CHAPTER - II

NATURE AND PARADIGMS OF ABSENTEEISM

1. Introduction:

The economy of the world may be placed in three categories, viz. Capitalist Economy, Socialist Economy and Mixed Economy. Economic freedom of contract and free trade are the main features and majority of industries are owned or controlled by the private entrepreneurs. The State is restrained to interfere in the matters of freedom of trade and contract of employment. In Socialist Economy, the major activities of production and distribution of goods are completely controlled and managed by the State. In Mixed Economy, the public sector, the private sector and the co-operative sectors have their own place for the growth and development of industrialization. The Industrial Revolution gave birth to Capitalist Economy where the private entrepreneurs, being economically powerful, exploited the working class ruthlessly following the philosophy of *laissez faire*. The acute exploitation led to emergence of Socialism. In a developing society, neither total nationalization of means of production and distribution of goods and material nor their complete handover to private entrepreneurs is feasible and justifiable. Therefore, developing the philosophy of mixed economy and a planned policy in order to recognize the proper place and role of both public and private sectors in industrial arena seems to be highly desirable.
Agriculture was the principal activity in India till 18th Century. There was a self-sufficient village community comprised of farmers, craftsmen and labourers. In the 19th Century, Industrial Revolution stepped into Indian soil and Plantation industry and Jute and Cotton factories were gradually developed. The development of industrialization, a prime necessity of the progress and civilization of mankind, provided multiple benefits, avenues and facilities to the human beings. It is also regarded as an indicator of economic progress and development of a nation. However, industrialization in itself inherits many socio-economic evils which can be enumerated as follows:

(i) Craftsmen became wage earners;
(ii) Workers were regarded as commodity;
(iii) A drastic shift from villages to industrial towns was noted;
(iv) Migratory character of labour was seen;
(v) A traditional outlook of masters and servants was observed;
(vi) There was a mushroom growth of in numerable unhygienic slums;
(vii) Ecological imbalance was created here and there;
(viii) Deterioration of human health became a common factor;
(ix) Unhygienic work environment under which the workers had to work in factories and mines;
(x) Labour turnover and absenteeism became a common phenomenon.
Thus, absenteeism has been one of the many economic evils of industrialization.

The economic status and place of a nation at international level can be judged on the basis of the growth and development of industrialization. In this respect, the industrialized society can be divided into three groups - the developed, the developing and the underdeveloped societies. India has not yet shifted from the take-off stage. It is struggling hard for the enormous growth and expansion of industrialization. Though the British-India was considered as one of the ten industrialized nations at the time of emergence (ILO) of International Labour Organization in 1919 at international platform, yet it cannot be placed in the category of a developed economy so far as industrial and technological development is concerned even after 50 years of Independence.

Steel industry occupies one of the principal industries in the economic development of a nation. India has a rich heritage in steel. History records that Indian steel was highly valued even in Hindu regime. Porus gifted it in 400 B.C. to Alexander as a token of courtesy. The Iron Pillar at Mehrauli near Delhi is a living example of the skill of Indian craftsmen. In tune with the trend in the modern world where the steel dominates the industrial development scenario, this heritage has been given a new fillip in India by the major steel plants of SAIL and TISCO. Indian steel has now a strong base and a bright future worthy of its glorious past. The percentage rate of absenteeism has been gradually lowered down in comparison to the position of absenteeism in the first part of the the 20th Century even on an
all India basis. There are many sectors for the gradual decrease of percentage rate of absenteeism. Comparatively cotton and textile industries can be placed at the top with regard to high percentage of absenteeism. The absenteeism in steel industry for the last five years has been found stable and constant and akin to the average rate of absenteeism on all India basis.

There may be many causes and compulsions for mandays lost including strikes and lockouts. Absenteeism is regarded as the major cause of mandays lost. Absenteeism considerably affects production, production cost, national income and above all the economy of the nation. Efforts have been made from time to time by all the three factors of the industrial arena, viz., the government; the employer and the workers organization to restrict mandays loss due to absenteeism. Even then the average rate of absenteeism remains stable and constant. Therefore, the researcher thought it fit to study, examine and analyse the causes and compulsions of absenteeism, the reasons for variation and the variation in different respects to pin point the overall impact of absenteeism in the selected industrial units under study.

India is wedded to impart social and economic justice to every Indian and through its planned policy it ensures the rapid growth of industrialization and technological development. Absenteeism works as a barrier to rapid industrialization and higher industrial production. It also increases cost of production and sometimes imbalances the market system. Absenteeism affects not only the industrial organization but also the consuming public and the economy
of the nations. One-man day's lost is lost forever. Absence of one worker in an industry normally disturbs the chain of production as one process of industrial production is so much mechanized and specialized that one process is dependent on the other and if a worker on one process remains absent, it would certainly affect the work of the other workers. Immediate substitution of skilled and highly skilled workers could not be possible and if there is frequent absence, it badly affects the production and growth of the economy of the nation.

In the past, several sociological and empirical studies have been undertaken to investigate and analyse into the problem of absenteeism in India, especially in the cotton textile industries due to the obvious reason that the average rate of absenteeism in this industries was very high. In several studies it was observed that the rate of absenteeism in this industry was as high as 18% to 22%, whereas the rate of absenteeism in the steel industry was noted at about 15% to 18%.

