CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Work is a purposeful human activity directed towards the satisfaction of human needs and desires. It is a group behaviour and an undeniable necessity. As a concept, work is socially constructed and as such, lacks fixed or universal meaning across space and time. Generally, work might be any form of transformative activity, depending upon the social context within which it occurs (Grint 1991).

Considering the classical approaches to work through the ideas of the 'gang of three', we come across Karl Marx's argument that the human species is different from all other animal species, not because of its consciousness but because it alone produces its own means of subsistence (1975a). Emile Durkheim's contribution to the sociology of work is fundamentally derived from his classic *The Division of Labour* and his discussion of 'anomie'. The third member, Max Weber's contribution to the sociology of work lies in disparate fields, which embrace criticism of Marxist perspectives (Grint 1991). Thus, work is not only a part and parcel of an individual's life but also forms a major link between human beings and society. For this very reason, the world of work is considered the central arena for individual and social development.

Work can be viewed either in a broad or narrow sense. In its broader connotation, work means any purposive activity, which entails the expenditure of energy and some sacrifice of pleasure. In its narrower sense, work refers to any income generating activity - for instance, workers engaged in production in a factory or a cobbler mending footwear.
In general, work is any purposive human effort to modify human physical environment. It is a basic human social process and is found in all societies; though, the social concept of work does not necessarily exist in all of them.

Work is a crucial determinant in one’s life. It is a living and active area of human involvement: it makes, and is made by us; it affects the general social nature of our lives in the most profound ways. Three important aspects of work can be listed:

1. Most people spend their prime waking hours at work

2. People often base their identity on work activities

3. People are often defined by others through their relation to work.

‘The meaning attached to work has been changing through the developmental stages of human society and technology. Earlier, work was considered as a physical activity performed for the mundane purpose of survival and existence. Later it was considered that people work to sustain life, to maintain contact with reality, to be part of a community, to attain status, to produce goods and services and to fulfil themselves through service to the society’ (Garg, Vrat and Kanda 1994: 463-466).

In general, the attitude towards work is strongly influenced by its milieu, so is the case of India. Weber (1958) pointed out that a characteristic feature of Hindu caste organisation is its great intensity of work and of property accumulation. Discipline and commitment to work as a part of the Indian ethos are clearly evident in the Bhagavad-Gita, wherein work is prescribed as ‘duty’ without any concern for the outcome (nishkamakarma). The doctrine of karma stresses the importance of work; the ancient
scriptures spoke of ‘karma yoga’; and the sayings of the great religious leaders like Basavanna (‘kayakave kailasa’) (see The Vachanas nd) and Swami Vivekananda (‘work is worship’), (see The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda nd), showed the path to divinity through work. In brief, in ancient times, work was given the highest priority in Indian society.

Thus, in India, traditionally the attitude towards work has been strongly influenced by religion. In the Indian village system, work had an instrumental value for maintaining collectivism and yet ensuring subsistence and security for all. Work as a gainful economic activity was performed either in the family or within the framework of inter-caste relationships, that is, between a food-producing family and the families that supply them with goods and services. These were called ‘jajmani’ relations. The term ‘jajman’ referred to the patron or recipient of specialised services, while the provider of goods or services was called by a variety of terms, ‘kamin’, ‘parjan’, ‘pardhan’, and the term ‘jajmani’ referred to the whole relationship (Mandelbaum 1970: 161-180). In brief, work was performed as a part of social relationships and occupations were differentiated along caste lines.

The work culture in India was strongly influenced by the social and cultural heritage of the country. Some of the basal values of Indian culture, namely, individualism, parochialism and ‘soft’ rationalism gave rise to weak norms of productivity (Rastogi 1988). This was reflected through egotism, rigid and narrow perception of one’s self-identity, caste and class strata, and communal affiliation, which gave way to disharmony, divergence and irrationality in labour-management, enterprise-government, and inter-
union relationships. Trust, tolerance and objectivity in inter-group relationships became inoperative. Efficiency and effectiveness in planning, decisions and actions were affected by a casual, uncommitted and indifferent attitude. All this was manifested in various forms of incompetence, irresponsibility, inefficiency, nepotism, corruption, superficial compliance, complacency in administration, mismanagement and poor implementation of plans and schemes for the achievement of vitally important socio-economic goals (ibid).

However, repeated invasions and the rule by people of different nations substantially diluted the Hindu view of work. Of all the rules, British rule had the maximum impact on the work values of Indians because they were closest in the history as the rulers of India for 200 years and the roots of industrial organisations and public administration system were sown during the British rule (Bhal 1998). Thus, the British-style of Indian management, that is, emotional aloofness combined with high control of subordinates, and administrative practices were inherited by Indians from the British, which stemmed from the Britishers' colonial attitude towards managing people.

