
UNIT 10 NATURE OF WORK

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10.1 INTRODUCTION

If some one ask you, why do you work? most probably your answer will be, “To make a living”. Although this is true, yet it is not the sole purpose of working. If this was true, many people who have enough financial resources and wealth would not be working. There are people who are happy with the high salaries they are getting but they still change jobs. On the other hand, there are people who do not change jobs even if there are opportunities for getting high salaries and other economic returns. All these people are not working merely for a living The work has much more meaning for people than simply in terms of economic returns. What is the true meaning of work for people? **Does it mean the same to all of them?**

These are questions that need to be answered before we can understand the process of career development. It is only when we can understand work in its full and proper perspective that we could succeed in guiding people to plan properly for a career and enhance in it. For instance, look at the following case of Mohan:

Mohan was a studious boy. As a science student he always wanted to practice medicine and make a good living. He did succeed in becoming a doctor but he could not make a lot of money as he is in government service. He could not establish a private clinic for himself. In spite of the fact that Mohan did succeed in his ambition he is not satisfied. How could we counsel him regarding his career?

Now look at another case:

Rita is a very good looking girl. She wanted to be a T.V. artist. She took to giving academic coaching to students and eventually established a coaching centre of her own. Here the original activity on the job did not turn out to what she liked. Even now, though she is making a lot of money, she is not happy.

How do we counsel these two persons? What intervention needs to be given? Do we tell Mohan to try and make a lot of money? Or we tell Rita to work for becoming a T.V. artist? Perhaps it is necessary, we understand first what is work and the reasons or motives for which people work.

In order to understand the nature of work we should not only look at the economic returns it brings, but also the totality of the work situation. Nature of work also needs to be understood in terms of its surroundings, both physical and social, and the activity to be performed. These characteristics of the work effect the different individual differently. In order to clarify how same work situation appears different to different individuals, look at Rahul’s and Janak’s experiences in their organization, which is engaged in making travel arrangements for executives. Rahul is very happy with the organization because it provides good salary and

good working hours. He does not mind being called at odd hours when he has to receive people. Janak, on the other hand, does not like being called at odd hours. She doesn't mind less salary, but would like to be left undisturbed at home beyond working hours. Another woman in the same organization would like to have more of outdoor work rather than desk-work, even if it means working at odd hours. Thus, for these three persons the work is satisfying in different ways. Why is it so? What makes them different?

These people actually differ in terms of their needs which make them see the work in different ways. The needs of the individuals are satisfied by work which make him/her happy and motivated. If these needs are not satisfied, the persons are unhappy.

10.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- describe the different motives for which people work;
- indicate the ways in which attitudes and values of the people are influenced by the job they take up; and
- indicate the way in which work affects the life-style of the individuals.

10.3 MOTIVATION TO WORK

Let us see what are the needs which change the meaning of work for different people. The needs of the people which could be satisfied by work are economic, social and psychological. The psychological and social needs, although not so apparent, could be very strong motives. The psychological, social and economic needs which are satisfied by work are discussed below:

10.3.1 Psychological Needs

Psychological needs, that work satisfies, includes sense of self-esteem, need for an identity, self-expression, a sense of competence and adequacy, commitment and personal worth. Although these needs may not be mutually exclusive or exhaustive, yet they provide a kind of perspective to the psychological motives for which people work.

Self-esteem : Individuals take up work for the sense of self-esteem they derive from it. To be able to do something and to be a productive member of society could be highly satisfying to the individual.

However, different individuals are differentially affected by the work they are doing. It depends on their own self-concept. The way a person sees himself/herself will influence his/her expectations from self, and others' expectation from him/her. For instance, Rajan wanted to become an engineer right from childhood. His parents also encouraged him to take up science at school level. Rajan also took competitive examinations for entry in an Engineering College, but he did not succeed. However, Rajan got admission in law course and became a lawyer. Depending on how strong Rajan's desire to become engineer was, he may or may not feel very proud to be a lawyer.

