This chapter would envisage the human resource management in a historical as well as contemporary context of the textile mill industry in Kerala.
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN TEXTILE MILL INDUSTRY
– A THEORETICAL VIEW

The previous chapter was assigned to draw an outline of the textile mill industry. As a labour oriented one the textile mill industry is largely dependent on the humans involved in it. Humans, as it is today, have been inhabiting the earth for the past fifty thousand years and no other form of life has been able to make an impact on earth as humans did. Humans are hard to define as even the definition of humans has been created by humans itself. Scientifically the humans are viewed as the pinnacle of biological evolution equipped with the highest order of ability to think and create. Religiously they are considered as the creation of God. But different beliefs in different regions has their own take on humans. For instance in the Hindu philosophies, Swayambhu (self originated) Manu is considered as the progenitor of mankind, as Mahabharata, one of the ideological texts of Hindu philosophy testifies, theoretical

"And Manu was endued with great wisdom and devoted to virtue. And he became the progenitor of a line. And in Manu's race have been born all human beings, who have, therefore, been called Manavas. And it is of Manu that all men including Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and others have been descended, and are therefore all called Manavas"\(^{114}\)

Everything put into equation, science, religion or belief, the fact remains that all these are the creations of the human mind. Infact everything in the physical world that the humans associate themselves today has been created by humans itself. Humans have created a myriad for their physical adaptability and industrial systems are a small fraction of that. Industrial systems such as manufacturing and service were created for improving the quality of human life and in the context of such an industrial system humans itself form the major resource. The concept of human resource management was developed to manage the human resource involved in such industrial systems for the growth and development of the human resource as well as the system itself.

\(^{114}\) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manu_(Hinduism)
On a global picture the management of human resources shows recorded existence as early as 1750 BC. The Babylonian Code of Hammurabi (appendix IX), aging as early as 1750 BC manuscripts the existence of terms such as ‘minimum wage rate’ and ‘incentive wage plan’. Though the essence of HRM existed from ancient periods itself, it was given a definite name only in the 1900’s when it began to be known as “Personnel Management”. Infact in modern times an existence of the concept is claimed to be in 1901 during which an industrial unit named “ National Cash Register Company” in USA (appendix IX) dedicated a separate department for the management of human resources. The genuine evolution of the term Human Resource Management (HRM) is believed to be in USA in the early 1960’s. Infact the Merriam-Webster dictionary claims that the first recorded use of the term Human Resource was in 1961.  

With the spread of more and more industrial units around the world the concept of HRM has evolved from its humble past.

It is not astonishing to see that the concept of HRM existed in India from ancient times itself as many modern principles of management are well documented in the ancient texts of India. Kautaliya’s ‘Arthashastra, (appendix IX) written three millennium before Christ, in the 4th century BC, has the earliest references of a systematic mode of management of human resources in India. The first Indian empire, the Gupta Dynasty, encouraged the establishment of rules and regulations for managerial systems and later from about 1000 AD Islam rulers had provided systematic procedures for regulating employer-employee relationships. In modern India the evolution of HRM can be traced from the 1920’s. Upto 1970’s though the concept was known as personnel management, it involved three specific areas namely industrial relations (IR), welfare and personnel administration and were carried out by three different personnel. In 1980’s, the three areas merged to became personnel management in a real sense. As a result the concept became more complex in nature and further evolved into a genuine concept of Human Resource Management.


We can observe that in ancient Kerala the working class were considered similar to a commodity that could be bought and sold. In a modern context, up to 1960’s the concept of HRM was largely welfare-based and towards the 1970’s the metamorphosed form of Personnel Management came into existence. The concept in a real sense got into the industrial sector of Kerala only towards the late 1990’s. Industrialization got into Kerala during the 1850’s and up to the 1900’s there were few industrial units in Kerala and the working condition of the labourers employed in these factories were appalling in nature. An account of K.K. Kunnan, a social activist, probably sums up the working conditions that existed in yester Kerala,

“………….were forced to work upto fourteen hours a day. Wages were not given in the form of money. Fines were imposed for each and everything. Moopans (supervisors) and other factory incharge used to beat up the workers. The police were literally enslaved to the interests of the owners. Apart from the beatings in the factory workers were also got beaten by the police. The owners and their accomplice were easily able to sent the workers to the jail on account of false crimes……..” 117

