CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Agriculture in India is the vertical backbone of the country and is regarded as the largest sector of the country’s economic activity. It is the major sector of the State economy, in which the majority of people earn their livelihood. Though the share of agriculture in the aggregate economy has declined rapidly during the planned development of the country, it assumes a pivotal role in the rural economy. The contributory share of agriculture in GDP has declined from 55.4 per cent in 1950-51 to 18.5 per cent in 2006-07 and again declined to 16.9 per cent in 2013 (www.tn.gov.in, 2013). Agriculture at present provides livelihood to 60 percent of the total population. The sector provides employment to 58.4 percent of country’s workforce and is the single largest private enterprise.

Agricultural farm worker’s issues occupy a prominent place in India’s political economy because agriculture employs a large section of the rural population, providing direct employment to almost two-third of the workforce. The ownership of agricultural land and other assets in rural areas is highly skewed. A vast section of the population engaged in the agricultural sector constitutes agricultural labourers, both landless and small cultivators, who work on other people’s farms for wages. A change in the well-being of the rural population can be brought out through technological improvement accompanied by institutional reforms. However, as studies show, despite the
institutional reforms introduced during the post-Independence period in India, the economic condition of agricultural labourer’s did not change much except in a few pockets in terms of wages and the availability of employment. In fact, the economic condition of agricultural labourer’s was rather grim till the 1970s. The liberalisation period brought about a fresh spell of misfortune for the rural labour force in terms of wages and the availability of employment, as indicated by various studies, the liberalisation period was marked by a decline in the growth rate of rural wages for agricultural / rural labour and falling growth in both farm and non-farm employment in almost all the states of the country.

Evidence from the National Sample Survey of India shows that the growth rate of employment measures by current daily status declined not only at the All-India level but also at the State level. Regarding the All-India figures, the employment growth rate declined from 2.47 per cent in 1983 / 1993-94 to 1.35 in 1993 / 94 – 2004 / 05.

### 1.1.1 Tamil Nadu Scenario

In Tamil Nadu economy is agro based and a major proportion of agricultural labourer’s in the labour force work are engaged in agriculture and traditional industries like cashew, coir and handloom. A significant proportion of the labour force in the agricultural sector comprises men. Men were able to opt out from agriculture and seek new employment avenues elsewhere when they encountered low prospects in agriculture. Women have remained, however, in the agricultural sector, accepting the traditional practice of paying wages to women at half the rates for men. According to the 2011 census, there were about 23,72,446 agricultural labourer’s in Tamil Nadu State which is 4.08 per cent of India as 5,81,62,962 agricultural labourer’s, of which 10,34,184 were male labourer’s and 13,38,262 were female labourer’s in Tamil Nadu (Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner,
India, 2013). The mechanization caused high levels of underemployment and casualisation in the agricultural sector which led into falling of incomes, and increasing insecurity of agricultural employment more especially women are more threats in agriculture

Tamil Nadu has carved out a special niche for itself in development discourse due to its impressive performance over the years in the demographic and social development front. Increasing participation of agricultural labourer’s in the labour market of the developed and developing countries has brought out the issue of differentials in earnings and employment opportunities into sharp focus. The agricultural labourer’s in India, especially in rural sector are discriminated and disadvantaged in many aspects of employment such as employment diversification, quality of employment and wage earnings.

The present study would explore the options for solving the problems of agricultural labourer’s by making a detailed study assessing their socio-economic status, employment position in agriculture, unemployment situation during off season, alternate source of employment and consequently suggesting the strategies to improve the present situation. The present study would suggest a number of far reaching implications for the formulation of appropriate policies to generate employment in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, towards creation of better employment for agricultural labourers.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Agriculture plays a very important role in industrial development of our nation as it is the source of raw materials for many industries. India’s foreign trade is deeply associated with agriculture. Agriculture accounts for about 14.7 percent of the total export earnings. Agriculture and its related
Goods contribute 38 per cent in the total exports of the country. Expanding agricultural production increases the demand for other sectors notably fertilizers, pesticides, machineries, transportation and communication varying with the level of technology. Indian agriculture continues to be a gamble on the monsoon.

Labour is one of the primary factors of production. It is considered to be important not only it is productive but also it activates other factors and makes them useful for production purposes. The size of labour force in a country is determined by the number of people in the age group of 15-59 years as generally children below 15 years and old people above 59 years do not participate in production activity. India’s labour force consists of 459 and one million workers (2004-05), growing at the rate of 2 percent annually. Out of this, 268.1 million workers are employed in agriculture as cultivators and labourer’s.