There is another dimension to the self-esteem, namely opportunity offered by the work. In the jobs which are highly organised, structured or mechanical, the opportunity offered for self-esteem is low as the degree of personal effort required is low. Such work will not enhance the self-esteem of the person. Where personal effort, organization, and planning abilities are required, the job offers greater opportunities for enhancement of self-esteem.

Identity : Work gives an identity to the individual, especially in the present day society, where people are known more in terms of work. The existence of the individual, his life style, his environment, all are influenced by the work he engages in. A person engaged in clinical set up will probably be perceived as more serious than the one who is employed in professions related to entertainment or hospitality. People in teaching profession are perceived more mature and serious than those working as artists. Thus, the qualities of a person are generally judged by the job he/she is employed in.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with the one given at the end of the block.

1. Nature of work refers to the following aspects of work

- a)
- b)
- c)
- d)

2. Tick mark (✓) the correct option (Yes or No) in the following statements:

- i) Same job offers different types of incentives to different individuals. (Y/N)
- ii) Individuals feel happy and satisfied with work if their salaries are high. (Y/N)

3. Answer the following questions in brief.

- i) Why meaning of work varies from person to person?
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- ii) What are the psychological needs satisfied by work?
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- iii) How does self-esteem affect the meaning of work taken up by the individual?
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- iv) Do the people employed in same job have same characteristics?
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Self-expression of Skills and Competence: Work also offers opportunities to express various abilities, interests, skills and even the values and attitudes they have acquired. The work becomes satisfying if the individuals are able to exercise the competence and the skills they possess. If the work provides opportunities to use the special training or the skills or knowledge that a person has acquired over the years, the person feels good about it. However, if the work does not offer opportunity to use the skill and the competence that a person has acquired, it creates obstruction for his/her engagement and involvement in the work. The unused abilities and skills make a person restless and motivate him/her to look for opportunities elsewhere to make use of the same. Therefore, a person is likely to look for other avenues where he/she can make use of special skills. If work itself provides outlets for the expression or utilization of specific abilities of the persons then all the energy of the person is likely to be directed towards the work only. Probably, that is why those who utilize their abilities and skills do a job well and are therefore, well motivated.

Interest in particular activity is also related to the satisfaction a person derives from engaging in it. Research evidence shows that it is the interest in a particular activity which is strongly related to the choice of the occupation and needs, values and motivation lead to the development of interest. The interest, in turn, results in occupational choice.

However, there are people for whom variety in work is much more important than the specific work involved. Doing same type of work all the time may seem very monotonous to them. This type of need is much more applicable in jobs requiring highly structured activity. Such jobs do not need any ability or interest, and, therefore, any opportunity for self-expression is denied. In such jobs even a change in location, place or schedule of work could make it slightly better and more interesting.

There are other type of people who would like to be involved in very specific kind of tasks either due to their very specific skill or interest. In such cases the content of the activity assumes a lot of importance for them. For instance, the person who wanted to become a civil engineer, planning dams, came to be working in the department which was involved in developing roads. This situation may not appear very motivating to him. Therefore, there are people who would like to be working in highly specific type of activities within broad areas of their interest.

Commitment and Self-worth : Another dimension of work, which motivates a person, has to do with his own commitment to the work activity, the job or a personal mission of his own, which is satisfied through work. The feeling of having a personal mission to be completed, or a goal to be achieved, could be highly energizing and motivating. It gives a mission to an individual life. The degree to which a person is committed to his mission, there is equivalent level of motivation in his life, provided he/she feels that the mission is being fulfilled. The self-worth of the person also depends on this feeling of fulfilment of his commitment, values and preferences.

Values and preferences of persons play a great role in deciding the satisfaction they derive from their work. The particular attitude and preferences people have, influence the type of activity they would like to do, their interests and hobbies, or even the type of people they would like to associate with. These preferences, attitudes and values also determine the satisfaction or dissatisfaction, with different degrees of success, in one's area of work. A person with academic values may not care much for promotions if he/she is able to pursue the goal of learning but another person with high value for power may feel dissatisfied with much more academic success.

