

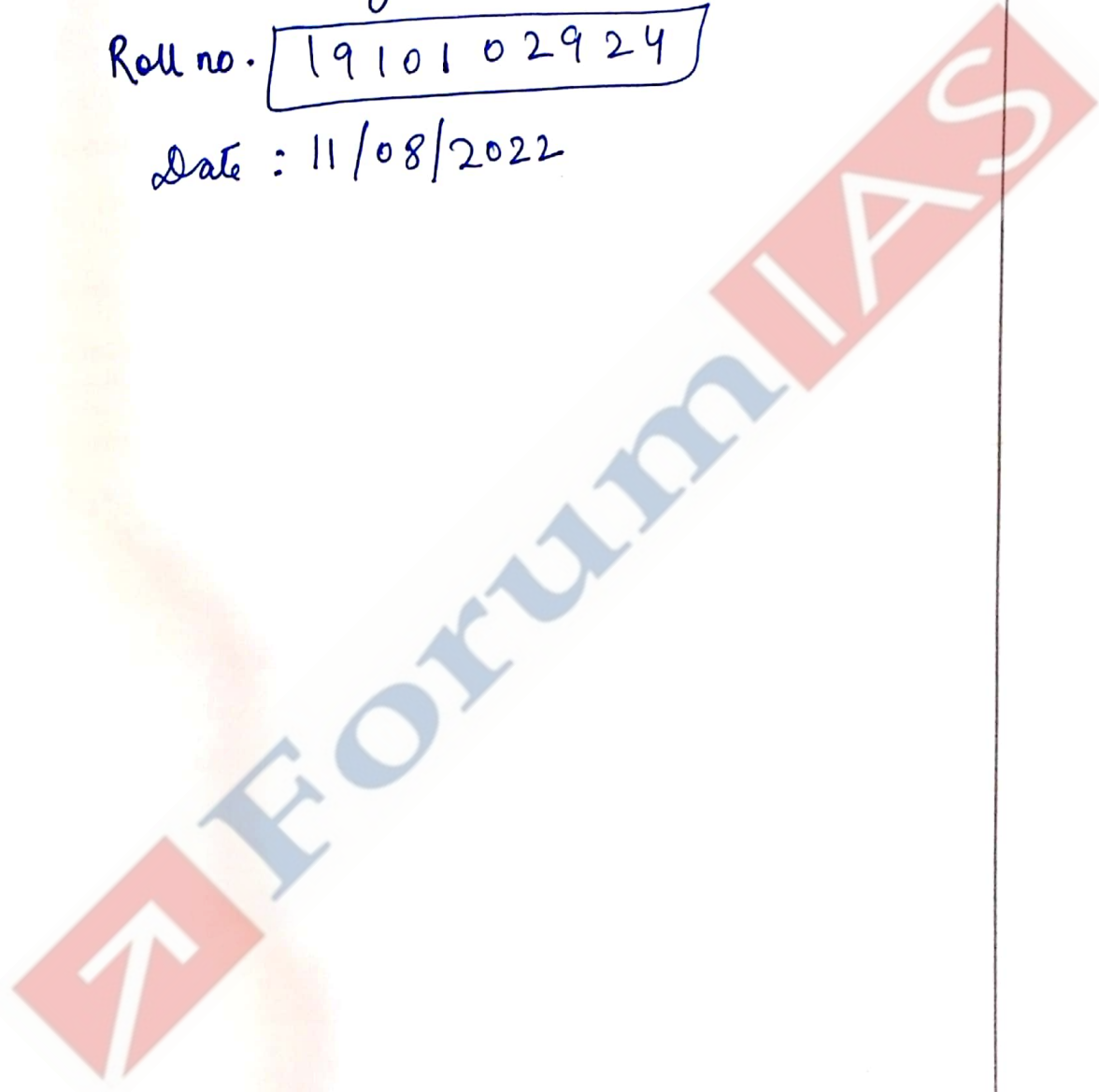
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दिनांक - 11/08/2022



Topic 4 Section A

Conversation enriches the understanding but solitude is the school of genius.



