through meditation. **Individual himself therefore, plays a pivotal role in determining the meaning of work<sup>106</sup>**. Thus, Japanese believe that individuals ultimately determine the meaning of work. This Japanese perspective might be compared with the Aristotelian construct of final causality – the idea that a person engaged in behavior-A, because he intended to engage in behavior-A knowing that a locus of determination was entirely within himself – is the exercise of his own intellect.

Compared to typical American model, the Japanese have shifted the focus from the nature of the 'work', to the nature of the 'worker'. For this reason the Japanese recruitment policy laid greater emphasis on overall character of individual than on education alone. From an organizational perspective emphasis on a person's ability to give meaning to work considers the actual nature of tasks as secondary and any job therefore can become compelling and meaningful.

If employees can be shown that meaning and motivation lie within them, then discouraging task-characteristics become less important. Greater systemic attention has therefore to be paid to the **intrinsic ability** of individual to confer meaning to task. Thus, in order to understand as to how individuals create meaning for themselves, studies should focus on the individuals' **subjective** and **introspective** interpretation of their environment and apparently to be more longitudinal than cross sectional and **more qualitative**.

Just as personality favorites like Epstein (1977) and Magnusson and Endler (1977) are moving towards framing questions of personality in terms of coherence – while trait based behavior seemed to be inconsistent and unpredictable to an observer they are both consistent and predictable to the actor – management theorist need to move **towards framing question of motivation in terms of the employees' subjective impressions of reality**.

American tradition holds that a relationship exists between the objective environment and one's subjective experience of it. Thus, environmental change typically precedes perceptual change. In contrast the Japanese suggest that the environment sometimes is substantially irrelevant as meaning is not "out there" – it is in 'our selves'<sup>107</sup>.

The corporate chaos often has caused several employees to question as to what they really want out of their lives and work. Barbara Sher the author of 'Live the life you love' says that people, who do work that they are passionate about, do not feel as if they are working at all. Typically in the context of Americans, it has been established that work is a place to make a living but the living itself takes a back seat.

This idea of personal responsibility is consistent with the theory of existential meaning (Frankl, 1959; Reker, 2000), which posits that meaning can be created

through making choices, taking action, and engaging in relationships. Increasingly, employees are seeking meaning, beyond economic reward, in their work (Ashmos & Duchon, 2000., Bloch, 2005., Mitroff & Denton, 1999).

Spirit at work reflects a distinct state that involves profound feelings of well-being, a belief that one's work makes a contribution, a sense of connection to others and common purpose, an awareness of a connection to something larger than self, and a *mystical or unitive experience* characterized by a positive state of energy or vitality, a sense of perfection, transcendence, and experiences of joy and bliss (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006b).

### 3.12 GITA AND WORK

The fundamental issue, therefore, which has to be addressed, is developing an understanding of 'meaning of work' without which a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of why people work is not feasible. The context becomes important.

One of the most apt, succinct, brief and all encompassing meaning with potential of versatile application in managerial and organizational context is the one contained in Gita<sup>108</sup>. Notwithstanding its spiritual context, it is worthy of being quoted to clear the confusion created by several interpretations that have been given to the meaning of 'work' by authors from various parts of the globe.

The whole cosmos comprises of matter which have both extrinsic and intrinsic properties called their 'Bhava' (qualities). Any 'sacrifice' which is made to bring out these qualities of the matter (which includes living and non-living) is known as 'work' or 'action' or 'karma'. For instance, there could be an iron pipe which has properties of rigidity, strength, flow facilitation quality, resistance to corrosion and could at the same point be used to hit someone and cause injury. Any or all of these qualities could be brought out by the "sacrifice" (effort) of the 'doer'. To an extent that the doer has been in a position to bring out these latent or apparent qualities, he has 'worked' and his 'sacrifice' (effort) to do so is his 'work'.

In a managerial context, there could be many subordinates working under a manager with varying degrees of performance and potential. **A manager is supposed to have “worked” only if through his ‘sacrifices’ (effort) he is in a position to bring out the ‘qualities’ of his subordinates.** This appears to be one of the finest and most accurate definitions of ‘work’ which does not leave anything to chance.

Understanding everyone’s action in the light of this definition, therefore, holds considerable potential of developing an altogether new perspective on work- place issues. This could also be used to address issues concerning leadership in organizations and societies and develop a connect with the meaning of their ‘work’.

It is for the reason of ‘cause’- and-‘effect’ that Indian sages have laid great emphasis on the purity of thought, speech and action of human beings. They have gone ahead to suggest that every human being is a part of the ‘supreme consciousness’ and therefore, is ‘pure’ in its existence. We are ‘divine’ beings undergoing ‘human’ experience. What could lead to bondage or salvation is the linkage of past and present actions.

It is not uncommon to read modern management thinkers talking about creating an organization of ‘future’ by remaining focused on the action in ‘present’. This gels very well with the principle of Cause and Effect in an organizational context as well. What creates the confusion at times is the human being’s inability first to develop an insight into this aspect of life and more importantly his basal instincts of anger, lust, envy, jealousy, greed, ego, etc.

Since this causative linkage is not visible to human sense organs in their current context as they strive to search ‘scientific and rational’ evidence (before developing faith and belief in the theory of cause- and- effect), a belief does not get formed and questions and doubts are raised and the theory of cause and effect in life is rejected by him.

It is like someone ignorant about gravity saying that there was no force like gravity. Imagine the fall of such a person under this belief who jumps from a high rise?

**Disbelief in the principle of gravity does not negate the existence of principle of gravity per-se.**

It is, therefore, dependent on the degree of knowledge, the experience and one's ability to correlate the learning from the past from those who may have had exposure or experience in this area. A glass half filled with water can always be argued to be half empty.

Thus 'meaning of work' therefore, is a question of 'perspective'. Through appreciation of this perspective (which is a function of knowledge and experience one has which results in programming of mind) it is possible to have a holistic context for understanding the meaning of 'work'.

When higher aspirations are called into being, individuals automatically look for discrepancies, mismatches, and inauthentic expressions. Reward, security and balance of various important life roles are moral issues which shape healthy workplaces and a healthy society. Thus, achieving and maintaining work centrality should be positive goal sought by organizations. It should be recognized, nurtured, monitored, maintained and further developed.

Therefore, from the perspective of meaningfulness, these are important concerns and leadership and organizational culture practices need to engage with them.

Any study that attempts to develop a comprehensive perspective has the potential to make a substantial contribution to advance our knowledge of the role and meaning of 'work' and its importance in the life of individuals and therefore in organizations and societies.