The value for a work like medicine doctor or a surgeon may make a person feel highly frustrated if s/he cannot become that, whereas another person may be unhappy because s/he could not become a specialist in the area of choice. There may be another person who is unhappy because s/he is not able to do the kind of preferred work after finishing medical school.

There may be individuals who value fairness, and as a part of the management feel unhappy, because management is unfair to it's employees. Thus values and attitudes both directly and indirectly go a long way to influence the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the person from his/her work.

10.3.2 Social Needs

Besides the psychological needs, all individuals have a need to belong, to be recognised by others. Human beings are social by nature; they would like to be appreciated by others, to be valued, and needed by others. Whenever there are more than two individuals together, the



social needs of the individual come into play. Work situation offers a social group, a social environment to the individual. The worker automatically becomes a member of society. S/he wants to develop friendships, social relationships and feel a sense of belongingness, in order to satisfy his/her social needs.

What does an individual often think when s/he joins a particular job? Probably s/he thinks about the work to be done, but along with that the thought also goes to the person who would sit next to him/her or work with them.

The social situation is much worse for the workers in the metropolitan cities where there is anonymity. People do not know each other, although they are thrown together in many situations, but these are very specific and short lived associations. For example, people travelling together, going to cinema halls or to watch football match etc. Therefore, if work offers social environment which is congenial and satisfying, the individual feels motivated to continue to participate. The congenial and satisfying environment is that where individual feels s/he is enjoying independence, fair treatment by others and social status.

Independence : Whenever a person gets into a group, rarely the relationship is that of an equal. Mostly, the person assumes either a position of a subordinate that of a superior. However, there are individuals who have a higher need to dominate others, whereas there are others who feel more satisfied if they are directed. Thus, within the limits of their own preferences, the workers tend to enjoy a certain degree of independence. If the job does not allow them the freedom they would like to have in execution of their duties, they feel uncomfortable.

Even while choosing a job, degree of independence allowed on the job determines entry into the job. A person who values independence may not like to take up a job as a teacher in a private school where there is close monitoring of the teaching. But the need of professionals in respect of independence is very high. Many a managers would like to have a free hand with the expenses and time schedule but a teacher would not like to aspire to such level of responsibility in exchange for independence.

Thus, independence on the job comes with responsibility, and varies from occupation to occupation. Even within the same occupation, different type of jobs will have different degree of independence. Given a very high level of independence, the worker is expected to be responsible for production deadlines or the quantity or quality.

Provision for emergencies/welfare activities : In any social situation the individuals compare themselves with others and have expectations of their own, ideas of their own, about what is fair behaviour on the part of the employer. Worker expect to be treated fairly in exchange for their service time, abilities and merit. The fair treatment involves fair pay for their expertise, level of experience and fulfilment of security needs. When an employee falls sick or is incapacitated s/he expects the organization to compensate somehow so that s/he can survive. If the individual's assessment of the treatment s/he receives on the job is not satisfactory s/he is not happy with the job.

Satisfaction with treatment, therefore, includes fairness of pay in comparison with others as per qualities and abilities of the individual and also support in the hour of need.

Status of the individual : The work gives social status to the worker. The status which a job offers varies from one occupation to another occupation. It may be high in case of professions, managerial and such occupations. Semi-skilled and unskilled jobs confer a lower social status on the worker. However, the satisfaction of the individual from his/her job and the status depends on his/her own pattern of needs acquired in his/her typical environment.

Take the case of a boy coming from an unskilled labour background. He got some education and learned to drive. Later on, he gets the job of a driver in a small organization. This boy might enjoy his job much more than the chairman of the company who, coming from a higher educational background, aspired to be the chairman of a very big company.