All the earlier factories in Kerala used to acquire labour by paying cheap rates and reap high revenues at their expense but the conditions of the labour remained abysmal. Towards the 1920’s the labour union concept initiated by P.K. Bhava 118 (appendix IX), a moopan (supervisor) at Empire Coir Works, Alleppey, though not in a full fledged manner, later developed into an influential concept by many eminent social activists, inspired the workers to voice against the injustice shown to them. But the initial major reaction against the pathetic labour conditions in Kerala was in the form of a labour strike which took place in 1907 at the ‘Darragh Smail Company’ in Alleppey against the over-stretched working hours. In 1919 a Department of Industries was established by the Government of Travancore and Cochin and its functions included establishment of technical institutes which is seen as the first major attempt to induce a

systematic training in Kerala.Labour laws became applicable in Kerala towards the 1920’s and this along with the change in the government attitude towards the industrial policy bought a slight revival to the labour conditions. This was manifested with the establishment of the first fully government owned company in 1935 where the workers were given all statutory provisions as prescribed by the labour laws. In 1938, a Board of Conciliation was formed in Travancore, the first of its kind in Kerala, to settle disputes and factory committees on the lines of present work committees were also formed. Industrial Relations Committees, a tripartite system and a labour department were also formed to ensure industrial harmony. Corresponding to the Factories Act which came to force on 1.4.1949, Government of Kerala framed the Kerala Factories Rule which made it mandatory for all the industrial units to have welfare officers.

The 1960’s saw the configuration of a concept of personnel management in Kerala. Establishment of large industrial units such as KSIDC in 1961, Kochi Refineries’ Ltd in 1963, and TELK in 1963 required large scale labour and so a proper system of management of employees was felt. KELTRON (appendix IX) formed in 1973 claims to be one of the first units in Kerala to set up a modern personnel department. The establishment of KITCO in 1972 introduced a wide spread use of training in the industrial sector. Private units such as Anna Industries started in 1972 and V-Guard in 1977 induced new HRM policies. Incorporation of many public and private units such as Malayala Manorama further intensified the growth of HRM. But Human Resource Management in a genuine sense got into the industrial sector of Kerala with the establishment of Technopark in Thiruvananthapuram in 1991. International Indian Giants such as Infosys, Wipro and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) started their operations in Technopark and brought the most sophisticated of management principles into Kerala. Thereafter the service sectors such as banking and IT remained as the major testing centre of new human resource policies in Kerala.


As witnessed all throughout the industrial past of Kerala, the traces of the concept of human resource management was conspicuously absent in the early textile mills in Kerala also, which saw their birth in the 1880’s initially in Malabar and Quilon. The working condition of the labourers employed in these mills were pathetic in nature similar to the other manufacturing units in Kerala. Infact the early conditions of the mill workers were recorded as no better than those who employed in the handlooms that required a hard hand for creating every bit of fabric. The induction of machines and tools in the mills did not served as a relief to the workers. The workers were initially lured to the mills by offering attractive wages and facilities but once entered the work they were forced to toil like work horses. Since electricity was not available and the mills had to be run either on water or coal power the mills still needed large manual efforts for their operation. There were instances of frequent mechanical failures where the labourers had to work for extended hours without any provision of pay. In mills especially under the European ownership the workers were of the native backward classes and the working period was from dawn to late into the day accounting for twelve to fourteen hours. The wages were not directly paid to the workers but to their custodians belonging to the higher castes. Women and children were also employed in the factories and all the workers were believed to be recruited and managed by a native contractor known as ‘moopan’. Similar to the general conditions that existed in Kerala most of the supervisors were recorded to be unsympathetic and rude to mill workers. The supervisors used to punish workers severely for simple reasons and could impose heavy fines for explicable mistakes. The workers were allowed only a dress code customary to the lower castes, shabby and underprivileged and were dispersed off their work if happened to disobey that and no specific welfare measures were provided to the mill workers. In mills under the ownership of native entrepreneurs conditions were relatively better but the forlorn conditions as a whole remained so, till the early 1930’s.