2. Absenteeism : Nature and Concept

As stated above, one of the basic problems of industrialization, which badly affects industrial production and economic growth of a nation, has been the problem of absenteeism. In India, factories were mostly established in towns where the employers under the philosophy of laissez faire engaged these workers for unduly long hours of work on paltry wages. The work environment was not conducive. Home sickness, a desire of free life, fresh atmosphere, fulfilment of socio-religious obligation also resulted in frequency and severity of absenteeism.
The government, philanthropic employers and national and social leaders tried to reduce the average rate of absenteeism by restoring to many measures. Also the government imposed many statutory obligations on employers to ensure health, safety and welfare of industrial workers to lower the rate of absenteeism.

Absenteeism is one of the major human problems of the day in industrial arena. It not only affects the cost of production, it also creates problems in achieving production targets. So absenteeism is a social malady in an industry, which disrupts work schedules, imposes extra burden on co-workers, reduces efficiency in labour productivity and lowers workers morale. Again in a planned economy, absenteeism creates hindrances in production targets, profit prospects, investments and incentives to working class. The first and foremost question, therefore, is to understand the concept of absenteeism and highlight the factors governing it.

Absenteeism refers to worker's absence from his regular work when he is normally scheduled to work. According to Webster's Dictionary,¹ "Absenteeism is the practice or habit of being an absentee and an absentee is one who habitually stays away," Etymologically, absenteeism means a condition that exists when a person fails to come to work when he is properly scheduled to work. It means that the employer has provided the work to the worker and he is aware of it, but for certain reasons whatsoever the worker fails to come to work. Absenteeism Rate is defined as the total man-shifts lost because of absences as a percentage of the total number of man-shifts schedules according to the circular issued by a

¹ Webster's Dictionary, P. 5.
Government of India to State Governments. Absenteeism has also been defined as the failure of workers to report on the job when they are scheduled to work, i.e., when their names are actually on the pay rolls of the organization.

K. N. Vaid opined that the definition adopted by the Labour Bureau and other authorities was not adequate. So he evolved a production-oriented definition and designed the method of measuring the average rate of absenteeism. He also emphasized the distinction between 'Absence Rate' and 'Absenteeism Rate'. Absence indicates total loss due to all reasons whereas absenteeism referred to only authorized absence. Therefore, according to him, absenteeism rates indicate more or less unavoidable time loss at a given point of time. The Labour Bureau, Simla, defines absenteeism as the failure of the worker to report for work when he is scheduled to work. The CSO for Annual Survey of Industries, another agency collecting data on absenteeism in India, interprets this term in a wider sense. According to it absence from work may be because of various vacations, privilege leave, strikes, lay off and absence due to sickness or unauthorised leaves.

Fillipo defines absenteeism as a condition that exists when a person fails to come to work when is properly scheduled to work. Seligman refers absenteeism to time loss in industrial establishment by unavoidable absence of employees.

In fact absenteeism means the average percentage of workers absent from work per day for any reason. It is nothing but a temporary cessation of work for not less than whole working day on the initiative of the worker when his presence

is expected. Thus absenteeism signifies the absence of an employee from work, i.e., unauthorized, unexplained, avoidable and willful.

If this definition is taken into account for the calculation of the percentage rate of absenteeism, following absence of an employee in an industrial organization cannot form part of absenteeism;

(i) If the absence is due to strike or lock-out in the establishment;

(ii) If an employee is laid off;

(iii) When an employee report duty in later half schedule;

(iv) When employee takes casual leave, earned leave or authorised medical leave with wages;

(v) When an employee avails permitted vacations, and

(vi) When his name is removed from the list of active employees.

Absenteeism is a symptom of worker's dissatisfaction to work in the organization. It may be either because of management attitude 'such as' quality of supervision and behaviour of supervisor, size of the department or nature of work. The reasons may be because of workers self-illness, difficulty of transportation or fulfillment of religious rituals.

Absentees are of two types :

(i) Chronic absentee, where the employee is habitual to remain absent from work, and

(ii) Rare absentee, where an employee remains absent only due to
unavoidable and uncontrollable reasons.

3. Causes of Absenteeism

Absenteeism is not a single problem. It inherits many problems in itself. It is the symptom of a complex disease in an industry. It is the malady adversely affecting the entire industrial economy of a country. Strikes and lock-outs present a case of heart-attack, while absenteeism is a cancer. Both are fatal to industry as a whole and if they are not checked, they may cause serious damage not only to workers, to employers or the industry, but they damage the overall economy of the country.

The Royal Commission on Labour (1931) observed that high percentage rate of absenteeism among Indian workers was due to their rural orientation and frequent urge for rural exodus. Workers who migrated from rural areas, found great difficulty in adjusting themselves to new urban and industrial environment and, therefore, normally they desired to return to their home village as frequently as possible. The incidence of industrial fatigue, tiring climate, malnutrition and appallingly bad working conditions again aggravate the feelings of change of environment among industrial workers. They visited their home places for rest and relaxation whenever they found any easier opportunity to slip off from their work.