Gautam Buddha - wandered in solitude for years and achieved enlightenment → Madhavi Mehta

relevant today
crisis & dilemma.

Humans - social animals → interact to develop our understanding argued that conversation enriches our understanding → solitude is a genius.

Conversation

During American Revⁿ - conversation among people about enlightenment thoughts → Bill of Rights
Thomas Jefferson }
Paine }
Montesquieu } → Social Contract
enriched understanding of different aspects

- Same (FR) → National Assembly.

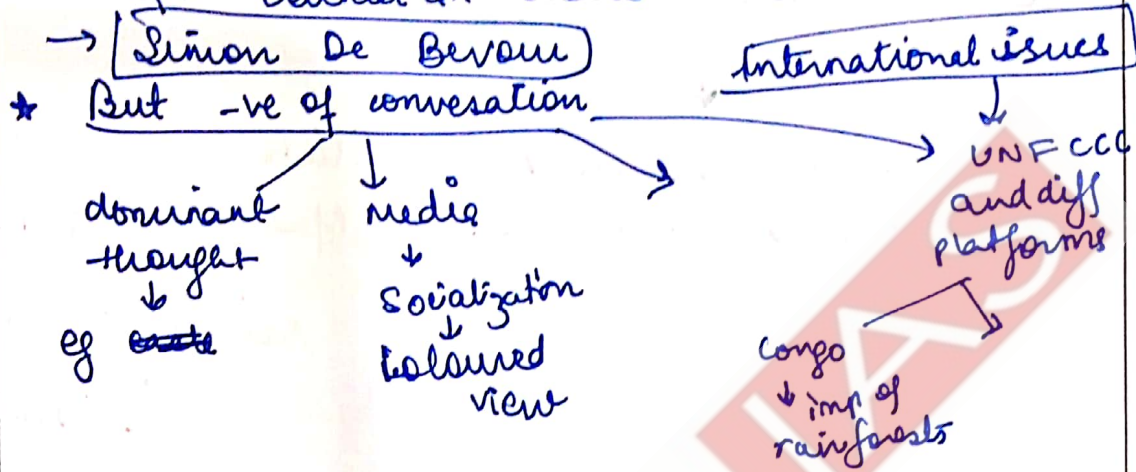
↳ rationale behind ~~part~~ passing of bills → 2 house P select committee public opinion
↳ enhance understanding

EIA → enhance understanding.

• Our core stereotypes can be broken only via conversation.
for ex BR Ambedkar, → Kamishka & Nagabhakte

CA debates

→ helps us come out of parochial mindsets
★ Tribes during covid - hesitancy but deliberate efforts
Qn & counter Qn - clears doubts -



Solitude school of genius

Gautama Buddha } enlightenment in solitude
Nahama }

↓ Scientists like Archimedes, Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawkins
↓ solitude

Marie Curie → 2 nobel prizes

or philosophers like Jean Paul Satre

-ve side doesn't counter views

↑ Radicalisation due to this

→ ~~is~~ juvenile delinquency (nuclear families)

Way ahead → life is a cycle & conv & solitude are phases everyone has their own phases of the two.

Siddhartha Gautama wandered and meditated in solitude for years before he attained enlightenment in Bodhi Gaya at the banks of River Niranjana. He then came to be known as Buddha (The enlightened one) and gave the world his philosophy of Madham Moey which is even more relevant today.

There is no doubt that solitude is the school of genius. History is full of such examples. But humans are social animals. Our interaction is the basic unit of our understanding. Conversation helps us enrich our understanding.

Going forward in this essay we will explore how conversation enriches our understanding and also how solitude is a school of genius

Significance of conversation

During the American Revolution (1776 - 1783) multiple thoughts of enlightenment thinkers like John Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau & Montaigne formed the basis of

discussions and conversations among the revolutionaries. Thomas Jefferson, Paine were able to draft & come up with the most revolutionary idea of that time - an idea of fundamental rights, end to domination of church and a republic. This was all possible because of the rich conversation that took place among them. It helped them enrich their understanding of the scenario.