Agricultural labourer’s, mostly landless constitute the poorest segment of the Indian agricultural population. They belong to the economically backward and oppressed section of the society. They mainly belong to the schedule castes, scheduled tribes and other backward communities. They are basically unskilled and unorganized and work in farms of prosperous big farmers as casual workers on wages for a larger part of the year. One of the most disquieting features of the rural economy of India during the past several decades has been its constantly increasing trend in the number of landless labourer’s. Factors like rapid growth of population, law of inheritance, rise in the cost of agricultural inputs and decline in small scale industries have been responsible for this increase. The phenomenon of under employment, under development and surplus population are simultaneously manifested in the daily lives and living of agricultural labourer’s.
Unlike industrial labour, agricultural labour is difficult to define. The reason is that unless capitalism develops fully in agriculture, a separate class of workers depending wholly on wages does not come up. The First Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee (ALEC) 1950-55 defined Agricultural Labour as “those people who are engaged in raising crops on payment of wages” (based on occupation). If half or more of a household have wage employment in agriculture then those households can be termed as agricultural labour households. The Second ALEC 1956-57 enlarged the definition to include- “Those who are engaged in agriculture and other agricultural occupations like dairy and livestock, farming, horticulture, bee keeping, poultry, etc. (based on income). According to the above definition if 50 percent or more of its income is derived as wages for work rendered in agriculture and allied activities, then it could be classed to agricultural labour household. According to National Commission on Labour “An agricultural labourer is one who is basically unskilled and unorganised and has little for his livelihood, other than personal labour”. At this juncture, the following attributes were probed by the researcher in the study.

i. The extent of socio-economic and livelihood status of the agricultural labourer’s would increase.

ii. The extent of agricultural labourer’s are satisfied towards the services offered by the Central/State Government and Agricultural agencies.

iii. The reasons inhibited that respondents quitting or migrating from agriculture work.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives are framed for the purpose of present study.
1. To study the socio economic and livelihood status of agricultural labourer’s in Tamil Nadu.

2. To identify the reasons for quitting or migrating the agriculture work among the agricultural labourer’s in the study area.

3. To examine the satisfaction level of the agricultural labourer’s towards various schemes offered by the Central / State Government in the study area.

4. To evaluate the satisfaction level of the agricultural labourer’s towards services offered by the Agricultural agencies in the study area.

5. To identify the problems faced by the agricultural labourer’s in the study area.

6. To suggest better ways and means to improve the socio economic status of the agricultural labourer’s in the study area.

1.4 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H_{01} : There is no significant relationship between selected independent variables viz., gender, age, educational qualification, marital status, family size, experience of family in agriculture work, dependence on agriculture, experience in agriculture work, number of days work in agriculture in a month, total family income, nature of holding area, size of holding area, type of land, type of soil, sources of irrigation, dwelling place,
number of migrations and their level of satisfaction towards various schemes offered by the Central / State Government.

H₀₂ : There is no significant difference between selected independent variables viz., gender, age, educational qualification, marital status, family size, experience of family in agriculture work, dependence on agriculture, experience in agriculture work, number of days work in agriculture in a month, total family income, nature of holding area, size of holding area, type of land, type of soil, sources of irrigation, dwelling place, number of migrations and their level of satisfaction towards services offered by the agricultural agencies.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The validity of any research depends on the systematic method of collecting the data and analyzing the same in a logical and sequential order. In the present study, an extensive use of both primary and secondary data has been made.

1.5.1 Sample Design and Size

In the selection of sample farm labourer’s, a multi-stage stratified random sampling method is used. Sample size refers to the number of data to be gathered for the study from the given population. Tamil Nadu has been purposively selected for the study owing to 70 percent of the Tamil Nadu population is engaged in agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. As per the report of India Stat Organization, the total agricultural labourer’s are 78,49,000 as on 2013. In this research, the population is known and hence the following formula has been used for calculating the sample size for the
assessment of socio-economic status of the farm labourer’s.

\[
\text{Sample Size (n)}^2 = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2 \cdot (N - 1) + z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}
\]

where,

- \( z = \) confidence level at 95% (standard value of 1.96)
- \( p = \) Sample Defective Population
- \( q = 1 - p \)
- \( N = \) Final Sample Population (78,490,000)
- \( e = \) margin of error

The required Sample Size (n) is

\[
= \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot (0.5) \cdot (0.5) \cdot 7849000}{(0.05)^2 \cdot (7849000 - 1) + (1.96)^2 \cdot (0.5) \cdot (0.5)}
\]

\[
= 384
\]

From the above calculation, the total sample size of the study is 384. A total of 32 districts of Tamil Nadu State have been divided into four zones viz., East, West, North and South. The detail of four zones is presented in the following table.
Details regarding Zone and its Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Name of the District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western (9)</td>
<td>Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Erode, Salem, Tiruppur, Namakkal, Karur, Dindigul, Dharmapuri.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern (7)</td>
<td>Tiruchirappalli, Thanjavur, Thiruvarur, Nagapattinam, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Pudukottai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern (7)</td>
<td>Madurai, Virudhunagar, Theni, Sivaganga, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern (9)</td>
<td>Chittoor, Vellore, Thiruvannamalai, Villupuram, Kanchipuram, Chengalput, Thiruvallur, Cuddalore, Krishnagiri.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Respondents were chosen from these four zones for the study. For collecting primary data, field survey technique was employed in Tamil Nadu State. A well framed questionnaire was also used to collect the primary data. First hand information pertaining to the farm labourer’s socio-economic and livelihood status and their opinion towards various services offered by the Central / State Government and their problems accrued in farm work were collected from 384 sample respondents by using multi-level sampling procedure.

