CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

God sentenced man to suffer wandering in the wilderness after Adam ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge. The duality of human nature in Adam and Abraham characterised by his urge to escape from the evils of his environment on the one hand and his aspirations for development by means of his achievements on the other, reflects the transformation of the human mind. It was a time when work was primarily restricted to slaves and to citizens who lacked independent resources. But then people came out of the bonds of slavery into unknown areas to take up challenges. Today, people thrive on visible progress towards meaningful goals. And they work whether or not they are pressed by economic needs.

It would appear that for most men the need to work is deep rooted in their psychological make-up and that the meaning of work takes on a significance beyond mere material well-being and economic satisfaction. If a man does not feel that his job offers challenge to him - if he does not value the

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1 "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground" (Gen.3: 19, The Holy Bible). See also Frederick Herzberg, Work and The Nature of Man, London: Compton Printing Ltd., 1971, pp.15-17.

skills that the job requires - then delegation is not likely to lead to higher productivity.¹

Today, organisations operate in an environment characterised by technological changes, which in turn affect employment opportunities, skill requirement, management policies, strategies and style, expectations and aspirations of employees as well as the physical working conditions. In the industrial world, the thrust is now given to 'Quality' in order to nurture a 'Quality Culture'. The total quality movement represents a shift in management perspective; people's issues move to the foreground and technical issues take a supporting role.² Quality through consistency is everyone's responsibility in the organisation.

The potential for excellence in action lies in every individual, irrespective of the work one does. Quality demands that one should act beyond certain limits; it is what should be instead of what can be. Quality assumes a goal or an objective or even a priority. Some are ahead of others not only in conceiving grand ideas, but in action too. Quality work cannot be achieved easily. If management is a process, quality is also more of a process than an achievement. There would be tremendous amount of satisfaction in all-too-rare performance of individuals. Performing a quality work presupposes

¹ Victor Vroom, Ego Involvement, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance, *Personnel Psychology*, vol. 15, No.2, Summer 1962, pp. 159-178.

accountability. Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of an intelligent effort.

Quality of Work Life (QWL), represents the overall satisfaction that is perceived by an employee from his work. QWL can also be described as the nature of work or work content, the physical conditions or the so called hygiene factors under which the employee works, the psychological stress one experiences from the work and from other components at the work place; the group morale where he performs - all these factors, and many more, combine to form a general perception of the QWL.¹

While differences in prestige and the physical characteristics of the work may have been exaggerated, there are white-collar jobs which provide distinctive satisfactions due to their unique characteristics, such as Human Relations Activity, Intellectual Effort and Managerial Responsibility.²

Nitish R. De observed that commitment to work can come only through development of group norms and by redesigning the work structure so that employees can find work more meaningful in terms of variety, responsibility, autonomy and skill upgradation within the overall frame work of the organisational policy.

People's overall levels of job satisfaction and performance are formed by their attitudes toward objects in their own work areas. A meaningful work is believed to require a variety of skills and would provide a sense of identity and autonomy. Job enrichment, and job expansion programmes are but a few strategies being tried to make jobs more intrinsically satisfying. QWL is a much broader concept covering not only the direct job related issues but includes management policies concerning work, work environment, working conditions and the 'feeling' that is created in an employee. Better quality of product and of service is said to be the result of the changes that are brought through work culture, work relationships, better teamwork, clarity in objectives, enhancement of human resource competency, on the whole through improved QWL.

The nature and content of any job, technology, management practices, employee attitude towards work, the possession of requisite skills pertaining to the job and the like leads to increased human performance and resulting satisfaction. There are some organisations that aim at achieving a high quality of organisational functioning such as being highly involved, or socially responsive, or quality conscious, or customer oriented, or human resource development oriented, or highly professionalised.\(^1\) Good performance is seen as an outcome of pursuing high organisational quality.\(^2\) Thus, if quality is both an organisational and individual commitment, then, quality would be an


\(^2\) *Ibid.*, 
individual's way of life. Total quality is a cultural change. It can be practiced in one's professional life, only when it is practiced in one's personal life. If an employee cherishes good work culture, it means he finds quality in his working life. If not, improving Quality of Working Life has to be performed within the mind's empire of each worker.¹

