CHAPTER-1

An Introduction to the Topic

1.1 Introduction

Work motivation has been studied from different perspectives and several eminent scholars have contributed towards the development of various theories in this area. However, the topic is still an intriguing phenomenon in management science because of the limited applicability of existing theories and also due to the fact that empirical evidences are varying depending on the context especially from the cultural point of view (Shamir, 1991). Theory development on work motivation did not make expected progress and most of the studies during the last two decades remained within the existing theoretical frameworks. This thesis reports the result of an empirical study for which the central theme is ‘deontic motivation’ which has its roots in seeing work as duty. The main purpose of this research is to establish the importance of deontic work motivation as well as to make research propositions to investigate further on this topic with special reference to organizational socialization and employee commitment. The propositions are derived from the discussion of the literature on these topics and their underlying theoretical principles are discussed. The special focus of this introductory chapter is to introduce the concept of ‘deontic motivation’ and its background within the scholarship of management science especially in organizational behaviour. This
chapter of the thesis is a document of scope and significance of the study of deontic motivation. The purpose of the study is highlighted by discussing theoretical aspects of deontic work motivation in relation to organizational socialization and employee commitment. The final part of this chapter gives the outline of this thesis report in terms of its chapterization with a brief on the content included in each one of the chapters.

1.2 Deontic Work Motivation: Background

“It is the sense of obligation that transforms mere behaviour into conduct.” (Harry L Hollingsworth, 1949, P. 3). This statement from the one of the earliest scholars of applied psychology whose work on the effects of caffeine behaviour is considered to be an earliest study in the field of applied psychology (Benjamin Jr, 2006) reveals the importance of ‘sense of obligation’ as one of the fundamental motivational characteristics of human behaviour. Inspite of the conceptualization of feeling of obligation in human behaviour as early as in 1949, Western literature on motivation does not formally recognize its importance even in the study of organizational behaviour wherein scholars have investigated almost all the known attributes. This lacuna in scholarship could be attributed to the fact that Western literature on human behaviour was mostly rooted in the principles of individualism and economics of calculative outcomes which were fundamentally rational in nature. Similarly, there is no evidence of any serious attempt in oriental literature of any scientific study on ‘sense of obligation’ even though ‘work as duty’ is
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ingrained into the oriental culture which is particularly true of the Indian culture, whose scriptures (*The Bhagavad Gita*) advocate the performance of one’s duty without thinking about the rewards. Moreover, the concept of ‘work as duty’ had been reinforced in India by the father of the nation who preached that ‘work is worship’ and hence, there is high possibility that ‘feeling of obligation’ or ‘duty’ could be a determinant of work motivation in the Indian context. However, in the world of management practice there are indications of effective use of ‘sense of obligation’ or ‘work as duty’ by organizations in the form of ‘loyalty based’ motivational systems both in the West as well as in the East. The practice of ‘lifetime employment’ in Japan, for instance, is a way of inculcating ‘sense of obligation’ so that ‘work as duty’ is practiced in work situations. Beginning from 1970, practitioners as well as scholars in the West started observing Japanese organizations and found that the fundamentals of Japanese workplace management were entirely different from what were prevailing in their own organizations.

It was this growing realization of uniqueness of Japanese management system and their success which prompted Schwartz (1983) to conceptualize and propose ‘the theory of deontic work motivation’. The word ‘deontic’ is derived from Greek word ‘*deonta*’ denoting meaning duties. In this sense, ‘deontic motivation’ should be understood as the motivation founded on psychological attribute of the feeling of obligation. The content and details of the operationalization of this theory will be discussed as part of the review of literature in the coming chapter of this thesis.
However, it is essential to understand as to what necessitates the study of deontic work motivation and its importance in understanding organizational behaviour beyond pure rationalistic and self interest perspective.