Before 1920’s the workers were given on the job training either by Europeans or by the native people who had the technical knowledge to operate the machines but the
training was in no way systematic or efficient and workers who were accustomed to handloom weaving were preferred for the mills to compensate the lack of training. The technical institute started by the Industries Department in Travancore in 1919 started providing systematic training in weaving related areas also along with other trades which was the pioneering of such attempts in Kerala. In the 1920’s and 1930’s the wages in cotton mills across Kerala were meager in nature miserably satisfying the basic needs of the mill workers. The wage system was largely piece based and the wages were a mere 3-4 paisa per 100 ‘rathal’ yarn per month. Towards the 1930’s the workers employed in units where the government had more than 50 percent contribution were started given statutory provisions as prescribed by labour laws such as Workmen’s Compensation Act of 1923, Trade Union Act of 1926 and Payment of Bonus Act of 1936 which prevailed in Kerala at that period but Balarama Varma Textiles (then at Nagercoil and now in Tamilnadu) was the only such mill in Kerala at that period. So in line with the general atmosphere of labour unrest in Kerala in the late 1930’s to the early 1940’s, a social uproaring began to arise in the cotton mills across Kerala. The evolution of the concept of human resource management in Kerala is closely associated with the vehement remonstrations from the part of the workers and the subsequent formation of the labour unions and in that context the textile mills in Kerala were the fertile grounds for the labour protests and trade union movement that started in Kerala during the 1930’s and 1940’s. On 9\textsuperscript{th} February 1935 about 700 workers of Thiruvannur Mills in Kozhikode struck work questioning over wages and was later called off on 25\textsuperscript{th} February 1935 when the management agreed to increase the wages by 6 ¼ percent. It was one of the first major labour strikes in the history of textile mills in Kerala. Strikes continued thereafter in Aaron Mill, Malabar Spinning and Weaving Mill and Sitaram Mills against the low wages, contract labouring and intolerable working conditions were significant not only in the history of textile mills but also in the industrial history of Kerala in terms of changing the conditions of labour.

The Factories Act of 1948 ensured that in the cotton mills in Kerala, wages were increased in the range of 22–25 paisa from the prevailing 5-6 paisa. After the formation
of Kerala in 1956 cotton mills under private entrepreneurship were started in different parts and the workers in the mills were prescribed to be given all mandatory facilities but most of the mills could not garner enough profits to provide satisfactory provisions to the workers. Nevertheless, as most of these mills were established in the rural parts of Kerala they were able to provide employment to a significant number residing in adjacent locality. The Kerala Factories Rule framed in 1957 made it mandatory for all industrial units including mills to have basic welfare measures and a welfare officer to administer it but prior to that mills such as Cochin Mills (present Alagappa Mills) and Cannanore Spinning and Weaving Mill were reported giving all basic facilities to their workers. Cochin Mills was also one of the first textile mills to provide proper housing facilities to their workers. A township named as "Alagappa Nagar" was built for the Cochin Mill employees. The Kerala State Textile Corporation formed in 1972 and the National Textile Corporation in 1974 took over almost 1/4th of the total mills in Kerala and ensured basic wages and welfare to the employees. Textile mills in cooperative sector were started towards the 1970’s guided by cooperative principles of sharing returns among the members of the governing cooperative society which initially consisted of the workers but later got displaced by other influential persons. Mayyil Weavers Cooperative Society was the first such cooperative unit in Kerala which was later known as Kannur Cooperative Spinning Mill. But later most of the cooperative mills because of scarce resources had to rely on government support and guideship of the Cooperative Textile Federation which has strived for the survival of the units and its employees. Private units such as Precot Mills and GTN Textiles started in 1962 tried to combine commercialization with cooperation of employees in an efficient manner and later Kitex Ltd started in 1972 set an example for manufacturing units in Kerala in the area of HRM remaining as one of the few trade-union free large scale units in Kerala.

Amidst speculations of the labour conditions in the textile mills in Kerala as not upto the mark when compared to some of the other manufacturing sectors it can be definitely said that the labour conditions in the textile mills in present Kerala has come a long way from its lean past along with a general progression of labour.
2.2 Present scenario of human resource management in Textile Mills in Kerala.

In the manufacturing blueprint of present Kerala the textile mills figure out as a prominent one and similar to other manufacturing industries there is a conspicuous division of labour in the textile mills also with the category of workers forming the crux of these units determining the overall productivity of the units and thereby deciding its sustainability in the industry. In case of division of labour most of the textile mills in Kerala follow more or less a similar pattern with an exception in mills under the ownership of National Textile Corporation (NTC) where there exists two categories of personnel such as NTC personnel and the Mill personnel existing under a single roof.

The human resource practices followed in the overall textile mill industry of Kerala shows their individual characteristics going along the three sectors of private, public and cooperative. In the case of an explicit image of HRM in the form of a HR department though a considerable number of private sector mills are under closure, some of the functioning units have their own Human Resource Development (HRD) department along with a conventional personnel department to administer the human resource while most of the public mills are still functioning with a conventional personnel department. In cooperative sector mills, human resource practices in many mills is administered by a welfare department but in some mills a designated department is altogether absent with the administration held by a welfare officer.

It is reiterated that the overall demeanor of an industry is a reflection of the sum image of the human resource practices followed. The textile mill industry in Kerala does not endorse an explicit progressive image and based on that the conditions of labour in that particular industry is widely speculated but there could definitely be exceptions and differences within the industry regarding the human resource practices followed and therefore a brief outing on the human resource management followed in the textile mills in Kerala by commenting individually on those human resource elements prevailing in the industry on the basis of available secondary data conforming to the claims of the units and discussions with the authorities, is considered imperative.
2.3 Human Resource Planning.