However, the principal causes of absenteeism of industrial workers in present daytime are not the same as they were found in the first phase of industrialization in India. It is generally observed that the living conditions of industrial town are
mostly disliked by the resources rather than the factory work itself. It is generally observed that the poor living conditions, meeting family and social obligations and helping the family at the time of sowing and harvesting often drove industrial workers back to their villages.

Let us now examine the causes of absenteeism from the different points of view:

(1) "The problem of absenteeism is not the direct outcome of industrialization, but it is a product of a large number of variables like the social, economic and cultural background of the work-force, their pre-conceived ideas and also their attitudes, the legislative structure of the country and the type of management policy pursued in a particular industrial set-up were also the problem of absenteeism to be faced.

(2) An American thought, indicated that the atmosphere obtaining in the plant affects worker's attitude to work and persuaded him to attend regularly or to keep him away. Irritation, uncertainty, irregularity and confusion in the factory were likely to be important causes of absenteeism. The attitude and practice of management also contributed absenteeism. Traditional management treated the workers as 'hirelings', whereas the enlightened management treated them as human beings. This difference in behaviour lead in the former situation to high absenteeism and in the latter situation to a lower absenteeism.
(3) It is further observed that shocking housing, intolerable working conditions, absence of any real and adequate medical facilities, back-breaking transport conditions, reckless alcoholism, gambling, acute indebtedness prevalent among labour were also the significant cause, of absenteeism. To these may be added the hostile and unsympathetic attitude of supervisors, non-cooperative attitude of work group, in sanitary and unhealthy living conditions, low vitality as sickness, accident of maternity, social and religious reasons, etc.

(4) According to the study of Bhutani\(^3\) the main cause of absenteeism were found as follows:

(i) 5 to 7 percent on account of genuine personal sickness;

(ii) 5 to 7 percent on account of genuine family sickness;

(iii) 1 to 2 percent on account of bonafide relaxation needed due to working overtime;

(iv) 5 percent due to bonafide emergencies;

(v) 5 percent due to social exigencies;

(vi) 15 to 20 percent on account of long-term holidays;

(vii) 5 percent on account of distance from factories;

(viii) 5 to 10 percent on side jobs;

(ix) 15 to 20 percent on account of drunkenness;

The above percentage rate of absenteeism increased heavily due to attitude and behaviour of chronic absentee workers. The work behaviour of factory workers depended greatly on their poverty, biological weakness or feeble-mindedness. But mostly the increase or decrease in percentage rate of absenteeism in an industry during a given period depended on chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism resulted further due to low wage rates in comparison to high prices, the lack of adjustment with the supervisors, with workplace, the distinction between 'work' and 'job' and mostly due to job frustration. Dr. Vaid has classified these chronic nature of absenteeism in five different categories of workers.

(i) *Entrepreneurial Absentees* :

It is also observed that the entrepreneurs, i.e. the persons who are generally engaged in several economic and social activities with an object to earn more money, status and power, were sometimes dissatisfied with their present *status-quo*. When they were found their actual work was small and insignificant of their expectations. They were normally dissatisfied with the nature of work which showed considerable amount of occupational and geographical mobility. Again, the entrepreneurs desired change jobs frequently to improve their employment status and earnings.

(ii) *Status Seeker Absentees* :

The status seekers constituted the second type of chronic absentees. They enjoyed higher social status and tried to maintain it. To them, the status at the work-
place often remained lower than the one they enjoyed outside. When they felt that the status at the job was not going to be improved, they undertook other activities in the community to maintain and enhance their status, which generally became the primary cause of their chronic absenteeism. Normally, most of the status seekers belonged to respectable and, they performed roles in their communities which could provide them a social status and better environment. Sometimes they played interesting role in trade union activities and involved themselves in counselling and holding other workers by assuming leadership roles on the shop-floor. Failing to achieve the desired ends in the job, the status seekers utilized their energies to secure and improve status in the community.

(iii) Epicurian Absentees:

The third type of chronic absenteeism is the epicurian absenteeism. Epicurians are the persons who are generally distinclined to undertake activities related to initiative, responsibility, discipline and physical effort. Work was a frustrating experience to them and they sought to avoid it. The case histories of epicureans indicated the following characterstics:

(a) No epicurian engaged in economic activities other than the ordinary product in job;
(b) Epicurians were fastidious about physical comforts even at the cost of money loss;
(c) Epicurians did not believe in job mobility or any other better working career;
(d) Epicurains were not involved in their work;

(e) Epicurians generally too pride in their origin and social status.

In this way the epicurians were passive personalities which are generally found in many industrial undertakings in India even today.

(iv) Family-oriented Absentees:

The fourth type of chronic absenteeism is related to persons who were heavily involved in family affairs. They considered job responsibility less than the family responsibility. For example, illness of one or the other family members, litigation, delinquency or other family work made them necessary to miss their work. They were extra sensitive to household affairs. They usually felt deep sense of family and social responsibilities. The over identification with the family matters distracted them to such a great extent that they became chronic absentees.