According to Schwartz (1983), the high level of commitment in Japanese organization originated from mutual obligation and this psychology of obligation and its development was ignored by both practitioners as well as scholars in the American society. The absence of scholarship on the concept of obligation was a major deficiency in understanding Japanese management and hence the attempts to adopt Japanese systems and practices did not produce any stated objectives of the American companies. Schwartz (1983) summarized his observation on Japanese management phenomenon thus; “the notion that the employee must act on the basis of responsibilities, obligations, duties, and moral imperatives that supersede her or his self-interest lies at the heart of Japanese industrial organization” (P 28). The basis of Japanese success is that every constituent member of the industry understands their responsibilities and they are motivated to fulfil those responsibilities. It is now not a new thing to the scholars that Japanese companies are famous in building and nurturing a unique industrial social system comprised of relationships based on mutual obligation and commitment.

Apart from the compelling evidences from Japanese industrial organizations there are myriads of human endeavours in human history as well as in the present day
that have emanated from this fundamental human feeling of sense of obligation. Probably, the classic example in this regard could be defence organizations of almost all the nations in the world, where the sense of obligation and duty beyond the self interest of the individual is immortalized by great deeds including human sacrifices. One of the major reasons for the strength of the culture of such organizations is because it is founded on the ideals of upholding duty and acting upon the call of duty. Specific examples can be drawn from the defence organizations of two largest democratic nations, namely, India and America. In the case of India, the motto of the army is ‘service before self’ through which they strive to ensure safety, honour and welfare of the country. Similarly, the first word of the motto of American army is ‘duty’ which clearly establishes their priority. The army organizations of both these countries have unparalleled accomplishments to their credit and known for their vibrancy and high level of motivation. It may be noted that the same is the case with army organizations of any other nations because one of the motivating factors for their action and existence is their duty towards the respective nation.

Analyses of certain sterling individual performances which have achieved seemingly impossible things in the world have come from those individuals who were motivated beyond fulfilling their self interests. One of such examples is the life of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation along with several known/unknown freedom fighters who gave their lives during the freedom struggle. Thereafter it was followed up by the selfless work of people from various
fields in shaping the nation by building world class institutions thereby transforming the nation into a global entity to reckon with. Similar is the case with various people who are working in social sector who selflessly pursue the welfare of others even though they could flourish elsewhere that would have provided them individually more beneficial and satisfying results. Whistle blowing is another intriguing phenomenon that calls for deeper investigation to understand the motivating force behind such behaviour. Surprisingly, as mentioned earlier, inspite of these potential phenomenological evidences, it has not attracted scholars to explore further on this topic. In this regard the statement of Hollingsworth (1949) still remains valid: “the contemporary schools of psychology have in common a scant respect for the fundamental human experiences known as conscience, the sense of obligation, the feeling expressed by ‘ought’. Personality and character tend to be analysed into their elements, and motivation is reduced to the operation of reflexes or the activity of instincts” (P 5). The same concern was expressed by Schwartz in 1983 while proposing the theory of motivation that due to reasons unknown the concept of duty has been completely ignored by the scholars though it constituted the nucleus of a good work culture. To put it in his words, (P 205), “organizational psychologists do not consider the notion of acting on the basis of responsibility and obligation important enough to study. The absence of the concept of obligation has cost organizational psychology dearly-both in terms of theory and practice.” Though Schwartz argued very forcefully for the attention of scholars of motivation studies by conceptualizing deontic motivation a very few studies have been reported on this topic till date.
Shamir (1990, 1991) carried out a critical analysis of existing theories of work motivation and opined that Western motivation theories overemphasised utilitarian individualism and hence many work-related phenomena are still unexplained in other cultures especially from Asian continent. In other words, work motivation is not globally uniform (Eskildsen & Kristensen, 2004) and the existing theories are quite inadequate to explain behaviours of different cultures especially certain individual sacrifices for collective concern. Shamir (1990) argued that motivation of an individual to contribute towards collective efforts cannot be explained by individualistic-calculative theories alone because of which he proposed to approach the phenomenon with three perspectives simultaneously and one of these perspectives is value-based or considerations based on moral obligations.