French Revolution and its National Assembly is also evident of the impact of conversation between people who have all faced similar oppression and exploitation. It only only enhances their understanding but also lets them come up with practical solutions to their problems.

This is the same rationality behind the deliberative model of passing bills and acts in our parliament through voting and discussions in the two houses,

a detailed scrutiny by departmental standing committees, eliciting public opinion. All of this helps in capturing a broad view on the issue.

Such conversations not only help in overcoming any loopholes in the proposed bill but also increases acceptance among stakeholders.

The recent withdrawal of farm laws by the Government was a litmus test which proved the necessity of conversations and participation.

The concept behind Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) is also to spark a conversation among the interested stakeholders to deliberate on the costs and benefits associated with the proposal and to arrive at an enhanced level of understanding.

Conversations & discussions help us challenge our stereotypes and core beliefs which are detrimental to social harmony. B R Ambedkar undertook steps like Mahad Satyagraha or ~~the~~ burning of Manusmriti to spark off a conversation among people to rationally discuss untouchability as ~~an~~ a social evil.

This was also why Raja Rammohan Roy joined his friends' society at Calcutta to discuss views and counter rudimentary beliefs via evidence based and verifiable facts presented during a conversation.

Mahatma Gandhi during our freedom struggle always steered for conversation rather than unilateral decision making. Even during World War II, he invited Subhash Chandra Bose and other leaders to discuss the options and to understand different viewpoints.

Our Constituent Assembly debates provide us an impactful insight into the reasons behind our present constitutional provisions.

It is an epitome of how meaningful conversations among people from different background, experience came together and it helped our constitution makers in enriching their understanding and coming up with such an elaborate constitution.

In democracy, conversations hold a sacred value. Its significance cannot

be undermined in any of the stages, be it during election campaigns, or during parliamentary proceedings.

During COVID 19 we were all very skeptical of the unknown virus. But all our doubts were put to rest only due to discussions and conversations with doctors, reading rational and objective views of scientists. It helped clear our unreasonable beliefs that doctors residing in our communities are responsible for spread of COVID.

Even tribals and people living isolated in deep interiors were skeptical about vaccines. This vaccine hesitancy could be overcome only by initiating conversation with them. Persuading them of the positives and clarifying any doubts.

International forums and grouping such as UN, WHO, G7 etc all help in enrichment of our ~~own~~ understanding. Using platforms such as UNFCCC, people could be made aware of the seriousness of the issue

surrounding climate change.

Simon De Beauvoir, a French thinker in her book explains how conversations with her husband and people at workplace helped her realise their point of view about working women. It enriched her overall understanding.

Later conversations she sparked off about gender equality through her books were able to change the perception & prejudices of many.

There is no doubt that conversations enrich our understanding. However for any meaningful outcome to come out of such conversations, it should be based on critical thinking and reasoning, not on rumours.

Socrates said "An unexamined life is not worth living".

Generally conversations which show only one side of the story or are based on sensationalization of news present a coloured view and instill bias/prejudice instead of countering them.

Solitude is the school of genius

From Gautam Buddha to Maharisa, we have numerous examples of exceptional genius who attained such high levels of knowledge and understand after years of solitude. It helped them become aware of their own senses, their surrounding and attribute cause & effect to it.

Scientists like Archimedes, Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking spent considerable portions of their life in solitude. The result of which were great scientific discoveries and principles which proved to be revolutionary.

Marie Curie the first woman to win two nobel prizes in two different streams of science also talks about how she spent her entire days and night in a chemistry lab all solitary.

All of this definitely highlights that solitary is the school of genius.

Sylvia Plath, suffered from an anxiety disorder because of which she often stayed solitary but wrote poems. Her works of art are revered in artistic circles worldwide.

Jean Paul Satre also talks about he used to remain all alone and even faced suicidal thoughts because of this. But his ethical philosophies are relevant & are used as moral compass to guide our behaviour even today.

