

I. Understanding the Core Concepts: Work, Livelihood, and Career

Work is primarily an activity that all human beings perform to "fit" into the world, create new relations, and utilize unique talents and skills.

It is central to all cultures, though values and perceptions regarding it vary. Essential activities undertaken for a specific purpose or out of necessity are described as work.

Meaningful Work goes beyond mere task completion. It is work that is useful to society or others, done responsibly, and is enjoyable to the worker.

It enables individuals to showcase creativity and problem-solving abilities while performing in an environment that stimulates positive professional relationships and brings recognition or rewards.

When work results are successful and meaningful, they contribute to personal growth, self-worth, and eventually the actualisation of one's full potential.

Differences between Job and Career:

- **Job:** Conventionally referred to as work done primarily to earn money and fulfill basic needs for oneself and family. It is often viewed as an involvement in work for the sake of it.
- **Career:** A career is more than just a job; it is driven by a deep desire to excel and a passionate need to grow, develop, and prove oneself within a chosen field. It is defined as a pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement in professional or business life. Growing in a career is a lifelong process involving the management of roles, balancing paid and unpaid work, and making transitions toward a personally determined future.

II. Perspectives on Work

Work can be perceived in several popular ways:

1. **Work as a Job and Livelihood:** Primarily a source of income to support a family, where satisfaction comes from the earnings.
2. **Work as a Career:** Viewed as a path for professional ascent in terms of posts, status, pay, and responsibility, requiring considerable time and energy.
3. **Work as a Calling:** Satisfaction is derived from the work itself, driven by inner drives or a sense of higher direction.
4. **Work as 'Dharma' or Duty:** An expression of one's true self and unique talents that influences the quality of life for self and others.

III. Gender Issues in Relation to Work

The age and sex of a workforce significantly influence the dynamics of personal and professional lives.

Biological vs. Social Construction:

- **Sex:** Refers to the biological categorisation based on genetics (XX/XY chromosomes) and reproductive organs.
- **Gender:** Based on social identity and determined by social and cultural practices that dictate how various genders are expected to behave and the work they do. Identity is constructed from an early age and impacts development throughout life.

Transition of Traditional Roles: Traditionally, men were assigned the role of breadwinner and women as homemakers. However, these roles are in transition, a phenomenon described as "continuity with change".

In India, women have always been engaged in production; rural women are extensively involved in agriculture and animal husbandry, while urban women work in construction or as domestic labour.

The "Double Burden" and Empowerment:

Women's participation in the workforce outside the home has improved family resources but has placed a **double burden** on them, as they are still expected to be primary caregivers and perform most household chores.

Furthermore, women continue to remain relatively powerless in decision-making despite their economic contributions.

Empowering women requires valuing the work they do at home as equivalent to paid work, as domestic chores demand energy throughout a lifetime and support the efficiency of other family members.



IV. Women and Work: Issues and State Initiatives

Women have been marginalised in some labour markets due to the increasing need for skilled workers, necessitating expanded training facilities to safeguard their interests.

Constitutional Rights and Acts in India:

- **Article 16 (1):** Guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

- **Non-Discrimination:** The Constitution forbids discrimination based on caste, creed, colour, race, or sex.

- **Factories Act 1948:** Provides protection to women in the industrial sector. Section 48 specifically mandates that **crèches** must be maintained for children below six years if more than 30 women are employed in an industry.

- **Maternity Benefit Act 1961:** Ensures women are provided with just and humane conditions and protection during and after pregnancy.

- **Equal Remuneration Act:** Mandates equal wages for the same work or work of a similar nature.

Organised Efforts for Empowerment:

- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV):** A government scheme aimed at bringing never-enrolled and dropout girls from disadvantaged sections into school education, now extended up to Class XII.

- **Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad:** An organisation started in 1959 by women, for women, providing self-employment to approximately 45,000 members. It is a prime example of women becoming self-reliant through a village industry.