Westwood (2001) has reported a study in Chinese context that family socialization and subsequent subjugation to the interest of the family is one of the foundations of the Chinese culture. He narrates that "The security of family membership instills an obligation to fulfill the role requirements of the family and to help build up, maintain and perpetuate family wellbeing and interests. The paradigm for this is the filial piety expected of the son. This takes on an inescapable, obligatory dynamic and is life-long" (P 26). This “obligatory dynamic” is the foundation of deontic motivation. Westwood goes on to explain that Chinese people emulate same familial culture with the organization too. Similar is the situation in Japanese organizations where members of the organization work as a family.
The findings of Westwood (2001) is in line with the social process of ‘upbringing’ because humans are born into this world as invalid entity and survive on the unconditional provisions made by his/her parents. The situation continues the same for quite a number of years and during this ‘upbringing’ one always receives things without actually giving anything back. This long process of family socialization inculcates the value of being obligated for one’s existence. The nature of the process of upbringing varies from culture to culture due to the nature of family socialization and hence it can be presumed that the feeling of obligation also will be varying. It is quite evident from family socialization process and also by the inevitable fact that one is dependent on others in the early stages of life is a good enough reason for development of a sense of obligation. This is precisely the reason why people in oriental culture make sacrifices for the family. In this way, one is discharging his obligation towards the family for having benefitted from the support system for his/her growth development.

The ‘obligatory dynamic’ or the attribute of deontic motivation resulting from socialization in the family context could be of special interest in organizational context too. In the organizational context, the topic of organizational socialization is one of the most researched subjects and the interest of practicing managers on this topic is not different. World over managers are in search of ways and means to create ‘family spirit’ or ‘family like’ environment within their organization so that employees are committed and sacrifice their self interest for the benefit of the
organization. As mentioned earlier ‘duty’ is the essence of employment relation where by employee and employers agree to mutually fulfill certain expectations. The beginning and the foundation of this relationship is the organizational socialization process by which a new person is inducted to an ‘organizational family’. It may be noted that from a sociological point of view individual is dependent on the family while on both from sociological as well as economic point of view individual is dependent on organizations. In other words, employee-organization relationship is not accidental but a necessity for both. In this regard, every individual desires to have an ideal organization for his/her growth and development. Hence, the process of belonging to an organization should be viewed broadly to mean more than a job. The question is whether organizations are able to see this broader perspective and take advantage of this opportunity. In the light of the discussions above, it is argued that there is an opportunity in organizations to build a relationship based on deontic motivation where individuals find meaning in making sacrifices for common good.

1.3 Context and Purpose

It is presumed that organizational socialization is central to the development of deontic motivation in the organization. This importance of organizational socialization is aptly stated by Tuttle (2002), “the successful socialization of an individual could be one of the largest feats to achieve toward setting the stage for commitment and performance success in the organization” (P 87). Organizational
socialization can be adjudged as successful only if the new individual is completely integrated to the organization. From the perspective of deontic motivation, the new individual should feel like a family member in an organization and it is worthy of his commitment and sacrifices. However, it may be noted that organizational socialization should be considered in its broader sense, that is, continuous and interactionist perspectives. Thus, we see that deontic motivation is one of the important factors that act as an energizing force that fashion human behaviour in general as well as in organizational setting. Most importantly, institutions and organizations of social and economic importance cannot be built and sustained with temporal feeling of motivation but only if one is motivated by duty because it calls for sacrifices for collective concerns over a period of time which is not affected by ups and downs of routine life.

The above portrayed relationship between socialization and deontic motivation matches with what is envisaged by Schwartz (1983) because he proposed that deontic motivation has two stages: generation of obligation and discharge of obligation. For example, when an individual accepts certain benefits offered by the organization against certain work, a sense of obligation is created within the individual and then the execution of that work becomes discharge of that obligation. In this way, the basis of work motivation is deontic and employee commitment could depend on the intensity of the obligation experienced by the individual. But, reward, intrinsic or extrinsic, is an essential ingredient in the recipe of work-motivation. The concept of ‘work as duty’ or deontic motivation is also not
fully outside the realm of influence by rewards. However, the main difference is that all other motivation theories advocate that while doing the work individuals focus is on getting reward and on the contrary, according to deontic motivation theory individual’s focus is not on the rewards but on discharging the obligation. Schwartz suggests that the process of creating obligation facilitates an external compulsion of work to become an internal compulsion. This shift of compulsions also shifts the locus of causality from external to internal which in turn generates a feeling of autonomy.