In the words of Lee M. Ozley and Judith S. Ball, quality of work life improvements are defined as any activity which seeks greater organisational effectiveness through the enhancement of human dignity and growth ... a process through which the stake holders in the organisation - management, unions and employees - learn how to work together better ... to determine for themselves what actions, changes and improvements are desirable and workable in order to achieve the twin and simultaneous goals of an improved quality of life at work for all members of the organisation and greater effectiveness for both the company and the unions.²

Improving QWL is a philosophy of management, a process and also a set of outcomes. Thus the management accepts and believes in cooperative relationships with its employees, cares for their development and trusts that every employee has the ability and the right to offer meaningful and useful inputs with decisions at different levels of the organisation. QWL also refers to the intended outcomes of making improvements in working conditions,


environment and management practices. Hence, QWL should be considered as a catalyst in improving the performance of the employee through personal development and promoting greater job satisfaction. Masaaki Imai, in his book, Kaizen, defines the word 'Kaizen' as improvement. It means continuing improvement in personal life, home life, social life and work life. When applied to the work place, Kaizen means continuing improvement involving everyone - managers and workers alike.¹

The QWL is a multi dimensional concept. The present study takes into account the work, work environment, management policy and immediate work group as the three major dimensions of quality of work life, to find out the levels of QWL as perceived by the executives. Further, the impact of QWL of the executives is measured with the level of their performance and satisfaction in the prevailing climate. If work is a pivotal point in a person's life, the attainments of the individual enable him to generate self respect and a feeling of personal worth and dignity, and he acquires social status and a unique place in the society. Hence to perform a meaningful work, and thereby derive perfect satisfaction, the quality of work life should be conducive. The extent to which the employee is able to demonstrate competency depends on the working atmosphere.


* Emphasis added
In the overall context, an executive's perception of work environment, management policies and behaviour patterns of his work group is believed to determine his QWL. The efforts he takes to do the work will be moderated by motivation, leadership, his personal abilities and the like, in a given QWL situation. As it is well known, the efforts result in performance that encompasses both qualitative and quantitative dimensions. Performance, then results in satisfaction and in turn there is a possibility of feedback influencing one's perception of some components of QWL, if not all.

1.1 NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

An industrial organisation is a large and evergrowing family. Human resources are seen to be central, vital and integral to any organisation. Concern for people and human values find expression in working environment that fosters and rewards individual achievement. An implication of Taylor's work on Scientific Management was that the workers acted as they did due to the way they were managed. According to Herzberg, the meaning of work to the individual is important in the overall context of human relations, not because it is the only factor contributing to one's satisfactory adjustment which transpires in the work place. Again, since work is an activity, one needs to remember that every one approaches the work with a different attitude and with varied expectations out of it.

Employees at the grass root level experience a sense of frustration because of low level of wages, poor working conditions, unfavourable terms of employment, inhuman treatment by their superiors and the like. Whereas the
managerial personnel feel frustrated because of alienation over their conditions of employment, interpersonal conflicts, role conflicts, job pressures, lack of freedom or challenge in the work etc.¹

The universal principle and purpose of growing businesses today is to achieve total quality of products and services. When one of their governing values is total quality, they will care not only about the quality of the products and services, but also about the quality of the lives and the relationships of their employees.²

In the light of the above, both the workers and managers are concerned about quality of life at work. Apart from the nature of work or work content, the work environment, the group morale, where he performs his work, the intentions of the management, all these factors and many more combine to form a general perception of quality of work life. The issues or factors that affect the quality of work life vary in their significance and intensity from one organisation to another depending upon a host of factors.

The problem is basically behavioural in nature. But there are several perplexing questions which are involved in identifying and operationising the different concepts and terms used, in bringing them under measurement and in finding the relationship between them. An enigmatic question in this


context is that, is there a relationship between the work of an employee and his working environment? While answering this question in relation to white-collar employees/executives, measurement of performance poses a problem. However, norms for a systematic way of performing may also be reliably used to measure the quality of their work. In this process it is presumed that the subjective realities of an executive’s perception towards his work environment, his management, his work team becomes meaningful work life and they may enable him to turn out a better quality work. When the quality of work performed by him brings him greater amount of satisfaction, it means his work life is conducive. Hence, the significant problem is to know the quality of work life pattern of executives, in terms of different QWL dimensions and further extending the study to find its relation to performance and satisfaction and also the quality of work performed by executives.