(v) Sick and Old-age Absentees:

In this category of absentees, we find the sick and old. As we know, they remain absent from work due to ill-health, chronic diseases or old age. The family position is not conducive financially and that is why they were generally required to work. Side by side because of continuous ill-health or the old age, they were unable to work continously. In this way, conflicting situations arose and they continued on job in spite of chronic absence because they did not afford to leave the job even when they were sick and old.
(4) Dr. Bhatia\textsuperscript{4} conducted a survey of 800 employees in a large power equipment manufacturing plant in Tamil Naidu. In all, 16 factors were found to be related to organizational factors and 25 to personal factors. He divided the factors in three categories;

(a) **Organizational Factors** : These organisational factors included the degree of strain/heaviness of work, leave rules and procedure; unhelpful, non-co-operative work group; quality and style of supervision; job satisfaction and challenges, recruitment policy, induction and placement, housing and transport problems etc.

(b) **Personal Factors** : The personal factors were length of journey to work, length of service, marital status, responsibility and size, personal habits, martial harmony, influence of second wage-earner (spouse), etc.

(c) **External Factors** : These factors included the level of unemployment, participation in religious ceremonies and festivals etc.

Dr. Baldev R. Sharma\textsuperscript{5} has examined many causes of absenteeism and he has indicated two main causative factors for absenteeism as (a) Macro-level Factors and (b) Micro-level Factors;

(a) **Macro-level Factors** : These factors included the lack of commitment, rural bias and lack of adjustment of industrial way of life; and behaviour pattern of workers affected by their social, cultural and economic background, etc.

(b) Micro-level Factors: Dr. Sharma classified the micro-level factors of absenteeism in the following five categories:

(a) Microlevel Factors:

(i) Managerial Style:

1. Quality and style of supervision.
2. Selection, induction and placement.
3. Recognition, communication and morale.
4. Job satisfaction and challenges.
5. Wages and incentives.
6. Overtime.
7. Leave rules and procedure.
8. Role of unions.

(ii) Technological Environment:

1. Condition of work and hours of work.
2. Accidents.
3. Occupational disease and medical care.
4. Recreational facilities.
5. Work group.

(iii) Personal Factors:

1. Marital harmony.
2. Family size and responsibility.


4. Bad habits.

5. Emotional health.

6. Community obligations.

7. Educational level.


10. Housing.

11. Indebtedness

(iv) External Factors:

1. Level of unemployment.

2. Social, religious and cultural aspects.

3. Time of the year and day of the week.

4. Climatic and related conditions.

5. Recreational facilities (local).

6. Transport facilities (local).

7. Housing (local).

On the other hand, Prem Chand and Ram Prakash\textsuperscript{6} have given three main factors, responsible for absenteeism in industrial workers;
(a) Socio-economic Factors:

(i) Living condition of workers;

(ii) Health of workers;

(iii) Drinking habit of workers;

(iv) Indebtedness of workers;

(v) Education;

(vi) Social norms and values; and

(vii) Side income.

(b) In-plant Factors:

(i) Occurrence of accidents;

(ii) Working conditions;

(iii) Personnel policies;

(iv) Welfare amenities;

(v) Leave facilities;

(vi) Differential wages and bonus payments; and

(vii) Working of trade unions.

(c) Other Unavoidable Factors:

(i) Occurrence of accidents;

(ii) Personal matters like attending or arranging of marriages; attending funeral; Family sickness, court cases or religious ceremonies.
On the basis of the foregoing discussions relating to various causes of absenteeism detailed by the authors and experts in their various studies, the researcher tries to make a detailed inventory regarding the cause of absenteeism as follows:

(i) Rural Exodus:

Industrial labour force is almost drawn from rural areas. To them industrial work is simply a source of additional income. Therefore, they discontinued service at the time of harvesting and sowing of crops. Besides, due to harvesting problem in urban areas, workers generally leave their families in their villages. Village is a sort of insurance against disaster and also shelter in sickness, maternity, strikes, lock-outs, unemployment and old age. Due to all these factors workers were attached to their villages.

(ii) Mal-adjustment with Factory Conditions:

Workers do not generally adjust themselves in the urban life, full of so many distinct problems like heavy traffic, strangers and their different languages, problems of religions and castes, misery of slums, toiling, continuous long hours of work, etc. Thus, the workers lived in the city just like strangers. Workers were ordered by supervisors to do things they could not understand and this led to heavy strain on their body and mind. All the above things affected the worker's presence at the work place, and so they could not have proper adjustment with factory environment. Thus, this mal-adjustment was mainly responsible for their absenteeism.
(iii) Social and Religious Ceremonies:

Social and religious functions also diverted workers from their work. In a large number of cases, the proportion of absenteeism due to sickness, accident of maternity is found to be not as high as it is due to other causes like social and religious functions. For example, a survey of absenteeism in textile industry revealed that percentage rate of absence of workers on account of social and religious functions was much higher in comparison to sickness, accident and maternity. In almost all the industries, absenteeism was high during local festivals irrespective of the fact that workers belonged to rural or urban area.