It can undoubtedly be said that in an organizational context the process of planning has a profound value as actions without planning could prove fatal. By human resource planning the management determines how an organization should move from its current manpower position to a desired manpower position. Through it the management strives to have the right number and the right kind of people at the right place at the right time, doing things which result in both the organization and the individual receiving maximum long range benefits. It involves job description which confirms the title, location, duties, tools and equipments and working conditions and job specification including education, experience, duties, physical skills, training etc.

Apart from the major functional areas of human resource management, marketing and finance, production management is an important functional area in textile mills and includes several areas such as raw material procurement and storing, mixing, blow room, carding, simplex, spinning, winding, packing, storing of final products and dispatch. Specific amount of work experience, duties, responsibilities and qualifications are prematurely assigned for each job in a mill thereby achieving job description and specification but there could be differences in the context of each unit. In Kerala textile mill industry the process of human resource planning is based on the capacity utilization of the individual units and the worker roll or the ‘daily muster roll’ in many mills changes periodically on the basis of that. In many mills the present strength of the permanent workers in the worker roll is about ½ or ¾ of the potential full capacity utilization. Most of these units earlier had or still have a permanent worker strength for the full capacity utilization but due to long periods of lockout and non use of full capacity many workers were put on layoff or given the VRS scheme. These units when working on full capacity hires casual workers termed as ‘badalies’ on daily wages. In mills under the ownership of KSTC and NTC workers are often exchanged among themselves according to the production utilization. In the case of managerial and other administrative staff many of the textile mills are reportedly having an excess of when compared to their capacity utilization.
2.4 Recruitment.

From the viewpoint of an organization, the purpose of recruitment is to have the right kind of people, who meet the criteria laid down in the job specification. The major types of recruitment are 1) direct recruitment which includes transfer or promotion, employee contacts, waiting lists from previous recruitments, job expos, open entry exhibits, institutional placements, mergers, acquisitions, and scouting, 2) indirect recruitment involving advertisement in mediums such as newspapers, journals, radio, television, and websites, and 3) third-party recruitment comprising of trade unions, labour contractors (for lower grade), recruitment agencies, and employment exchanges.

In many of the textile mills in Kerala, all categories of recruitment take place though indirect recruitment through newspapers is the most favoured medium for most of the mills for the higher categories of personnel. In recent times, some of the mills in the public and private sector have started adopting online methods of recruitment for the higher categories of personnel. The permanent workers in all sectors are still recruited through conventional methods such as newspapers, dying in harness scheme, kin of employees, and third-party recruitment such as employment exchanges. The casual workers or the badalies are recruited mostly through recruitment agencies and internal references with a preference given to those residing within the premises. In some mills, especially in the private sector, females workers are recruited for certain functional areas only while in certain others, female workers are not recruited for factory work. In many mills across Kerala apart from about a brace under KSTC, recruitment has not been taking place periodically due to the general sluggishness of the industry.

2.5 Selection

In human resource management, selection is a method of matching the qualifications of the applicants with the job requirements. Selection weeds out unsuitable candidates and finally identifies the most suitable candidates. A normal selection procedure can involve up to seven steps which include 1) Initial screening
2) Application Blank 3) Selection test 4) Employment Interview 5) Medical Examination 6) Reference checks and 7) Final approval. But it is not necessary for all the organizations to have all the seven steps. It could range from two (Interview and final approval) to all seven depending on policy, fund allotment etc. of the organization.

In textile mills across Kerala, in the private sector the process of selection is dependent on the selection policy of the respective units. In the case of lower categories some units constitute a separate selection committee for the selection of recruits whereas in the rest the selection is performed by the concerned heads. In the case of higher categories the selection is done by an interview committee and the process generally involves the seven steps 1) Initial screening 2) Application Blank 3) Selection test 4) Employment Interview 5) Medical Examination 6) Reference checks and 7) Final approval. In the case of public and cooperative sector mills the selection is generally a four step process 1) Selection test 2) Employment interview 3) Medical Examination and 4) Final approval and the selection is generally done by a committee for all categories of personnel though for higher categories the selection committee will highly comprise of the top most officials of the governing corporations while for the lower categories the committee comprises of the concerned departmental heads.