The status has many dimensions. The uniform, the authority, the room and other status giving characteristics may be enjoyed by the person in relation to other jobs but within the organisation he/she may not like the status or vice-versa. For example, an air hostess who gets good salary, opportunities to meet people, travel abroad etc. In comparison with other friends with similar educational background, but may not like her status or position vis-a-vis other employees in her own organisation.



Status of the person is also reflected in the house s/he lives in, the circle of people with whom s/he interacts. In a way it puts certain limitations also on the person. The access of people and the time s/he could share with others is much less. A lot of protocol and norms have to be kept in mind by people of status than those not so highly placed in work situation. A person who enjoys status has to learn to like the limitations that go with the status, otherwise the motivating characteristic of social status associated with the job is lessened for the person. On the other hand, over ruling of the norms may lead to problems.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with the one given at the end of the block.

4. Answer the following questions in two to three lines.

i) What are social needs?

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ii) Why should work satisfy the social needs of workers?

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iii) What can the worker do to earn slightly more independence on the work?

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iv) What happens if independence on the job is denied?

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v) What welfare activities the job may offer to the individual?

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vi) What are the status giving characteristics of the job?

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vii) Do all individual have same need for status?

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10.3.3 Economic Needs

Economic needs are the most obvious reasons for working. The importance of making a livelihood becomes most prominent for understandable reasons. It is only when a person's urgent and routines needs for the food, safety and security are met that social and psychological needs, which have been discussed above, become important. It is the basic existence which is most fundamental. The present salary, perks and other benefits sometime completely override other considerations involved in selecting a job.

However, there are many other economic criteria which are no less important than the level of present income. It would do well not to loose sight of these motives which are equally important. These motives are the need for future security of income and job. The satisfaction of the individual is affected by the future, and this in turn is dependent on the job security.

Present income : Present income is satisfying in terms of the purchasing capacity it gives to the worker. However, the level of need, and the concept of a comfortable life are dependant on the social situation of the person. For instance, a bank manager who is new to the city,



will be satisfied with a comfortable home and reasonable level of comforts and luxuries. But the son of a local landlord, who takes up a bank job, will want to maintain a higher level of social status in accordance with what he is accustomed.

Thus, the satisfaction with the present income level is affected by the level of the aspiration of the person and the parity between his income, and that of others who are similar to him in education, income and experience. The income is perceived as instrumental in helping a person to acquire the convenience and maintain standards similar to that of the fellow colleagues. Worker feels satisfied when they get income similar to that of fellow colleagues. But if s/he feels that s/he is not being treated fairly and is given lesser income than others similar to him/her in experience and competence s/he feels dissatisfied.

Job security : Workers are not simply satisfied with a job that provides satisfactory income and helps them to maintain a social status at par with people similar to them in education, age and experience. They need to have a future also. They would like to be ensured of a future income too.

Since the individual would like to maintain their present level of income in future also, therefore, where chances of re-employment are low, they would like to continue in the same job. This is especially true of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. Although professional workers change jobs for better salaries and perks, yet job security is a prime consideration with them.

Thus, different jobs differ in respect of the man power needs and supply. Those jobs where man power needs are high and supply of personnel is inadequate the worker feels secure and can change jobs. However, people would not change jobs even if the next job offers better salaries and perks, if the job security is not ensured.

Different jobs differ in the duration for which they offer employment. Some jobs are available in a particular season only. Therefore, there is perpetual problem of security. Jobs of plumber, electrician etc. have higher rates of turnover inspite of income level being satisfactory to workers, due to job security problem.

The jobs involving high accident rates or those offering seasonal employment leave the employee insecure about future income. It is not only in terms of future income but employees are also concerned about the income after retirement. The jobs which offer pension or other post retirement benefits will be preferred by those whose financial resources are limited to salaries. The retired persons may also likely to take up a job which requires less physical effort and responsibility to earn income and be able to retain the job. At old age, to be able to secure a high paying job income and demanding lot of effort and responsibility would be difficult to manage. Therefore, people would accept lesser salaries to continue in the job and ensure regular income for subsistence. Although among professionals, even at old age many people may get high paid jobs. Thus, the job security in future, and even after retirement, remains a prominent economic need.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with the one given at the end of the block.