(iv) Unsatisfactory Housing Condition:

It is further noted that the majority of Indian workers have to face accommodation problem. For example, 90 to 95 percent houses occupied by industrial workers are beyond human habitation. The housing of migrants combines the worst characteristics of both the rural and urban slums. A room of 10' x 10' accommodates a large family and in some cases two families, and often ten to fifteen persons sleep in one room. Mostly industrial workers are living in slum areas, which are health hazards, leading to high morbidity and consequent ill-health. Workers, therefore, make frequent visits to their home villages to get a relief from such insanitary and unhealthy environment.

(v) Industrial Fatigue:

The workers try to seek some part-time job to improve their financial
condition. Due to their poor wages, this part-time job compelled workers to devote more time to extra job, which often results in constant fatigue and frequent absence from work. When this fatigue affects them seriously, the workers may remain absent continuously for a longer period of time.

\textit{(vi) Unhealthy Working Condition :}

Heat, moisture, noise and vibrations in the factory, bad lightings, dust, fumes, and over-crowding considerably affected the worker's health. This environment resulted greatly into workers sickness. Secondly, to get rid of such unhealthy conditions, the workers may like to visit their village for a short while. This is one of the important causes of absenteeism.

\textit{(vii) Lack of Adequate Welfare Facilities :}

In India a majority of industrialists treat workers welfare as a barren liability rather than a wise investment. Due to this phenomenon of inadequate welfare facilities increases the rate of absenteeism. For example, according to National Commission on Labour, the statutory welfare amenities have not been properly and adequately provided. In several cases particularly in medium and small-sized units, their standards are distinctly poor. The study undertaken by some State Governments, in respect of different components of welfare including sanitation, washing facilities, first aid appliances, ambulance rooms, drinking water, Canteens, shelters, rest rooms and creches also strengthened the general impression that the compliance of statutory welfare provisions is half-hearted and inadequate. Thus,
lack of adequate welfare facilities compelled the worker to abstain themselves and seek solace by migrating to their homes in rural areas.

(viii) Alcoholism:

Drinking habit of workers also constituted the main cause of absenteeism. After receiving wages workers usually rushed to liquor shop to drink, which affected their minds. They forget all worries of day-to-day life. Even sometimes the workers forget to attend their duties due to drinking of liquor in previous night. Due to this cause the rate of absenteeism becomes high in the second week of each month, when they get their wages in the first week and have sufficient money to purchase liquor.

(ix) Indebtedness of the Workers:

It is a known fact that majority of workers in India suffered from indebtedness. This causes a great worry in mind of workers. Many times workers had to take advance salary or loan from their friends, relatives or money-lenders. This leads, many worker to be absent, even up to the extent of resign from their service to escape from the clutches of the money-lenders resulting high rate of absenteeism.

(x) Inadequate Leave Facilities:

There are many employers who do not provide adequate leave facilities to their workers. Under E.S.I. Scheme workers are entitled to avail 91 days leave in
a year with sickness benefit. Instead of going without pay, workers avail the E.S.I. facility, which affects absenteeism rate indirectly.

(xi) Improper and Unrealistic Personnel Policies of Management:

Favouritism and nepotism are rampant in promotion policies particularly in public sector industrial undertakings. These situations create frustration in the minds of workers. The frustration results in low efficiency, low production and unfavourable relationship between the employee and the management. This also leads to long absenteeism of workers in many cases.

(xii) Dissatisfaction with Supervisors:

Attitude of supervisors and managers plays an important role in industry in every aspect. If immediate supervisor is having a work-oriented than man-oriented approach, the workers working under him would be dissatisfied with his behaviour. Such workers remain absent on false sickness certificate, rather than availing leave on bonafide grounds.

(xiii) Lack of Recreational Facilities:

Recreation is an essential thing for a human being. In villages' the family is an important agency of recreation. When the worker lives alone in the city, he needs entertainment and recreation. In case, he gets some extra-mural recreational facilities it relieves him from monotony and drudgery. The recreational facilities include various types of indoor and outdoor games, radio and T.V. programmes,
excursions and other cultural programmes, etc. Non-availability of such recreational facility may cause a worker to remain absent.

(xiv) **Insufficient Transport Facilities to and from the Work Place**

Where an employer provides sufficient transport facility to and from the workplace to his employees, the rate of absenteeism is generally low. This is one of the important causes of absenteeism. Workers who come from far distance are unable to come in time. This may result to remain absent full day rather coming late and listening the abuses of the supervisor. On bad weather days workers avoid to come on cycle. Workers working in night shift have to paddle in night and sometimes they may fall sick due to this night paddling after a day's hard work and thus leads to absenteeism.

(xv) **Shift System:**

The next reason, which is important in connection with absenteeism, is the shift system itself. In general, the nights are made for rest for all human beings and days for work. Due to this the percentage of absenteeism is higher in night shifts than in the day shifts. Change-over of shifts which has been introduced in certain industries has, however, reduced rate of absenteeism during night shifts.

(xvi) **Low Level of Education:**

Majority of the industrial workers are illiterate or the level of their education is very low and so they are not aware of their rights and duties. Such workers are
more prone to remain absent. Well-educated workers are aware of their responsibilities and right. They know the evil effects of their absence, hence they are more regular in their work.