But there is also a downside to staying solitary. It doesn't help us build a broad base of our understanding. It doesn't provide us with views and counter views to critically examine our thoughts and propositions. As a result, we might grow up to be rigid, stubborn & adamant believers of a particular belief which might prove detrimental to us and the larger society.

Radicalisation among the youth is on the rise today. Why? Because of the increasing technological increase that has left us solitary with minimal human interaction.

With globalisation, there is breaking up of joint families and nuclear families are characterised by working parents, lack of support system for the child. This has manifested in the form of increased juvenile delinquency cases among the children.

An understanding of the above discussion makes us realise that both conversations and solitary have their pros and cons. They should not be seen as mutually exclusive rather different phases in an individual's life cycle.

There are times when solitary would yield us the best outcome but there are other times when conversations make us more innovative and productive.

21st century is characterised by increased automation, technology and globalization. In this scenario, we

must understanding what constitutes meaningful
solitary and meaningful conversations.

A judicious use of technology for the benefit
of humans remembering that

"technology is there for the aid of people &
not people for the aid of technology".

ForumIAS

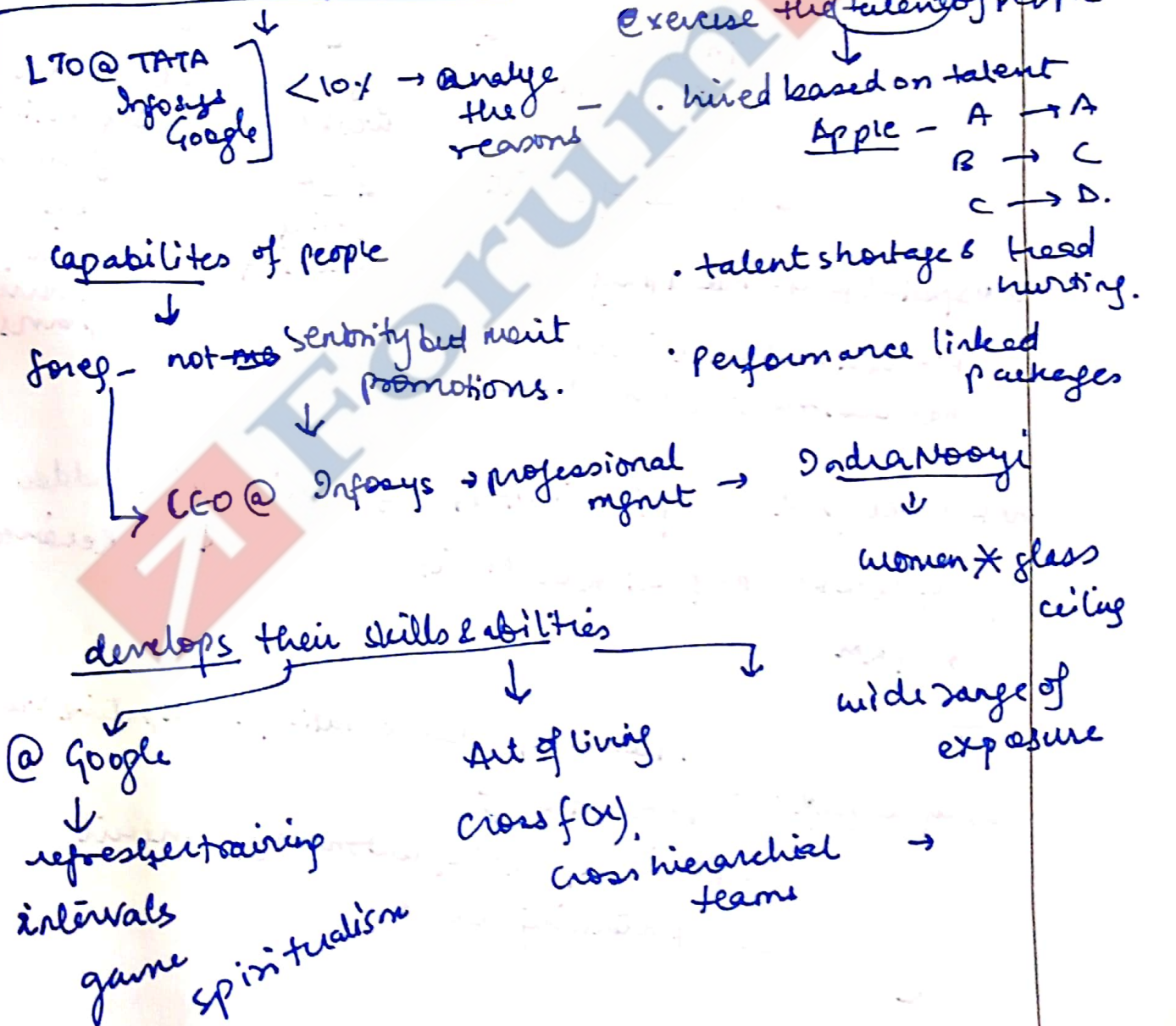
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Section - B → Topic 4