2.6 Training and development

Training is a systematic learning process that involves the acquisition and changing of knowledge, skill, behaviour, concepts, attitudes and motivation of the employees to enhance their performance on their job as per the business goals and objectives of the organization. Generally training is for operatives and development is for executives. Benefits of training to the entity who provides it are 1) Higher productivity 2) Better quality of work 3) Mass learning 4) Cost Reduction 5) Reduced supervision and 6) Low accident rate and wear and tear of resources whereas the benefits of training to the entity to whom it is provided includes 1) Adaptability 2) To avoid mistakes 3) Self confidence in work 4) Safety 5) New addition of skills 6) Horning already acquired skills and 7) Self growth by way of development. Training
can broadly be divided into six, 1) Orientation training 2) Job training 3) Safety training 4) Promotional training 5) Refresher training and 6) Remedial training.

In the private sector textile mills in Kerala, the training is generally dependent on the training policy and funds of the individual units. Some units have in-house training facilities where as the rest are dependent on professional trainers and training consultants from the outside. In the public sector in mills under KSTC the training period for the workers is generally two years and orientation and on the job training are the major training methods given to the lower categories where as for the higher categories the training period is also generally two years. KSTC mills which are members of SITRA often receive training in various areas of work. In the NTC mills the higher categories are given training in the NTC training college at Coimbatore where as the lower categories are given training within the unit. In most of the mills induction and on-job training are the most frequently given training methods with some of the mills in the private sector occasionally employing new methods of training.

2.7 Performance appraisal

In performance appraisal the qualities of an employee such as initiative, regularity, loyalty and personality are compared with each other. Then each employee is ranked or rated. The traditional methods of performance appraisal are 1) Ranking method a) Simple ranking b) Alternative Ranking c) Paired Comparison 2) Graphic Scale rating 3) Confidential Reports 4) Checklist Method 5) Critical Incident Method and 6) Narrative Essay Method while modern methods are 1) Management by Objectives 2) Assessment Centre 3) Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale 4) Role Analysis 5) Human Resource Accounting and 6) Psychological Appraisal Methods.

In the public sector and the cooperative sector mills, confidential reports are the most used performance appraisal method for higher categories where as in the case of the lower category of workers monthly or quarterly or six months reports based on the observation done by the supervisors is employed for periodically appraising
the performance of the workers. In the private sector relatively new methods are occasionally employed and in some of the private mills such as GTN, Precot, Kitex etc performance appraisal is strictly done by the concerned heads once in three or six months and based on the reports training and the necessary support is provided to the employees. On the whole the performance appraisal is not periodically done in majority of the textile mills in Kerala. In the public sector mills promotion and transfer is based on the IRC settlement dated 1-12-1994 and as per the settlement the principle to be followed in case of promotion is merit-cum-seniority. The private and cooperative sector mills follow suit but devoid of any settlement.

2.8 Wages and Salary Administration.

Primary compensation in industrial terms means basic pay in the form of wages and salaries. Normally wages denote payments based on hourly rated production given to workers and salary denotes payments on a monthly basis given to clerical, supervisory and managerial employees. But in the case of permanent workers wages are hourly calculated and monthly paid.

The wages for the personnel in the textile mills in Kerala is hourly calculated and monthly paid where as the salary is monthly given as followed by almost all the industries in Kerala where as the casual workers are paid daily. The payment days differ in case of mills, for KSTC the 5th of every month, for NTC and cooperative mills the 7th day of the week but within the first week of every month for all the mills. Except for a few mills, in most of the other units irrespective of the sector, the remuneration paid to the employees are said to be lesser than similar manufacturing industries in Kerala which is evident from the periodical strikes and lockouts reported from these mills demanding higher wages and other allowances. For all categories of permanent personnel in textile mills, Net pay = (basic pay +Increment +DA +H.R.A +Other allowances) with the casual employees not eligible for allowances. According to the SIMA (South India Mills Association) reports the daily wages of the mill workers in the textile mills in Kerala on an average is around Rs 250-300 which is lesser than
the wages prevailing in similar manufacturing industries in Kerala. Generally the piece rate system is followed for the mixing, blowroom and, carding section and for the others time rate system is followed.

2.9 Employee Motivation

Employee motivation is like a battery which needs to be charged from time to time for performing the job assigned to a particular person. Scientifically there are three methods of studying employee motivation and are 1) Inferences from motivation from behaviour which can be done by a) Statistical analysis of labour disputes, grievances, absenteeism, turnover etc. b) first hand observation of behaviour of individual workers, supervisors, reports and descriptions of workers performance etc and c) historical analysis of growth in labour unions, analysis of writings, opinion about worker problems etc, 2) Reports from the individuals concerning his/her motivation and various forms of questionnaires and interviews analyses by experts in the field and 3) Projective techniques involving use of ambiguous or unstructured stimuli such as pictures, meaningless figures, or incomplete sentences.