(xvii) Sickness and Industrial Accidents:

The vitality of Indian workers is very low. Bad housing and working conditions of living make them a prey to many diseases and epidemics like small-pox, malaria, cholera, etc. Therefore, when they suffer from various diseases, they are naturally forced to remain absent from their work. Due to defective arrangement in industries and lack of skill and training of workers, accidents generally occur. Accident and sickness both are important causes of absenteeism.

4. Factors Affecting Absenteeism:

Causes of Absenteeism as discussed above were found mostly in the first phase of industrialization. In 20th century efforts were made by the Central Government and State Government through legislation or otherwise to control high percentage rate of absenteeism. Employers and worker's organizations have also taken steps to remedy the causes of absenteeism of workers, are not the same as they were in the beginning of industrialization. Many causes have been remedied but new factors of absenteeism emerged.

There are many factors affecting the percentage rate of absenteeism in an industry during a given period in present time. These factors may vary from place
to place and from industry to industry. Some of the factors are dependent on personal characteristics, pressure to attend, work environment, organisational factors and personalities factors. Though factors may be synonym to causes of absenteeism but there are many other factors which are affecting absenteeism in an industry in present daytime. Therefore, the following factors require examination and assessment for measuring the percentage rate of absenteeism in an industry.

(a) Personal Characteristics:

The personal characteristics of individual worker may primarily affect the position of absenteeism. For example, rate of absenteeism of an old and aged worker would be very high in comparison to young worker. Age factor is crucial factor for placing absentee in normal category or in chronic absentee. Newly married young worker may normally remain absent frequently, the unmarried worker or worker having family avoids absence of work. A person above 50 may remain frequently absent due to physical disability. The socio-economic compulsions made them to accept employment even after fifty. Sex is also another personal characteristics of a worker affecting percentage rate of absenteeism.

The empirical studies of problem of the absenteeism in textile industries undertaken from time to time revealed that women workers are chronic absentees in comparison to male workers. The household responsibility and a special responsibility of child bearing compelled women workers to take authorized or
unauthorized leave which increases the percentage rate of absenteeism. The male worker if getting sufficient wages tries to maintain regularity in work and mostly avoids absence.

Experience is also a factor within the parameter of personal characteristics. An unqualified and inexperienced person gets less wages and feels boredom and therefore, remains absent frequently. The experienced worker gets adequate wages and has interest in the job. There are less chances of monotony and boredom. Thus an experienced worker remain rarely absent in comparison to an unexperienced worker.

(b) The Ability to Attend

An industrial worker faces many problems in industrial life because of inhuman work environment and insanitary living conditions. Sickness, accident and other family responsibilities affect a worker to attend to his job. Factors affecting the ability of an industrial worker to attend to work or to remain absent are: sickness, accident and accident prone behaviour, family responsibility, transportation problems, specific months having socio-religious festivity and specific days in a month on which a worker has to procedure consumable goods and necessities of life in family.

An industrial sincere worker normally avoids to remain absent because it would not only affect the purse of the worker, but gives discredit in the career which hampers the chances of promotion and future prospects. But there are certain
important factors which may dissuade the worker to attend to the job. Self-sickness or sickness of any member of the family perturbs the industrial worker and in spite of unwillingness, he has to take leave. There are certain hazardous processes in an industry or accident-prone work where there may be chances of accidents or apprehension of accidents. In the process whoever is engaged is often psychologically tensed in the apprehension that at any time accident may occur. Thus, accident-prone behaviour or likelihood of accidents may lead to frequent absence of industrial worker engaged in that activity.

Family responsibility is another important factor which incapacitates an industrial worker to attend the job. Sometime transportation problem also affects the percentage rate of absenteeism.

In a calendar year there are some ceremonial months like October and November when marriages and festivals compelled newly-married worker to remain absent from work. If the industrial worker has sufficient agricultural holding of the family the months of harvesting are important to them and during these months they remain absent. After perk or salary day, the workers remain absent for procuring household goods and necessities of life. In those places where the consumable items are not easily available and they are available in the public distribution system, a worker has to wait for 4 to 6 hours at ration shop to procure consumable goods like wheat, sugar and kerosene. Therefore, for that purpose also an industrial worker has to remain absent.
(c) Pressure to Attend

There are many unorganisational effects on industrial worker also to remain absent in India. These days, position of unemployment and underemployment is very acute. In private sector, job is normally not secured and workers appointed at the factory gate can be refused by the employer any time. It may sometimes lead to absence for offering services because the worker roams here and there in search of better employment. Inadequate salary may also be one of the factors affecting absenteeism. If the salary of an industrial worker is not sufficient to maintain the family even at the subsistence level, the worker tries to do additional remunerative job. The additional remuneration may exhaust him mentally and physically because of work for long hours in a day. The normal tendency in such cases would be to remain absent frequently from permanent employment. Excessive overtime work may also result in absence of the worker on future days.

(d) Job-Related Factors

There are many factors at work place which may affect the regularity of a worker on the job. In some factories working conditions are not conducive to human habitation which may affect the health and physique of industrial workers. High temperature, the extreme cold, the non-availability of fresh air and sun rays are also some important problems unsuited to the smooth working of employees.