5. Answer the following questions in brief.

i) What is the most fundamental need for which people work?

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ii) What are other economic criteria for which people work apart from the salary?

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iii) Why are some people not satisfied by their income?

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iv) State the factors that influence a person's satisfaction from his work?

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v) Why do some workers are not bothered about job security?

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vi) What kind of jobs suit people after retirement?

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10.4 WORK AFFECTS WAY OF LIFE

Work determines the style of living of a person. The type of work a person engages in, influences the time spent on the job. The total working hours a person spends on the job is determined by the type of job he/she is engaged in. Different jobs make different demands on the time of the individual. High level jobs do not end within the office hours. In fact, the person most of the time stays on job in the sense his social, personal life is oriented towards job. Lower level employees are not so much influenced by the work activity and responsibility. The type of work also determines the time. Business keeps a person on the work for longer hours than the office work.

It is not only the time but social status of the person is also influenced by the occupation.

Although social status is complex and is influenced by many factors, but occupation is one strong influence which determines the status in present societies.

In the traditional societies individuals had an identity in terms of the social structure prevailing, such as a brahmin or a kshtriya etc. In the present society such social stratification gives way to the classes which have economic classification in comparison with the social strata which are more of lineage and family related categories. The economic strata depend more on the occupational characteristics. The occupational characteristics, such as the required educational level, training, income, all contribute to the economic strata of the class. These characteristics in turn decide the job or the occupational level and income, which in turn decide the place to live in, the interests a person pursues, the society one moves in.



Thus, the status a person enjoys in the present day society is linked with the type of occupation s/he is employed in. The status characteristics in the present day society are much more complex than those existing traditionally.

10.4.1 Occupation and the Status

The occupational status of different occupations varies in many ways. The jobs could be classified in a hierarchical manner according to prestige, the income, skill or training required, educational level, interests and the ability. One such classification divides occupations into following categories: professional, proprietary and managerial, clerical and sales, skilled and supervisory, semi-skilled and unskilled.

The difference between the various levels is clear, the higher the person on these occupational levels hierarchy, higher will be the income, prestige and the responsibility. But this is a very simplistic representation of the wide variety of occupations within a level. All the occupations are not at the same level. The professions do not confer the same status and income on the individual as do the skilled and unskilled jobs. Although the income tax consultant and the college professor are both professionals, but the later has much less income. However, even the prestige the two enjoy depends on the cultural context. For instance, in India a college professor may be held in esteem in rural area, but in cities it is the managerial jobs or tax consultants who command more prestige.

Moreover, the prestige of an occupation and the income may not correspond with each other completely. This aspect makes it difficult for a person to opt for both money and prestige, or power and prestige.

The occupation not only confers social status but it also helps improve social status. The occupational mobility results from educational mobility.

10.4.2 Work Routines and Occupation

The occupation also influences the leisure time available with a person. The manual worker normally finish work in regular office hours while the professional people (like professors, advocates, tax consultants) work beyond office hours also. Either they may have to spend time in improving their technical skills or they are working for their professional development. Since, the time spent on the job is different, therefore the time a person will be able to devote for leisure, family and other hobbies will be automatically structured.

10.4.3 Friends and Work Routines

The occupation not only determines time but also the persons with whom the leisure time could be spent. There are occupations which could exist in certain areas, such as people working in merchant navy or those working in mines or in special townships built near mines such as steel plants or coal mines etc. Even those in defence services get to spend their time mostly in the company of those at that particular station. Similarly teachers are likely to befriend people in their own area of work.

Check Your Progress

- Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.
 b) Compare your answers with the one given at the end of the block.

6. Answer the following questions in brief.

i) What are the ways in which work affects a person's life style?

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ii) How do the status giving characteristics of job may change?

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iii) Does the job which give status also bring more power and income also?