Work is meaningful when it develops & exercises the talent, capabilities & skills of workers.

4:10 start → 5:30 finish

anecdote Peter employee @ Infosys
last year his suggestion of flexible work schedule implemented → led to saving of 1 billion →
he's more committed & satisfied. →
Work is worship - Not true for everyone. →
When work = worship? For whom. →

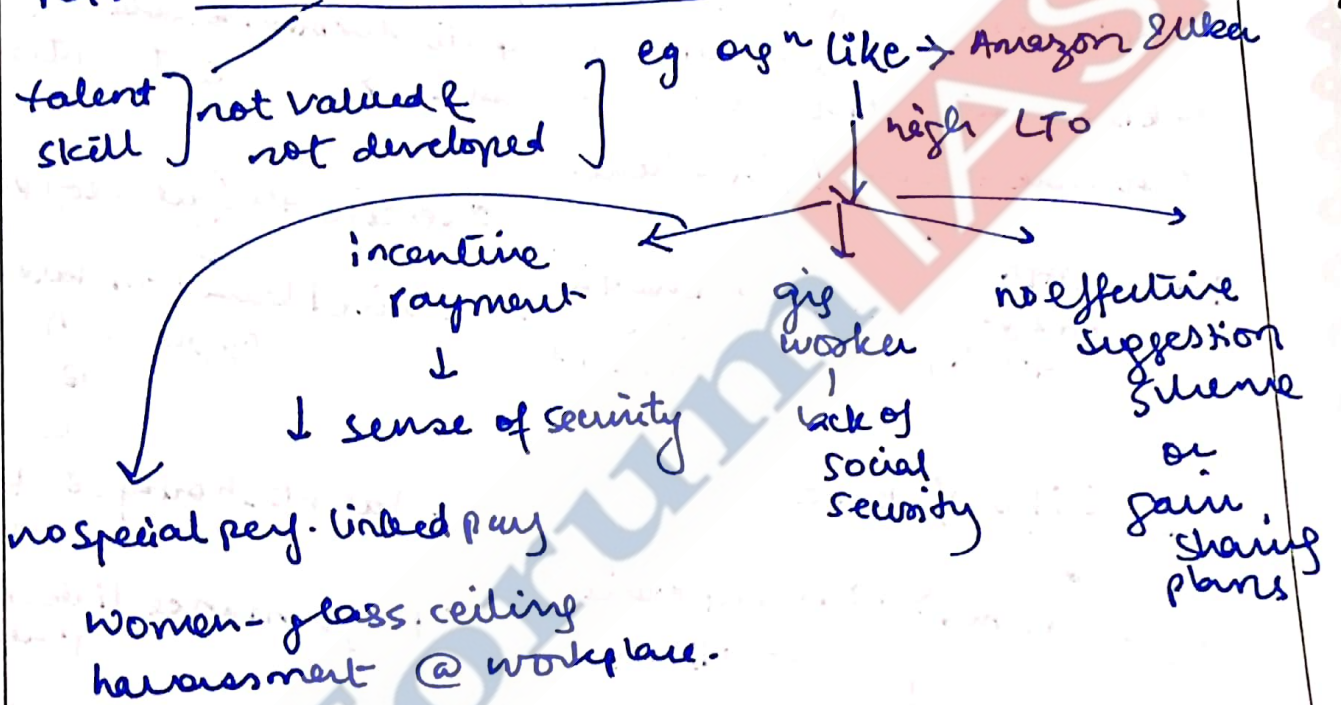


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→ lack of discriminatory policies
stereotypes → eg Infosys
Judge 1987A.