That is, 96 sample respondents were selected equally in 4 selected zones of Tamil Nadu State by using stratified sampling method and selecting the sample respondents by using random sampling method. From the collected 384 samples, the maximum unfilled and biased questionnaires are found and rejected from the study. In this way, 84 questionnaires are eliminated from this study. Finally, the researcher, supervisor and doctoral
committee members have finalized 300 sample respondents to make the research study easy. The sample of 300 respondents was considered for primary data collection.

1.5.2 Reliability

The reliability of the enquiry schedule and the individual items in it were tested with the help of Cronbach’s alpha. Examination of Cronbach’s alpha provides information about the reliability of any given set of measures. The value of alpha must be larger than 0.70 to imply reliability. The Cronbach’s alpha value in this research is 0.923 and 0.916 for the level of satisfaction towards various schemes offered by Central / State Government schemes and the level of satisfaction towards services offered by various agricultural agencies respectively. Hence, the study is reliable for analysis.

1.5.3 Frame Work of Analysis

By virtue of a mass data obtained from research survey, as well as data from secondary sources collected and presented in the report, a descriptive and an analytical research is considered most appropriate for the study. The researcher used closed-ended and open-ended questions in the questionnaire to collect the primary data.

1.5.4 Construction of Questionnaire

The key aspect of the present research was identified through the preliminary interviews with a few selected agricultural labourer’s. The questionnaire so drafted was circulated among a few research experts, agricultural labourer’s, agriculture officers and research scholars for a critical
review with regard to wording, format, sequence and the like. The questionnaire was then re-drafted in light of their comments.

1.5.5 Pre-Test

The questionnaire meant for the respondents was pre-tested with twenty (20) agricultural labourer’s. After pre-testing, necessary modifications were made in the questionnaire to fit in on the track of the present study.

1.5.6 Primary Data

In order to fulfill the objectives set, the primary data was collected in the form of responses from farm labourer’s in Tamil Nadu. The farm labourer’s are the respondents who provide information regarding their understanding, experiences, opinion, and perception towards agriculture field. The study was undertaken by using a well framed questionnaire that was duly filled by the respondents. The respondents were selected from various zones of Tamil Nadu. A noteworthy feature was that the respondents filled the questionnaire with much zeal. This was due to the high level of literacy among the respondents and the researcher’s rapport established with them.

1.5.7 Secondary Data

Be it any research, the researcher is aware of the value of secondary data. The secondary data provided the researcher with information regarding the activities, the scope and the opinions of other researchers and experts in the initial stages. The data further guided the researcher in defining the variables of the study. The secondary data provides useful and necessary information supplementing the qualitative aspects of the research findings.
For this purpose, the secondary data was collected from all associated sources that include books on labour, agricultural labourer’s behaviour, research journals, magazines and periodicals, internet web sources and libraries of reputed universities, institutes in and around Tamil Nadu.

1.5.8 Discussions and Informal Interviews

In order to know the socio economic status of the farm labourers, several rounds of discussion were made with experts in the field of agriculture, farm labourer’s and the research supervisor.

1.5.9 Statistical Tools used for Analysis

The difference in the extent of using the various schemes offered by the Central / State Government in agriculture field between the different types of farm labourer’s based on their age, gender, educational qualification, monthly income level, marital status, family size, type of land holdings, etc., was studied by means of Percentages, Mean, Ranges, Standard Deviation, Cross tabulation, Chi-Square test, ANOVA, Correlation analysis, Multiple Regression analysis. In addition, Henry Garrett Ranking Technique is used for finding the reasons for quitting / migrate the agriculture work. Most importantly Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Model are also used in the study.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to analyse the farm labourer’s socio-economic status, which includes a thorough analysis of socio economic conditions and their living status, livelihood status in Tamil Nadu. Among the
various aspects that build the rapport with the farm laboures and keep them in their fold, the satisfaction level of the farm labourer’s is much more important to examine the dissatisfaction area in their work nature. Hence, the outcome of the present study will be of immense help to the government in bringing out the various aspects concerned with farm labourer’s which would definitely facilitate them to work out their appropriate strategies and promote the farm labourer’s in Tamil Nadu.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. As the geographical area of the study is limited to Tamil Nadu State alone, the findings of the study may not reflect the entire Indian scenario.

2. The elicited opinion of farm labourer’s may not be good all times, because of the individual differences due to Age, Gender, Attitude, Income, Profession and others.

3. The findings of the study may not be applicable to the universe, as only 300 samples were taken under convenience sampling method.

4. Since, the study covers only agriculture field, the results obtained may or may not be applicable to other field of work.

1.8 CHAPTER SCHEME

The report of the study has been presented under five chapters, as given below.

Chapter 1: The First Chapter provides the design of the study comprising introduction, statement of the problem, objectives of the study,
hypotheses of the study, research methodology, scope of the study, limitations of the study and chapterization of the present study.

**Chapter 2**: The Second Chapter presents the review of related literature available in the field of agriculture.

**Chapter 3**: An Overview of farm labourer in Tamil Nadu.

**Chapter 4**: Data Analysis and Interpretation.

**Chapter 5**: The Final chapter highlights the summary of key findings, suggestions and conclusion.