1.2 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

QWL and related issues are signs of a growing industrial economy. India, emerging as another industrial nation, also faces this problem and there is concern for a better understanding of enriching quality of life at work. Both the change masters (Industry leaders) and the policy makers must be aware of these trends.

1. Inspite of the many attempts made by researchers in the field of QWL, literature pertaining to the Indian scenario is sketchy and further examinations of QWL and its measurements are not clear. The nature of work environment, management practice and the immediate work
group taken individually and together are the proposed new approaches for a better perspective of the quality of work life, and make the study important.

2. Performance levels may differ but are they associated with QWL? Though several variables contribute to performance, some may be considered more important than others. If we go by Herzberg’s view, a better QWL may be taken to provide the hygiene factors and not the motivation for performance. In such a case, at least do the levels of QWL and quality of work go together? An attempt has been made to find the association between QWL and various levels of performance as well as job satisfaction.

3. It is presumed that, if the QWL is conducive, and if giving due importance to different facets of work, whether be technical, administrative, supervisory or supportive, the employees would turn out quality work. Does the importance given to the different facets of work vary in tune with age, experience, nature of the job, the level of satisfaction, in the prevailing QWL? This is another aspect of the study.

4. The final picture that emerges may unfold the significant factors or the components that are present in an executive’s work, especially those that are associated with high overall performance and the quality of work and work life. Incidentally, the study reiterates the association between performance and satisfaction.

5. From the viewpoint of the organisation, it would be helpful to identify certain weak spots in order to give further thrust to promoting QWL.
and enhance the quality of work life of the executives, if there is a quest for perfection from them.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the perceptions of selected middle-level executives, the present study, examines the prevailing QWL and the related variables like performance and satisfaction along with Quality of work. The objectives of the study, in specific terms are:

1. To identify the overall level of QWL of a cross section of middle-level executives and the significance of the set of variables constituting their QWL;

2. To find out the relationship between certain personal variables and the levels of overall QWL;

3. To explain the association between the levels of QWL with performance;

4. To examine the association between the performance of executives and their satisfaction in a given QWL environment; and

5. To find out the significance, if any, of the quality of work of the executives in the prevailing QWL.

1.4 SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

The perceptions of 412 middle-level executives in 31 organisations constitute the primary data for the present study. This was collected during July-September 1992 through questionnaire administration from the selected
manufacturing organisations in Tamil Nadu. Methodology of the study has been described in detail in a separate chapter.

1.5 CHAPTER ARRANGEMENT

The study is presented in seven chapters. The brief contents of these chapters are as follows:

Chapter I on Introduction, introduces the subject matter, explains the problem, narrates the importance and sets out the objectives of the study.

Chapter II on Review of Literature, gives an account of the relevant earlier studies relating to quality of work life.

Chapter III on Methodology, describes the sample, the instrument design, the approach adopted to study the QWL and quality of work, performance, satisfaction and their measurement. The limitations of the study have also been presented here.

Chapter IV on Analysis of Data I discusses The QWL Paradigm. The dimensions of QWL, the relationship between QWL and certain personal factors present the QWL paradigm observable among the representative middle-level executives in the State.

Chapter V on Analysis of Data II examines Performance and Satisfaction in the QWL Environment. The levels of performance,
satisfaction and the extent of association among QWL, performance and satisfaction are identified in this chapter.

Chapter VI on Analysis of Data III elucidates the 'Quality of Work Life' and 'Quality of Work', and presents the third and last part of the analysis. The association between quality of work and certain personal factors of QWL dimension, job satisfaction and performance are ascertained.

Chapter VII is on Summary and Conclusion. It presents the summary of findings of the study and draws an overall conclusion. A few suggestions have been made at the end for further research.