PREFACE

Of late, the economic condition of agricultural labourers (AL), who form a major segment of the so-called 'weaker' or 'poorer' sections of the society, has attracted a considerable amount of attention of the policy-makers, economists and academicians. This emanates from a general belief that the fruits of various development programmes that have been implemented so far have, by and large, accrued to the affluent sections of the rural society. Recently it has become a most vocal issue because, as the celebrated 18th century French writer Montesquieu points out, 'Freedom is that good which enables us to enjoy all others.' But how can one exist if work and bread are lacking? In fact a hungry ignorant man cannot be fully free. He poses a big challenge to our democratic setup. Besides, labour is not only the means of production but the end of production as well, for human resources are the greatest asset of any nation.

Indeed in this agriculturally dominated nation of ours, only AL can propel agriculture and thus pump the prime of our economy. To develop a dynamic and prosperous agricultural economy, we have to exhort agricultural labour, emancipate them and educate them, for prosperity of our country largely hinges on their productivity. But we cannot do much to improve the economic condition of AL without having a correct perspective of their problems.

In view of the facts stated above, a proper and fuller understanding of the magnitude of the problem of AL and its various
dimensions is imperative for formulating policy measures in respect thereof and also for ensuring their effective implementation. For the very fact that there are large regional variations, a study of labour problems at macro level is not illuminating. The study has perforce to be at disintegrated level, preferably at the grass root levels. It is also required that frequent enquiries be made of their problems. These are not the only factors, however, which have led me to undertake the present study. My long association with the village life and keen interest in the problems of village people have been largely responsible for prompting me to do so.

During the course of the present study, I have received help, encouragement and assistance from several persons, to all of whom I am grateful. In particular, I wish to express my profound gratitude and indebtedness to my supervisor, Dr. V.P. Pande, Professor and Head of the Department of Economics, University of Saugar, Saugar, but for whose able guidance, valuable suggestions and affectionate encouragement this work would not have taken the present shape.

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