There are many cases when an industrial worker is not satisfied with the job.
The nature of job given to him may not be of his liking. In that case, he tries to avoid it. Which may lead to absenteeism. If a particular job does not have any scope of progress and promotion, then it may be one of the factors affecting absenteeism. The number of workers in a unit at shop level, the behaviour of the supervisor, homogeneity among workers in the group, the role and attitude of workers, leader etc. are also some of the significant factors related to job which may affect absenteeism in an industry.

(e) Organisational Factors

Absenteeism is not only dependent on personal factors relating to an industrial worker, but there are certain other factors pertaining to the organisation also in which he has been working. If a worker does not get psychological satisfaction during working hours due to behaviour of his co-workers and supervisors, then he would remain absent to enjoy the company of his likeminded person.

In the present day industrialization, the production process moves from different stages. The activity of one particular department in an industry may differ from another because of differences in nature of work. If one worker does not remain in touch with another, it creates an apathetic and indifferent attitude in the mind of the workers which may be one of the factors of absenteeism.

Most of the industries are running round the clock and, therefore, every worker has to be rotated in all the three shifts, including night shift. If the working hours in the night shifts are eight hours it may be more cumbersome
and tiring. The night shift may lead to industrial fatigue and long working hours reduce efficiency and productivity of the worker which needs him to take leisure and rest. The workers often leave their job when there is a rotation of night shift. Generally, it is observed that, the workers are absent when they are required to work in the night shift.

In an industrial organisation, where the workers work with a team spirit and group cohesiveness, work like a family, co-operate with each other and have tolerance, the work environment would be cordial and harmonious and the rate of absenteeism is low. On the other hand, if the team spirit and group cohesiveness is lacking at the work-place, then the worker would remain on leave which will increase the percentage rate of absenteeism.

(f) Employees Values and Expectations

In modern times, a worker cannot be regarded as a commodity. He should be given a proper place in industrial organisation and the value of his work should be recognized and appreciated. A worker expects many things from the employer and it should be an endeavour of the employer to satisfy, as far as possible, the expectations of his workers. One of the expectations of the workers is job satisfaction. If a worker gets the job of his liking and the employer places him at the proper job in the organisation, he will feel psychological satisfaction and then there would be less percentage rate of absenteeism. But when a worker is not satisfied with the job, he will avoid the work.
The attitude and behaviour of the supervisor, manager, or the employer should be paternalistic and sympathetic. If the employer or the manager adopts the traditional attitude of keeping a gap like a 'Master' and 'Servant' then the modern worker would try to avoid the work and remain absent. Only the correct approach to personnel management leads to psychological satisfaction to workers leading to increased efficiency and productivity.

There are many psychological and economic factors for boosting workers of morale. If the employer has failed to achieve industrial morale, then there would be a possibility of higher rate of absenteeism. It should also be the responsibility of the employer to provide adequate housing facility, hospital facilities for the treatment of workers and their family members, schooling facility for the education of their wards together with recreational facilities, and then there are rare occasions when a worker would remain absent. If the essential needs of a worker is satisfied and the worker keeps the family in the town getting all essential needs satisfied, then he would avoid taking leave, Job enlargement and job enrichment are also matters providing job satisfaction and future prospects of workers. If particular industry is having a wide scope of job enlargement and job enrichment then there is a scope for promotion and prospects. The industrial worker, in this case would stick to their job and avoid to remain absent. In an industrial organisation having the scope of job enlargement and job enrichment, the percentage rate of labour turnover and absenteeism would be less.

(g) Personality Factors

A worker is a human being and cannot be equated with a machine. He does
have his own personality, ambitions and emotions. Whenever his status and personality is challenged, it gives him mental injury. Therefore absenteeism is also dependent on personaility factors, such as, mental health, emotional health and removal of handicaps faced by the industrial workers. The idea of workers participation in management or involvement of workers in day-to-day management of the industry has been introduced only so as to recognize the personality of industrial worker and to provide him mental satisfaction. If the employer provides a handsome salary but behaves with a worker like an animal, the handsome salary would not give the worker mental and emotional satisfaction. He would not take keen and deep interest in the work. Mahatma Gandhi rightly remarked that the employer should treat workers as co-partners and the industry should be run on the philosophy of co-trusteeship. It is to be noted that in the present day-time significant studies are being undertaken for ensuring to industrial workers a psychological satisfaction by recognizing his personality and worth in order to reduce the percentage rate of absenteeism. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the employer to take care of the mental and emotional health of the industrial workers.

On the basis of the above discussion, it can thus be concluded that, in general, the factors affecting absenteeism can be categorised under the following three heads:

(a) Condition existing in the industry.

(b) Condition external to the industry.
(c) Condition pertaining to the personal life and experiences of the work.

At the same time, the causes of industrial absenteeism in relation to the above three factors may be summarised as under:

**(A) Causes relating to the Nature of Industry.**

(i) Fatigue, occupational sickness and industrial accidents.

(ii) Faulty selection, wrong placement and inadequate training of employees.