The two stage process of generation of obligation and discharge of obligation involves two parties and it is reciprocal in nature. The reciprocal behaviour (Gouldner, 1960) is the foundation of social exchange theory introduced by Blau (1964) and it is widely used by the scholars of organizational behaviour as the base theory to understand the various motivational aspects of work behaviour in the organization. This theoretical paradigm can also be used to explain the process of deontic motivation but the content and concept will vary. In the case of deontic work motivation, application of social exchange theory and reciprocity could be from social and psychological perspectives rather than the economic perspective. Needless to say that the scope of deontic work motivation is within the relationship between employee and the organization represented by the employer and hence application of reciprocity norm in their exchange. However, the relevant question to be answered here is to what is the fundamental and underlying factor that motivates one to comply with the reciprocity
Thus, there are strong indications to suggest that ‘deontic motivation’ could be a distinctive factor of work-motivation, and could be more characteristic of the ‘employee-type’ of Individuals. Even among employees, there could be variations in this motive across types of jobs, levels in the organization, sectors of industry, life-cycle stage of the individual, and the like. Such variations may also be a function of the early experiences of the individual especially the family socialization. According to deontic motivation theory, doing the work in the right way gives self esteem to individuals and is argued that it is in line with the idea of the dignity of work and workers. There is a clear sociological and psychological background to the concept of deontic motivation because we are conditioned to make behavioral choices based on our obligations or feels it as our duty to do so. Most importantly one is obliged to do certain things irrespective of his wants or needs which are the fundamental requirements of existing theories of motivation. In other words, it is not the need satisfaction of the individual concerned; on the contrary something is demanded of the person though the benefit of which may not accrue to him/her. One is motivated not because she/he needs something but one feels/inclines to do so as duty and sense of obligation is the core energizing force.

Recent developments in strategic HRM clearly emphasis the role of committed manpower for competitive advantage of the firm and this is more relevant because of its linkages to the new and emerging theories in business strategy. It paves the
way for making the human resources management more integrated with business and attain the status of distinctive contributor. However, the key to obtain such status is in developing manpower resources that are committed to the organization so that they take up challenges as their obligation which is not thrust upon but an internalized attribute developed over a period of time in their relationship with the respective organization. It is the state of mind to see the organizational challenges as his/her own challenges. The practitioners as well as scholars have approached this issue by introducing a series of practices based on various concepts like, employee engagement, participatory model, high involvement, empowerment, work as play, job enrichment, etc. It is argued that deontic motivation plays a major role in developing a sustained employee commitment and hence calls for an empirical investigation based on comprehensive theoretical model linking organizational socialization, deontic motivation and employee commitment. Development of this theoretical model with the help of existing literature and testing it empirically through quantitative methodology constitute the major purpose of the study.

Initial support for the above suggested model is provided by Schnippert (1995) in his empirical study on the general structure of deontic motivation which has proved the presence of deontic motivation as an influencing factor in human behaviour. Another important empirical study related to deontic motivation is reported by Eisenberger et al (2001) in which they found that perceived organizational support was positively related to ‘felt obligation’ and in turn it
mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and affective commitment, organizational spontaneity and in-role performance. However, this study did not consider felt obligation from the perspective of a motivational factor. The fact is that, there is a genuine paucity of literature on this topic which is both limitation as well as advantage at the same time. It is a limitation in the sense that the theoretical foundation of the study may look weak because as of now one is not able to clearly identify the root of the construct of deontic motivation with the support of the existing literature. On the other hand, it is an advantage because it offers a fresh area of research with a potential to change the way we design, implement and measure the various HR related organizational practices.