Regarding the motivational factors of employees in the textile mills in Kerala there are few studies done to point out the specific factors which influence the motivation of the personnel in textile mills in Kerala but various studies conducted over the years have shown a large degree of absenteeism in the textile mills for which the lack of general motivational factors was also attributed as a reason but the overall picture of the textile mill industry in Kerala does not endorse a highly motivated personnel with relatively few exceptions.

2.10 Industrial Relations

Industrial relations (IR) deals with either the relationship between the state and the employers and workers organizations or the relationship between the occupational organization and themselves. Industrial relations includes individual relations and joint consultations between the employers and their workers at their work
place, collective relations between employers and their organizations and trade unions and part played by the state in regulating these relations. The major components of IR include labour rules and laws, dispute settlement system and trade union regulations.

In Kerala, Industrial Relation in the overall industrial sector is regulated by the Labour Department and the textile mills also comes under its jurisdiction. Besides that every mill has their own arrangements for solving industrial disputes and to maintain a peaceful atmosphere. Normally the shift supervisors, asst. spinning masteries and spinning masteries would keep a close watch of the worker categories to get information on the day today developments and generally deals with the minor disputes. Major disputes are informed directly and confidently to the higher officials by the quickest possible means. In case of an emergency the higher authorities will convene meetings of the concerned officers, supervisory staff members and trade union representatives immediately to resolve the situation and in addition to that periodical meetings are also conducted at regular intervals to discuss the labour situation existing in the mills and resolve matters or disputes needing settlement as per the regulations of the dispute settlement machinery pertaining to the state of Kerala.

2.11 Employee participation

Workers participation aims to raise the motivation level of workers. Participation provides workers a sense of importance, pride and accomplishment, freedom and opportunity for expression, a feeling of belonging and a sense of workmanship and creation. Workers participation is applied through various methods such as Works Committee, Joint Management Councils, Workers Directors, and Quality Circles.

Effective forms of workers participation methods such as quality circles have not been reportedly functioning in any of the textile mill in Kerala. In some of the textile mills works committee are reportedly constituted consisting of the General Manager, Factory Manager, Personnel Manager, Finance Manager, three representatives of workmen decided by the CEO/ General Manager in consultation with the trade unions.
and chairman of the joint management council of the mill. In some textile mills, mostly in the private sector suggestion schemes are employed by the management as a resort to participation. The suggestion scheme is usually in the form of a suggestion box maintained in convenient places and is opened fortnightly. All the suggestions are invariably acknowledged and viable suggestion are occasionally rewarded in some of the mills especially in the private sector.

2.12 Employee Welfare

Employee Welfare is referred to as betterment work for employees relating to taking care of the well-being of employees by employers, trade unions, and governmental and non-governmental agencies. Employee welfare is flexible in nature, bearing a different interpretation in one country from another, according to the different social customs, degree of industrialization and educational level of workers.

The welfare services provided to the employees in the textile mills in Kerala is in accordance with the financial status of the individual units other than the mills under KSTC and NTC. Though all the cooperative sector mills are guided by the Cooperative Textile Federation (TEXFED) there are differences in the welfare facilities given to the employees based on their individual financial capabilities. Though all the textile mills in Kerala irrespective of the sector are prescribed to provide all the welfare facilities both mandatory and non-mandatory such as 1. Maternity benefit 2. Marriage benefit 3. Medical benefit 4. Death relief 5. Pension/family pension 6. Superannuation benefits 7. Assistance for permanent disability 8. Educational assistance 9. Canteen facilities 10. Travelling allowances and 11. Housing allowances, the orientation of these facilities in majority of the mills is reportedly been dubious in nature. There have been strained demonstrations and remonstrations reported from many mills across Kerala in the form of strikes and agitations regarding the lack of welfare facilities and the delirious functioning of provided facilities. Some private mills are reportedly giving the employees fair welfare measures with Kitex Ltd, as a leading example in the overall industrial sector of Kerala.
2.13 A critical assessment of human resource management of textile mill industry in Kerala in a modern context

Human Resource Management (HRM) can be functionally termed as a set of activities starting from acquiring employees and culminating in maintaining them as competent and satisfied individuals. But as far as the HRM in the textile mill industry in Kerala is concerned it can hardly be said that the various HR practices culminates in satisfied individuals as the labour force in the mills over the years had expressed their disapproval regarding the management of employees. There has been many protests over various issues such as low wages and welfare deficiencies. The labour strikes and protests reported from the mills throughout Kerala points finger to this. Human resource management is considered to be assigned the job of managing human minds in an organizational context, as the mind enables the employees to act and react. In the context of textile mills in Kerala there is a noticeable division of labour with each division comprising a workforce that has their own physical and rational requirements. As these different layers of workforce has their own needs, an efficient human resource system is supposedly to be present in all the mills in Kerala but apart from a few, the HR system in most of the mills were found to be not able to shoulder this responsibility.