→ @ Accenture - culture sensitivity

→ for whom work is not worship.



not developed → opportunities for moving up the ladder
↓ eg Reliance

- ↳ lack of professional ethics
- ↳ GRM
- ↳

Inclusive, democratic, participative values

way ahead :- modern orgⁿ
flexible, QWL, autonomy, merit
paternity leave.

Peter works at Infosys. Last year, his suggestions of flexible work schedule and options to work from home were implemented by the company. This yielded a total annual savings of 1 billion\$ to the company. Peter feels not only more satisfied but more committed to work at Infosys.

It is often argued that work is worship. If we analyse this and find out why is work compared to a sacred affair such as worship, we find out that work is something which should be able to yield us increased satisfaction, a sense of acceptance and contentment.

Instead of being something we worry about, work should prove to be an essential component of our life.

Not MONDAY BLUES or JOB BURNOUTS rather a work life balance.

Work environment in the 21st century has undergone a transformational change marked by automation and globalisation.

For some it has brought new opportunities and strengths but for some it is posing a very existential challenge of survival, constant upskilling- a PERFORM or PERISH situation.

To lead a meaningful life, it is crucial that the work we do is also meaningful because an average individual spends arounds 50% of his day at work. Also, work life has a ripple effect on your other interactions as well.

But the question then arises, what is meaningful work? It's a subjective realisation. For some great leaders like Gandhiji and Swami Vivekanda, the only meaningful work will be one that brings good to the most vulnerable sections of society and therefore they worked for emancipation of the untouchables and women.

For a person under abject poverty, being able to feed two meals a day to his family is meaningful work.

For a millionaire, even minting billions of dollars a day may still not be meaningful.

So we now realise that there are multiple facets to a meaningful work. But despite this, a general understanding suggests that for work to be meaningful, it should be able to develop and exercise the talent skills and abilities of the workers. Moving forward in this essay we will explore how.

When does work become worship for workers?

Attrition Rate of a company is particularly useful in understanding the overall worker sentiment and conditions of work at workplace.

Companies like Google, Apple, JATA and Infosys have labour turnover as low as 10-15%.

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An analysis into the reasons makes us understand that attrition is low because workers in these companies are satisfied, happy and motivated because they derive meaning out of their worklife. It is because for example Google exercises and develops the talent of people. There are Cafeteria Compensation Plans which means customised incentive & Payment plans.

Payment & compensation depends upon the talent of employees and not a strict Human resource budget of the company.

Apple's mantra is Hire A grade people because A attracts B, B attracts C and C attracts D.

So it understands & exercises the talent of people.

Suggestion plans & schemes like SCANLON exist in organisation through worker's inputs in increasing the productivity of the company are roped in. Through mechanisms like Worker Participation in Management, worker is given an

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opportunity to take part in decision making, in crucial decisions. His actual on group experience, skills are put to use.

Recently Maruti through implementing suggestions of workers via its Suyhar Sangrahalika was able to reduce accidents at workplace.

When workers are given due credit for their skills & abilities they feel more valued and their commitment for their work increases.

It gives them a sense of purpose & meaning. Workers don't feel like fence sitters but active board room members. This also helps in instilling a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Modern organisations like Accenture are heading towards merit based promotions as compared to seniority based which is still widely practiced in government organisations.

Such a practice creates a positive pygmalion effect that there exists a fair opportunity to rise up the ladder based upon their skills & abilities.

Even in family owned enterprises, there is a fair opportunity for individuals to hold positions of CEOs bypassing their family candidates. Such as Vishal Sikka, Satya Nadella have been CEOs at Infosys. All these organisations value the talent and reflect qualities of equality & democracy. This makes life and work of its employees more meaningful.