It is true that the existing body of literature on motivation does not discuss specifically on the concept of deontic motivation, however, almost all the studies on organizations behaviour especially dealing with employee-organization relationship recognize the role of obligation. But, it has not been treated as independent branch of study though it has the potential to be developed as theory. Ideally, the concept of deontic motivation requires more discussion in the light of other similar concept within the framework of reciprocity norm under social exchange theory. On the whole, one can conclude with confidence that theory of deontic motivation is reliable because of the strong theoretical framework provided by Schwartz and the initial evidences of the nature of deontic motivation emerging for the study of Schnippert (1995) could provide basic foundation for empirically establishing this view point. Moreover, it is more relevant in the Indian
context where the family socialization is rigorous and deontic motivation seems to be a strong factor in societal value structure.

Deontic motivation places work beyond a contractual relationship based on sharing of end results but central to one’s own moral existence rather as a medium to satisfy one’s hedonistic desires. Most importantly, the dignity of labour and work become central themes because work is not only a means but and an end in itself. When work itself is considered to be a dignified human activity it is not necessary to invest time and energy to make it impressive to attract individuals. On the contrary, deontic motivation allows presenting work as more acceptable and fitting to the basic nature of people. However, as very little research has been undertaken in this area and hence there are many challenges that one might have to overcome. The major challenge would be to establish the comparative relevance of the concept of ‘deontic’ to prove that it can create more autonomous motivation suggested in the existing theoretical frameworks especially by exponents of self determination theory of work motivation. This requirement entails grounded research and authenticating it with adequate empirical evidences through quantitative data analysis. Though it is a difficult task ahead with regard to the theoretical investigation of deontic motivation, the encouraging factor is that this stream of study is not crowded and hence a scholarly work is bound to attract the interest of scholars as well as it has potential in making a valuable contribution to theory and practice.
1.4 Significance of the Study

As indicated earlier, it can be safely concluded that there are several motivational patterns in different cultures that cannot be explained by existing well researched theories of motivation and in such cases deontic motivation expected to throw more light. In other words, the study of deontic motivation is expected to fill the deficiency of the existing theories in many ways. First of all, the existing theories of work motivation seem to rely heavily on self interest aspect of human behaviour which in many occasions is not true. This over estimation of self interest by scholars of motivation has been highlighted by Folger and Salvador (2008) and they opined that this tendency of over estimating self interest as the only motive behind human behaviour is hasty generalization and not true in all situations. In this context, deontic motivation could be of an explanation for those behaviours which are undertaken primarily for the benefit of others. Secondly, the existing theories of work motivation advocate that individuals fashion their behaviour in anticipation of reward or to obtain certain reward by undertaking an activity while in deontic it is presumed that the reward is already received and hence one has the duty to reciprocate. This is against the conventional management of employee-employer contract but a developmental approach where investment is done on employees anticipating better and committed performance. Thus, deontic motivation offers a logical and psychological explanation for employee development activities and also makes it broader and meaningful. Thirdly, deontic motivation could be one of the major reasons behind an extrinsic motivation
becoming intrinsic like motivation. In other words, internalization of sense of obligation plays a major role in converting externally oriented work motivation into an internally oriented one in the self determination continuum. The self determination continuum proposed by self determination theorists Gagne and Deci (2005) does not dwell much into the reasons of such shift, that is, from external orientation to external. One of the major reasons discussed is the benefit accruing to one from the end result which is limitation and this limitation can be overcome if it is conceptualised with help of deontic motivation because the focus gets shifted to discharge of the obligation irrespective of the fact that whether the individual benefits from the end result. What is emerging from this discussion is that deontic motivation could explain the interactionist perspective of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