V. Age-Related Work Dynamics: Vulnerable Groups

Vulnerability refers to groups more likely to be affected by adverse circumstances. Children, youth, and the elderly are considered the most vulnerable.

1. **Children and Work (Child Labour):** Children are vulnerable due to their rapid development in all

domains. Official estimates suggest 17 million children work in India, though the World Bank estimates may be as high as 44 million.

- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000:** This legal framework addresses two categories: children "in conflict with law" and those "in need of care and protection". It focuses on rehabilitation and a child-friendly approach to adjudication.
- **ICDS and Anganwadis:** The Integrated Child Development Services is the world's largest programme for children under six, providing nutrition, health, and pre-school education.

2. Youth and Work: The National Youth Policy 2014 defines youth as those aged **15–29 years**. This is a period of biological change and preparation for adult roles, such as earning a livelihood and raising a family.

- **Challenges:** Youth face pressure to excel, peer pressure, and risks related to substance abuse and reproductive health.
- **Government Schemes:**
 - **National Service Volunteer Scheme:** Provides full-time opportunities for degree-holders in national development programmes like Nehru Yuva Kendras.
 - **Scouts and Guides:** Inculcates character, patriotism, and a desire for social service.
 - **Commonwealth Youth Programme:** Encourages youth participation in national development processes.

3. The Elderly and Work: In India, Senior Citizens are defined as those aged **60 years and above**. India has the second-largest number of senior citizens in the world.

- **Vulnerability:** Many elderly face loneliness and financial dependence as children move away (the "nuclear family" shift in cities).

- **Programmes for the Elderly:**
 - **National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS):** Meant for destitute persons above 65 years.
 - **Mobile Medicare Units:** Provide medical care to elderly in rural and isolated areas.
 - **Respite Care Homes:** Provide nursing care for seriously ill older persons.



VI. Attitudes and Approaches to Work

Job satisfaction is heavily influenced by an individual's **attitude** rather than just the job itself. Dissatisfaction often arises when individuals compare only salaries without considering qualifications, work output, or dedication.

Conversely, perceiving work as a source of energy, fulfillment, and learning ensures greater satisfaction.

Life Skills for Livelihood: The World Health Organisation defines life skills as thinking, coping, and social skills that enable positive behaviour and resilience.

- **Essential Workplace Skills:**

- **Working Productively:** Applying effective work habits and dynamism.
- **Communicating Clearly:** Precisely conveying information and opinions.
- **Working Cooperatively:** Completing tasks with others and resolving conflicts.
- **Thinking Critically/Creatively:** Using analytical thinking to be innovative.
- **Healthy Habits:** Taking care of body, mind, and spirit to face workplace pressures.

VII. Ergonomics and Dignity of Labour

Ergonomics (Human Factors Engineering) is the study of work with the goal of adapting the work environment to the worker. It aims to reduce stress and health problems while increasing productivity and efficiency.

- **Benefits:** Reduces injury risk, decreases absenteeism, and improves worker morale.
- **Example:** An adjustable chair for office work helps prevent back pain by conforming to ergonomic safety specifications.

Dignity of Labour means taking pride in whatever one does, regardless of the nature of the task. Mahatma Gandhi served as a prime example by performing sweeping and scavenging in his ashram to demonstrate that no job is inferior.

VIII. Traditional Occupations of India

India has an ancient and diverse culture where traditional crafts like **Shola craft** (Odisha), **Channapatna dolls** (Karnataka), and **Bamboo craft** (Assam) have thrived.

- **Knowledge Transfer:** Skills were traditionally handed down through home-based training within families or closed groups.

- **Modern Context:** These crafts have entered the global market, earning significant foreign exchange. There is an urgent need to revive these skills through design innovation and the protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

IX. Occupational Health and Safety

A healthy work environment is crucial for employees to thrive. This includes:

- Paying attention to individual needs and expectations.
- Treating people equally and fostering team spirit.
- Matching the person to the task and providing feedback.
- Ensuring technical competence and a safe environment.