Undoubtedly the concept of HRM in the textile mills in Kerala has developed into an organized layout when compared to the earlier stages but the progression with time has not taken place. The organized layout indicates to the explicit image of human resource management that takes the form of a designated department and designated personnel for its governance. Majority of the textile mills in Kerala has been able to organize a designated department and designated personnel for the governance of its workforce. But the implicit motif and the more important of the two that is the generalized impression of the concept in the minds of those who perform and activate it, has been the concern of mills in Kerala. According to the personnel inhabiting the industry there still rule an attitude that a particular amount of money whether it satisfies the needs and wants or not, is given for a particular amount of work. This kind of an
indifferent attitude of those who perform and activate the system is singled out by majority of the labour force as their biggest headache. As widely known the fundamental base of human resource management lies on the expectancy level of the employees and those who employ them. There exists a fine balance between the expectations from both ends and human resource management balances out that chord of expectation. But in most of the textile mills in Kerala that chord of expectation has not been balanced out because of the inefficiency of the HR system. In majority of mills in Kerala the expectations of employees such as fair wages and good welfare measures has reportedly not been met where as the expectations of their employers in the form of improved labour productivity has also been not met. The expectations from both poles are mutually exclusive but HRM has not been able to act as the connecting link in most of the mills. Most of the mills in Kerala still concentrates on conventional HRM activities such as Human Resource Planning, Recruitment, Selection, Training, Performance appraisal, Wages and Salary Administration, Employee Motivation, Industrial Relations and Employee Welfare. Apart from these methods only a few mills performs some of the new concepts of HRM on basis of their policies, needs and funds.

The trends in Human Resource Management have now been subjected to many changes. Some trends are due to the status of the economy while others are emerging due to new rules, new educational system, technological advancement and type of people employed. But in the case of textile mills in Kerala it can hardly be said that there has been any new trends in the practices related to HRM. Many of the mills are still abiding with practices which has been continuing over the many years. Now-a-days technological advancement had imposing influence on all functional and operational areas and concepts and in a highly competitive business environment, knowledge and skills have become the prized possessions. But in the textile mill industry in Kerala as a whole hardly any significant technological advancement have taken place and most of the mills are still operating in a technological environment of atleast a quarter of a century old. As a result no related developments have arisen in the requirement of skills and creativity regarding the work in mills. In the new millennium employee skills
are regarded as the biggest asset of an organization and employers are redefining limits for obtaining and retaining skilled human resource. Citing an example, in Ferrari car factory in Italy (appendix IX) the employers have even planted shrubs and trees inside their factory for the employees to have the feel of a green atmosphere. But all these remain as a distant dream for the textile mills in Kerala. It can be observed that in the present era business concerns crossing boundaries has created a new social environment that has brought employees together of different beliefs, values, ethics and a myriad of factors and subsequently the concept of HRM has also changed with the environment. But as there has been no development of such sorts in the textile mill industry in Kerala, the concept of HRM has also not witnessed any significant changes apart from the natural growth of the needs of the employees. In the past textile mills had such an influence on the existing social and industrial environment in Kerala that many facets of the growth of the concept of HRM happened in mills across Kerala. For instance textile mills such as Parvathi Mills in Quilon (present Kollam), Malabar Spinning and Weaving Mills in Kozhikode and Sitaram Mills in Thrissur influenced the social and industrial environment to such an extent that they played a crucial role in changing the conditions of labour in Kerala. The past of many of these mills were the social and industrial past of these regions. But since then their influence on the labour environment in Kerala had declined as a result of absence of growth and development.

The corporate world has now been witnessing a greater need felt for multi skill development. But due to any significant growth this cannot be said true for the textile mills. In many mills the skills needed in the work environment especially in the area of production have remained the same over the years. While the role of the HR manager in the corporate scenario has shifted from that of a protector and screener to that of a planner and change agent, in the case of textile mills the HR manager still remains as a designation to manage the activities of the mill employees and not as a change agent. While organizations are now widely trying to prepare themselves to address people centric issues with renewed thrust on HR issues, in textile mills the HR issues are

reportedly been given least importance. Many leading organizations have introduced new practices such as Six-Sigma where as textile mills are still abiding to conventional practices. In the present scenario organizations are putting in the best of efforts to work out an efficient retention strategy for holding back their employee base but many mills especially in the private sector are losing employees because of the absence of required facilities. In the case of mills in the public sector many skilled employees with years of experience are reportedly either been given the VRS scheme or been laid off.