(iii) Problem of inter-union and intra-union rivalry.

(iv) Poor scheduling of work, temporary or sporadic breakdown of machine.

(v) Unpleasant and undesirable condition of working place.

(vi) Repetitive lengthy shifts, insufficient rest periods.

(vii) Frequent overtime, disagreeable task and monotony.

(viii) Poor supervision, lack of team work and coordination.

(ix) Inadequate induction techniques.

(x) Frequent friction with superior.

**(B) Conditions External to Industries:**

(i) Housing problem.

(ii) Insufficient transport facilities.

(iii) Lack of education facilities for children.
(iv) Lack of recreational facilities in and around the locality.

(v) Unrecognised and wrongly designed labour market (where jobs are abundant and there is a tendency for workers to go for "Job-Shopping").

(vi) Climate condition is conducive to absenteeism.

(vii) Time of the year and day of the week is also very important factor for absenteeism. Saturday and Monday and all days preceding and following holidays account for a large percentage of absenteeism.

(C) Causes related to Personal Life and Experience of Workers.

(i) Sickness and accident.

(ii) Family peace. (It is one of the major causes of absenteeism in the modern industries. Maladjustment with the husband and wife upsets all schedule of life).

(iii) Ceremonies like weddings, birth-days, funerals etc. are also some of the causes absenteeism.

(iv) Excessive desire for pleasure and recreation, too must consumption of alcoholic liquors to get rid of boredom also account for a portion of absenteeism.

(v) The necessity of taking care of personnel business, such as visit to the doctor, court appearance, community obligations etc.

(vi) Pride for being an esteemed man in the society in case of political leaders, players, singers, poet and writers).
5. TYPES OF ABSENTEEISM

Economists have classified the concept of absenteeism in many types according to their philosophy and logic.

(i) Total Absenteeism,

(ii) Excused Absenteeism,

(iii) Un-excused Absenteeism;

(iv) Vacation Absenteeism.

(v) Sickness Absenteeism.

On the other hand, there are some who say that there are generally two types of absenteeism - Avoidable and Unavoidable Absenteeism. There may be certain reasons which can be avoided by the workers such as participation in festivals or overstay at native places, in marriage and other religious functions. But there may be certain major reasons of absence of workers on unavoidable reasons. For these reasons workers have to remain absent irrespective of the fact whether they get wages during that absence or not.

Again the Labour Bureau, Simla classified absenteeism in two types - total absenteeism and true absenteeism. Total absenteeism means total number of man-
days lost due to all reasons. Reasons may be leave with wages, authorised leave, unauthorised leave, sickness and hazards and other reasons such as visit to home town and paid holidays. No institution calculates percentage rate of absenteeism, counting of absence for above 9 reasons and the Labour Bureau, Simla calculates and compiles absenteeism rate on the basis of true absenteeism.

True absenteeism means out of the above causes the following absences are to be excluded - absence for which workers are not directly or personally responsible. It includes lay-off, lock-outs, strikes and hazards. The absence due to availing casual and privilege leave is also excluded because it is the legitimate right of the workers to enjoy these leaves and thus in true absenteeism, absence on account of leave with wages, authorised leave, unauthorised leave, sick leave and an absence due to accidents are only included. Sometimes in order to collect an accurate rate of absenteeism a frequency rate of severity rate will have to be derived first. Whatever classification is given for the concept of absenteeism, by different Economists, it is clear that absenteeism affects the industrial production and in order to maintain the target of production the employer has to engage the reserve to substitute the absentees or to allow overtime work to co-worker. In both the situation, it affects the cost of production and ultimately the economy of the nation. That is why endeavour has been made from time to time to minimize the percentage rate of absenteeism.

Chronic absentees are considered to be strange, variety of human beings whose different work behaviour arises in entirely different from that of regular
workers. Some trace, this behaviour to poverty and other to biological weakness or feeble-mined. Chronic absenteeism failed consistently to conform to the attendance requirements and thus on the disapproval of the management as well as working class. The behaviour of chronic absenteeism may sometimes be manifested due to job frustrating situation. Reasons of frustration may normally be dependent on worker's high ambitions and aspirations, his expectations and social status, motivation and physical factors. Absence proneness is dependent on the behaviour of chronic absentees. So far as the spell concept is concerned absenteeism rate may differ from a particular day of the week to another day, a particular week of the month to another week and a particular month of the year to another month.

In general, the studies on absenteeism undertaken so far indicate that the percentage of absence rate remains lower on payment day and first week of the month. The percentage absence rate remains higher during summer vacations of the worker's wards or during the months of October-November due to festivals and marriages. Therefore, while collecting and compiling data on absenteeism we would consider many variations based on proneness and spells.

6. Conclusion:

This chapter has discussed at length the nature and paradigms of absenteeism found in India. It also highlights the various causes of absenteeism, types of absenteeism and the seasonal nature of absenteeism. It is a quer phenomenon that
absenteeism in the Indian industries is widely scattered from month to month and it is high in almost all industries in the summer months and low in winter. The negative of absenteeism in different industries as reflected in the secondary data has been discussed in the subsequent chapter of the study.