During the colonial era, the British rulers bureaucratised Indian work organisations and polarised positions of officers and non-officers. The Indians did not internalise the western work values to a satisfactory extent. The relationship orientation of superior (nurturant) - subordinate (dependent), Indian psyche was midway between bureaucratism and autocracy (Sinha 1990). The Indian work organisations missed the experience of the Industrial Revolution. The work organisations (shaped by colonial experiences, bureaucratic model of functioning and polarised positions) were made to assume a developmental role, prescribed strongly in the public sector than in the private sector. The
greater penetration of social habits and cultural values into the fabric of work organisations resulted in the weakening of work values, which Sinha (2000) calls a culture of ‘aram’.

The work forms in India remain embedded in the ‘traditional aim of spiritual perfection’ (Chatterjee 1994), despite the import of technologically complex organisations from the west. ‘In India organisations are encouraged to take a passive/reactive stance to task performance; success is judged on moralism derived from tradition and religion, people orientation is paternalistic’ (Kanungo and Jaeger 1990). This was because the reforms in the public sector in India were long on words but short on substance. ‘The contribution of public sector enterprises to each of the Five Year Plans fell short of expectations’ (Kapila 1990: 195). ‘The main shortfalls of public enterprises were uneconomic pricing of products, overstaffing, lack of professional management, overstocking and enormous unproductive and administrative expenditure’ (Joshi and Banerjee 1986: 89). The public sector has always been blamed for inefficiency, non-professionalism, under utilisation of resources, low productivity, and interference by political forces, bureaucratisation, administrative influences and delays in implementation of decisions. The private sector also was not contributing to the economy to a satisfactory extent due to the regulatory policies and interference of the government.

In this context the idea of liberalisation as a part of the New Economic Policy (NEP) was adopted to enhance the growth of the economy. Liberalisation means scrapping the debilitating restrictions, controls and licensing over investments, imports and production. The new structure of market economy, laid and developed since 1991,
and the New Industrial Policy of July 1991, not only move away from the past socialistic approach, but also welcome foreign investment and technology which helps to reach the goals of higher productivity and efficiency (Agrawal 1986).

The New Economic Policy has opened up the economy and given it an outward orientation by creating new opportunities/challenges for Indian business/industry. The public sector, which has so far been the lead-sector in development, no longer holds the commanding position in the economy. Its role has been reduced and redefined, as the private sector is being given a larger space to operate in. Thus, in some areas the public sector will have to compete with the private sector (ibid). An improvement in the functioning of the various entities, whether they are in the public or the private sector, is sought to be achieved by injecting an element of competition (Kapila 2001).

The multinational corporations were the natural outcome of the globalisation of economy. Using their worldwide operations to develop global strategies, they have come out with success stories. The success of multinational companies and some private sector companies (which followed their way) is attributed to their different work culture. The changes in the economy due to the New Economic Policy brought in changes in the structural and behavioural aspects, technology, inter-relationships, inter-communication systems, appraisal systems and such other spheres of work in organisations.

**THE PROBLEM**

With the introduction of the New Economic Policy, organisations/enterprises in India are under pressure not only to survive but also change and compete in the global
market. Enterprises are now required to conform to international standards such as ISO 9000, apart from aiming to achieve high quality-standards in their products and services. The idea of gaining a competitive edge in the era of market being opened to foreign companies has cleared the pitch for increasing change and competition. It is widely argued that promoting work culture in organisations contributes to improving quality, productivity and profitability, apart from achieving better customer service and product innovation. Thus, in the context of liberalisation and changing scenario of enterprise, the study of work and work culture from a sociological perspective becomes both relevant and important.

While there is a growing discussion on ‘work culture’ and ‘organisation culture’, the concepts themselves still remain hazy. Though managerial experts and psychologists often use these terms, in sociology few studies are found on organisation culture and none at all on work culture. The discipline that deals with societal culture can well deal with the concepts of ‘work culture’ and ‘organisation culture’, which certainly carry the imprint of the culture of the larger society.

In the light of the changing economic scenario and considering the need for a sociological contribution to understanding work culture, the researcher has made a humble effort to compare work culture in the public sector, private sector and multinational corporations to highlight the differences among them and to find the implications of liberalisation on their work culture. The researcher has within each sector, attempted to compare organisations engaged in various activities - categorised under production,
finance, commerce and software - in order to have a better understanding of work culture and the impact of liberalisation on different spheres of activities.

**SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The broad objective of this study is to understand work and work culture in organisations from a sociological perspective. The main objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. Understand and clarify the concept of work culture and its interface with organisation culture:
   a. conceptual understanding of the two by management experts and social scientists, and
   b. understanding of the same by employees in organisations.