In present Kerala the concept of Human resource management has been able to get infused in a big way into the service industry. In the manufacturing sector of Kerala the concept of Human resource management has not been able to seep through in a true sense but in the textile mill industry the condition of HRM has been even more critical. In manufacturing units such as National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Cochin Refineries, FACT, SILK (Steel Industrials Kerala Ltd), KMML (Kerala Minerals and Metals Ltd), Malabar Cements, KELTRON, Anna industries Ltd, V-guard industries Ltd and Malayala Manorama the wages and other welfare measures are reportedly better than the textile mills in Kerala. In the textile mill industry in Kerala the average wages of the workers comes to around Rs 300 a day but most of the large scale manufacturing units offer a better pay to their employee base.

We can observe that there has been a recent trend especially in the western countries in the area of Human Resource Management where the highly admired and revered references about the concept in the religious and philosophical pasts of India including Kerala has been extensively used in a practical sense in the business environment. But it can hardly be said that in the context of textile mills in Kerala. In Bhagavad-Gita it has been said that “Effectiveness is doing the right things while efficiency is doing things right”. But neither way it has been happening in the human resource system in the textile mills in Kerala as a significant number of labour force in the textile mills in Kerala are reportedly been unsatisfied regarding the HR system. Bhagavad-Gita repeatedly proclaims that “you must try to manage yourself” and in the
modern corporate world this principle has found revered acceptance especially in the western world where the principle of HRM has now changed to ‘management of self management’ where management remains invisible. But according to the work force in majority of the textile mills in Kerala it is the other way round where the management appears to be very much conspicuous in nature and interferes in almost everything related to the activities of the workforce. Bhagavad-Gita discusses all the modern principles of human resource management such as vision, leadership, motivation, work excellence, planning, decision making and achievement of goals in a simple yet profound manner and the textile mill industry can take a leaf out of that to improve their HR system. The foremost management principle propagated by Bhagavad-Gita is the optimum utilization of available resources which has not been happening in textile mills in Kerala where machinery and other facilities are reportedly been under utilized. Gita has long propagated that there should a larger vision in one’s work which has now been recognized as the fundamental principle of Human Resource Management. But the work environment of most of the mills in Kerala follows such a narrow channel that employees are paid for their respective work. Adi Shankara, the most proverbial of the religious philosophers from Kerala, in his advaita teachings has maintained that skills necessary in the performance of one’s duty is that of maintaining an evenness of mind but the work force in the textile mills in Kerala were reportedly been not to keep an evenness of mind due to a myriad of problems such as low wages, job security etc.

Though the concept of human resource management has evolved to new heights everywhere in the world the core element of the concept has continued the same, the human beings or the employees involved in it. Though employees have remained as the nucleus of the textile mills in Kerala as many of the units are still dependent on their productivity, they are not been given their due attention. Employees impart physical and intellectual potentialities to their organization and their expectancy in return could be materialized only through efficient HR practices. But the practices in the mills were not able to attain levels to satisfy the employee expectations. In the new age, employees consider themselves as free agents demanding equal respect and their
needs and wants to be taken care of, not only in an organizational environment but also outside of it. In a business world it is often reiterated, it isn't the 100th setback that makes an employee feel down but the 99 that went before, meaning that seldom it happens, employees become unhappy or leave an organization all of a sudden but in most circumstances it would probably be the cumulative effect of a period of time. It can been considered true for the textile mills in Kerala especially for the private sector where there has been reports of a high level of attrition and many of those have reiterated their decision to leave their units not as a compulsive one.

Though the concept of HRM has moved a long way from personnel and administration roles, such a transition has not been witnessed in the textile mill industry in Kerala. The scope of personnel management had included only activities such as manpower planning, recruitment, job analysis, payroll administration, performance appraisal, labour law compliance, training and related tasks where as HRM also includes developmental activities such as leadership, motivation, organizational culture and communication of shared values. But in majority of textile mills in Kerala HRM is still largely occupying the status of its predecessor of personnel management.

From the above viewpoints we can reach a conclusion that the importance of HRM lies in the fact that without an efficient and reliable employee base all other resources sum to zero. Therefore it can undoubtedly be said that for the textile mill industry in Kerala to improve their productive status in the industrial map of Kerala, focus has to be laid on the maintenance of their human resource which at present has been lacking in many quarters. The forgone assessment was based on observations based on secondary data and informal discussions with those inhabiting the industry. As a true picture of the human resource practices of the textile mills in Kerala can be acquired only through in-depth primary responses of those inhabiting the industry, such a primary data collection concerning the various practices was conducted and the succeeding chapter is concerned with the analysis of that primary data collected from the respondents in selected textile mills in Kerala, employing statistical tools.