Fourthly, deontic motivation is conceptualized as an internalized attribute of a person which is neither intrinsic nor extrinsic. The sole motive of undertaking a task is to discharge one’s felt obligation as effectively as possible because of the favours one has already received in similar conditions. This is aspect of deontic motivation could explain why certain tasks which are neither intrinsically motivating nor extrinsically rewarded are undertaken by individuals. It may be noted that there are a very few tasks in the world which could provide intrinsic satisfaction and it is most of the tasks or at least part of it in a business organization may not be intrinsically motivating and deontic motivation is an answer to this challenge. There are a large number of voluntary social workers
and social activists who take up challenging jobs sometimes in a very disgusting environment and these extreme behaviours could be attributed to deontic motivation. Organizations also face situations when nobody wants to do certain tasks but inevitable and in such situations, many a times, invoking duty could be the only way to get the commitment of the people on the task. Individuals who contribute in such situations are most often characterised as having high level of commitment. It may be noted that, generally, the immediate motive of such behaviour is sense of obligation and not any calculated benefits.

Fifth point in this regard is that deontic motivation is not directed to any goal achievement. The thrust is on ‘it should be done’ or ‘ought to be done’ rather than ‘what is in it for me’ or ‘what will I gain’. There are many tasks which cannot be defined or described in details to anticipate as to what activities one should undertake during the course of time. The existing motivation theories deal with those tasks which are clearly defined in terms of its objectives so that the individual is able to weigh the options before deciding to commit. But, this kind of scenario rarely exists especially in managerial job or any kind of innovation projects and hence the applicability of traditional theories is limited. It is proposed that deontic motivation can fill this gap in explaining similar behaviour pattern. Shamir (1991) has criticised the existing motivation theories on the ground that they deal with only discrete behaviours which are easily observable and measurable. According to him such an approach to the study of commitment is useless. The nature and general construction of deontic motivation may not follow
rational process as emphasised by existing motivation theories but a heuristic process.

Finally, deontic motivation might help in understanding the dynamics of those behaviours that are against established societal and even individual values. These are related to those activities undertaken due to felt obligation even though it might be against societal and individual values. These are those typical situations when sense of duty towards some entity prevails over morality or value system. On many occasions, individuals behave in such a manner with the full knowledge that the act is not in accordance with societal norms. It is not the righteousness of the act but again it has to be done because of deontic motivation. This aspect of deontic motivation distinguishes it from morality and it is a secular motivating attribute of human behaviour.

It is evident from the above discussion that empirical investigations on deontic work motivation are warranted from academic point of view and it offers exciting opportunities for making substantial contribution to the theories of motivation. The perspective of deontic work motivation is poised to change substantially the way one understands organizational behaviour. The emphasis of deontic work motivation is more of humanistic than a mechanical interplay of certain well defined and calculable offerings and desires. It recognises the human ability, or one might call it dignity, of transcending self interest for collective value creation. It is hard to believe that individual’s actions would be based on a single motive and
hence more appropriate would be to believe that they are based on a set of motives, of which deontic motive is an important one and sometimes decisive. Apart from theoretical ramifications, we can safely say that the outcomes of the study of deontic motivation is expected to impact management practice in a positive manner by making many practices more meaningful and rich. The topic of deontic motivation meets both criteria of a scientific research in management science, that is, novelty and usefulness. It is novel because of it offers a new and better way of understanding work motivation. The possible applicability of this concept through well designed management practices makes it useful.

1.5 Thesis Outline

Including this introductory chapter this thesis report contains seven chapters and second chapter is a detailed analysis of existing literature on work motivation and evidences of deontic motivation from literature is collated. This chapter is concluded with the development and discussion on theoretical model of the study. In the third chapter, the methodology and its execution for the study are discussed. Also, the scientific reasons for choosing specific methods and tools are discussed with the support of literature. The fourth and fifth chapters constitute the major part of the study where the qualitative steps taken for scale development and data analysis are reported with results and discussion. All the findings of the study are discussed and its linkages to various existing theories are established and also specific contributions of the present study are documented. The sixth
chapter contains detailed discussions on theoretical and practical implications of the findings of the study. The concluding chapter summarises the major findings of the study and major suggestions are made with practical implications of the findings of the study. This chapter also discusses future directions to research in the area of deontic motivation.