At PepsiCo, Indira Nooyi got the prestige of holding the coveted CEO chair. The perception that women can never make rational decisions and therefore existence of a GLASS CEILING was broken. She was promoted based on her capabilities. All of this adds more value to the life of its employees.

Also, organisations that develops, the skills and capabilities of its workers are always preferred. They invest in workers as their assets. Their goal is that workers' development is their

responsibility.

For example refresher training modules at Google., constant upskilling at TATA, flexible and learning organisations at Apple.

To develop talent of workers, companies are providing wide range of exposure to its workers by assigning them cross cultural teams, cross functional departments.

This develops a new set of skills which not only helps them perform better at the current set of job but also in any future engagements.

Today organisations like McKinsey, J P Morgan are providing autonomy, flexible work schedule and focussing on Quality of work life of its workers.

There has been a shift from earlier approaches of treating workers like a cog in the wheel to a human relationist approach of treating workers as the only innate and most valuable asset of the company.

Even spiritualism at workplace has been used to let workers exercise

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their skills and develop their potential to the fullest. For example CISCO gave a separate time slot for its employees to work for cyclone relief activities. This would help workers see the real impact they're able to make.

When does work not prove to be meaningful?

We all hear of our friends and colleagues for whom Monday mornings are a nightmare. They don't derive any meaning/value out of the work they do. Apart from financial security, no other element of the job excites them.

When companies don't value their workers' talent, skills and capabilities, they feel there is no development in their skill set, they lose interest in the work.

For example at Amazon and Uber, attrition rate is very high.

The payment mechanism which is based on consumer feedback, is unable to instill a sense of security in the minds of its workers

They feel their skills are not being properly exercised.

Similar is the case of Disguised unemployment be it in family owned businesses, in the agriculture sector there is no exercise or development of full potential of the workers. In such cases work doesn't remain meaningful.

For gig and platform workers at Zomato, Swiggy, these are facing structural unemployment. We meet delivery partners who are highly qualified but are not able to utilise their talent & skill effectively. Apart from this there is lack of social security mechanisms available for them → all of this reduces the meaning they derive from their work.

Workers working at small, local and unorganised establishments like construction workers, caterers, waiters are all not able to utilise and develop their skill set. Almost all of them suffer from emotional dissonance because of this.

Any workplace where worker is discriminated, faces harassment of

any kind - mental, physical or sexual is also unable to utilise his skills and capabilities effectively.

In family owned businesses which lack transparency and professional ethics, where top positions would always be occupied by family members irrespective of their talent and skill also loses out on talented workers because they fail to find meaning in a work that doesn't treat them as equal; where genes are valued over talent.

For any economy to grow and prosper, it is essential that its workplaces are able to attract and retain the best of talent. India suffers Brain Drain also because of practices in its organisation which are not able to develop and exercise the skills & talents of its employees.

In such a scenario, we must take cues from professional practices worldwide. It is time we implement strategies of companies operating in USA, Japan, Scandinavian countries etc

In this pursuit of ours, international cooperation and agreements can be helpful. Employer & employee exchange programs can help in imbining democratic and holistic developmental values.

An attitudinal change is needed. Taylor, called this a MENTAL REVOLUTION.

Recently Infosys started with its Inclusionity Campaign wherein it highlighted how Infosys equally values transgenders, LGBTQ+ and recognizes workforce based on their talent and skills. This is a step in the right direction.

Democracy within helps strengthen democracy outside. Indian companies, even government PSUs and organisations should consider merit based promotions, lateral entry, skill development programs. Focus on autonomy and quality of work life.

Modern workers are choiciful, aware and career oriented. In order to tap their full potential and enhance productivity they should be made

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a partner in baking the cake. Only those organisations which are able to develop & recognise talent & skills of its workers well will be able to make their work life meaningful and therefore attract & retain them.

It is said that modern problems require modern solutions. In this spirit, workers should be motivated through developed practices.