2. Compare and analyse the employee profile across organisations in terms of:
   a. nature of organisation - public, private and multinational corporations, and
   b. type of activity - production, finance, commerce and software.

3. Compare and analyse the prevalent perceptions on work culture across organisations - by employees and their employers.

4. Compare and analyse the prevalent work situation across organisations.

5. Explore the factors influencing work culture in organisations.
6. Explore the perceptions of the employers on the impact of liberalisation on work culture in organisations.

The researcher has tried to arrive at a comprehensive picture of the work situation using both the quantitative and the qualitative data collected for the study from the employees and the employers/representatives of the organisations chosen.

**LOCATE OF THE STUDY**

The area of the study is Bangalore City, capital of Karnataka state. Bangalore, located in the centre of south India is a well-known industrial and cosmopolitan urban centre. It is an icon of the new industrial city, which has been described as the 'Silicon Valley' of India. Being home to a complex and wide variety of work organisations, it is also a social laboratory par excellence for studying the existing and changing nature of work culture and enterprise.

According to *Karnataka State Gazetteer 1983-93*, the new Bangalore District came into existence on 15th August 1986 with the division of the erstwhile Bangalore District into Bangalore Rural and Bangalore Urban districts. Being the capital of the state, the city is the chief administrative centre clustered with numerous state-level and divisional-level government departments and offices associated with the legislative, executive and judicial wings of administration. The city is the headquarters of both the Bangalore Rural and Bangalore Urban districts.

Manufacturing industry enjoys a pivotal place in the economy of the district. As on 30th September 1999, there were 3,970 establishments in the City (see *Man Power Profile*...
Karnataka Year 2000-2001). The unique position attained by trade and commerce is another characteristic feature of the city. Bangalore city is not only the most prominent trading and commercial centre in Karnataka, but also a major centre of banking industry. Bangalore city is the nerve centre of various religious, social and cultural organisations and movements. The city has served as a venue for several social and cultural activities of local, regional as well as of national and international importance.

Bangalore is the home of several large-scale public sector industries and their ancillaries - and more recently the info-tech and garment industries - and gateway to styles of globalised consumption. Thus, the city has always been marked by regional, national and global forces and interests (Nair 2000).

Bangalore is one of India’s foremost cosmopolitan, industrial, scientific, technological, commercial, administrative, educational and cultural centres, and it also occupies a strategic position on the map of India. Its many enviable parks and gardens, and its salubrious climate have earned for it the epithet “the garden city” (Jayaram 1989).

The researcher being a native resident of Bangalore is conversant with its locale, the ways of its people and the language(s) of everyday communication there. This is certainly an advantage not only in collecting data, but also in interacting with organisations selected for the study as and when required.

The focal point of the present study is work culture in the context of liberalisation. The researcher has chosen sixteen organisations in Bangalore city to conduct the empirical investigation. The organisations are classified based on the nature of their ownership: the
public sector, the private sector and multinational corporations; and the type of activities they are engaged in: production, finance, commerce and software. The various organisations covered in this study are shown in Table 1.1. The detailed profiles of these organisations are presented in Appendix 1.

**SAMPLE DESIGN**

The primary data required for the study were collected through field work in two different phases: the first phase included the data collected from employees through a questionnaire survey, and the second phase consists of data collected from a few employers/representatives using an interview schedule.

Foreseeing the problem of lack of response to the questionnaire survey, in all 550 questionnaires were distributed. Out of these 550, the researcher could get back 420 (76.4%) filled-in questionnaires. Considering the problems of obtaining a random sample for the study, samples were selected by the quota sampling method. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, 16 organisations were chosen by the purposive-sampling method. With the intention of carrying out a comparative study, the researcher had selected organisations that vary not only in terms of ownership but also with regard to the type of organisation. The responses obtained from each of these organisations are not uniform in number. The raw data collected was processed and categorised by the researcher for easy and meaningful analysis. The processed data were stored in the Microsoft Excel format. Tabular analysis was used extensively along with factor analysis to arrive at the results of the study.
### Table 1.1: Organisations Covered by the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Organisation</th>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Software</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited</td>
<td>• State Bank of Mysore</td>
<td>• Karnataka State Co-operative Apex Bank Limited</td>
<td>• Centre for Development of Advanced Computing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Zuari Industries</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Karnataka State Co-operative Consumers Federation (Janata Bazaar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Mangalore Chemicals and Fertilisers</td>
<td></td>
<td>• State Bank of Mysore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Chaitanya Hi-Tech Engineering Company Private Limited</td>
<td>• Nilgiris Dairy Farm Limited (Nilgiris Supermarket)</td>
<td>• Veerashaiva Co-operative Society (Kalyan Super Bazaar)</td>
<td>• SLN Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNC</td>
<td></td>
<td>• GERB Vibration and Noise Isolation Systems</td>
<td>• Standard Chartered Bank</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lucent Technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Nagel Special Machines Private Limited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cypress Semi-Conductor Technology India Private Limited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to respond to questionnaires and the nature of the data resulting from the questionnaires. To ensure that the data from the questionnaire meets the objectives of the study, it was pre-tested on a small sample. Fifty questionnaires were administered to respondents belonging to six organisations of the sample. Data sets complete in all aspects were analysed, the shortcomings of the questionnaire were corrected, and a final questionnaire was prepared for use in the fieldwork (see Appendix 2). An interview schedule was prepared to collect data from the employers/representatives of the organisations through interviews (see Appendix 3).