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iv) What is the difference between the time structuring of professional and other workers?

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v) Does work affect social relationship? Give an example.

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10.4.4 Work Influences Attitudes and Values

Occupations differ in terms of the work activity, status, income, time routine, leisure and even the persons one meets. Different persons have preference for different activities, work routines and leisure. The status or the income may also be differently valued. Therefore, people generally tend to choose occupation according to their values and attitudes. But all of them do not succeed in entering on occupation of their choice. Therefore, there are people with different preferences, likes and dislikes in an occupation.

Once people become a part of the work force on the job, the environment influences their likes and dislikes, preferences, attitudes and values. The physical, psychological and social environment of the job moulds their attitudes and values to a considerable extent. In fact, those who fail to change either quit the job or are relatively less adjusted.

The change in values and attitudes brought about by a job encompasses the behaviour not only typical to the work but also the totality of the personality characteristics.

The attitudes and values of persons who work in quiet and clean work places is very different from those who work in noisy, disorderly and dusty places. For instance, workers differ in their manner of speaking, their likes and preferences, if contrasted across jobs. For example, the construction work and bank manager's work, or the agricultural field and the college principal's work. The very environment and the work setting make the workers behave differently. Even if the two were similar in the beginning, they will become very different from each other over a period of time. The attitudes towards environment learnt in the work setting are transferred to home and other places also. The one in neat, organized and clean places is likely to shun outdoor work and prefer indoor organized work settings, but agricultural field workers and mine workers will feel uncomfortable in such work settings. In fact, greater is the time spent in the outdoor, natural and disorganized work places, greater may be the discomfort in the posh, clean and dainty interiors. As such, the environment may appear very artificial to those used to natural places and surroundings.

It is not only attitude towards the environment itself that becomes specific but also the whole attitude towards clothes, mannerisms, food etc. may be affected by the physical climate of the work.

10.5 SOCIAL CLIMATE

Influence of the physical climate is still more enhanced by the social situation of the work. The social situation determines the people with whom one may come in contact with. The limited number of people available from same type of occupation, interest and hobbies tend to change the person in ways similar to that of the job.

Dress Language: It is not only the interest and hobbies but also the dress, language and conduct that are influenced by the occupation. The persons inadvertently unconsciously and incidentally learn to express themselves in language which is typical of that used by people in that occupation. Not only language, the dress and mannerism also are influenced by the occupation. The language associated with the white collar jobs is very different from that used in the manual jobs. The professional people employed in outdoor jobs dress up differently than those in indoor occupations. The choice of formal and informal dress is also determined by the job to a great extent. A company executive or a college professor is not likely to wear a flashy dress even on a social occasion.

Check Your Progress

Notes: a) Write your answers in the space given below.

b) Compare your answers with the one given at the end of the block.

7. Answer the following questions in two to three lines each.

i) Which aspects of a person's personality does the work influence?

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ii) How does work change the personal characteristics?

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iii) Do jobs vary in terms of the social situations they offer? How does it affect the individual workers?

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10.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit introduced you to the nature of work and various aspects of work which influence people. You have learnt that the people work to satisfy their needs i.e. psychological needs, social needs and economic needs.

- The psychological needs, which are satisfied by work include self-esteem, identity giving characteristics, self-expression of competence and skills.
- The work also offers opportunities for developing social relationships and ensures welfare of the person in emergencies.
- Work provides livelihood and social-economic status.
- Work affects style of life of persons and their attitudes and values.

10.7 UNIT-END EXERCISES

1. Why people work even when they have sources of regular income?
2. "People would continue to work irrespective of working conditions and economic returns". Examine the validity of statement and give reasons in support of your answer.
3. Compare the case history of a professional and non-professional worker.
4. Take up a case study of a professional person and find out the following facts about:
 - a) His/her own life history.
 - b) His/her work schedule on the job and away from job.
 - c) Economic returns apart from salary.
 - d) His/her social relationships.