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The primacy of work culture has not been highlighted in our society. It is a part and parcel of the overall development of every nation. It is in this context, work culture in various organisations in Bangalore, one of the major cities influenced by the New Economic Policy 1991 in India, has been studied. This will help us in understanding the nature of work culture in a changing world.

A study of this type is relevant, for it attempts to identify the key factors influencing work culture. It brings out the sources of ‘better’ work culture. The study aims at finding ideas about work and work culture both at individual and group levels. There is hardly any study on work culture from a sociological perspective. The present study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of work culture by a comparative analysis of the public sector, the private sector and multinational corporations.
The proposed study is mainly exploratory in nature. Theoretically, this study tries to provide a sociological understanding of the concept of work culture and lay the ground for the generation of hypotheses for further studies. It discusses the factors influencing work culture both positively and negatively.

**LIMITATIONS**

Due to paucity of time and resources, the study is restricted to the select 16 organisations. Generalisations made here pertain only to these organisations, and are limited by the quota nature of the sample. Some of these generalisations are, no doubt, applicable across the board, at least hypothetically. Though care has been taken to ensure the reporting of correct responses, it is possible that, in some cases, due to errors of recollection, respondents may have given incomplete or wrong data. After all, this is an inherent limitation of the questionnaire method. However, care has been taken to minimise the problem of missing values.

The study could have ideally included organisations of other types like health, education and so on, but due to constraints of time and resources they were not considered in the present study.

The language used in the questionnaire was English. As an after thought, it occurred that considering the cultural context of the various terms used, though our respondents were conversant with English, we could have elicited more appropriate and accurate responses had the questionnaire been designed in the regional language. But then
Bangalore is a cosmopolitan city and not all the respondents could be expected to be (and, in fact, are not) conversant with the regional language, namely, Kannada.

**CHAPTER SCHEME**

The thesis has been organised into nine chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 discusses the changing meaning of work and work in classical sociology, and then examines the concepts and theories on work and work culture. An analysis of the concepts ‘work culture’ and ‘organisation culture’ by various scholars belonging to different disciplines is given. The global and the local scenario of work and work culture through the ages are outlined.

Chapter 3 provides the profile of the respondents with reference to their socio-demographic background, socio-cultural background and socio-economic background. The factual details such as age, sex, marital status, family type, family size, religion, caste, education and occupation of the respondents’ parents, education of respondents, their socio-economic class and their geographical background, discussed in this chapter provide the background of the employees whose work culture we seek to understand in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 4 describes the employees’ location[position in the organisation. Details of employees in relation to their organisations are discussed here. This chapter covers such aspects as current designation, experience/number of years of service put in by the employees in the current organisation, promotions received by them, working hours, lunch break, and distance from the employees’ home to office.
Chapter 5 analyses the employees' perceptions of work and work culture. The opinions, attitudes and preferences of employees about various aspects of work and work culture are discussed here. It also explains the employees' feelings, values and priorities, which have a bearing on their work culture.

Chapter 6 deals with the social organisation of work, which adds details of the understanding of work, work relationships, nature of communication patterns, social activities, small group activities, resolving problems and difference of opinions, workers' union and their relations with the management, the value orientation of employees and the sense of belonging to organisation among them.

Chapter 7 discusses various organisation-related aspects such as motivation; leave facility, changes in the organisation, targets, incentive schemes, job stress/work pressure, facilities and opportunities in the organisation.

Chapter 8 presents an analysis of the qualitative data collected by interviewing the employers/representatives of the organisations. Their opinions about various aspects like work, work culture, ideal work-culture, work culture and organisation culture, factors fostering work culture, organisation processes like recruitment, training and performance appraisal systems, are provided. Finally, the employers'/representatives' attitude and opinions about liberalisation and the impact of the same on organisations throws light on the changing socio-economic scenario, resulting in changes in the world of work and work culture.
Based on the analyses presented in the substantive Chapters 3 to 8, and drawing insights there from Chapter 9 presents the summary and conclusions of the study, explaining work and work culture in terms of the nature of organisation and the type of activity with special reference to liberalisation and enterprise.