Chapter I
INTRODUCTION
Women constitute half of the global population and one-third of the labour force, but receive only one-tenth of the world income and own less than one per cent of the world’s property. The process of economic development induces several key changes in the structure of the developing economies that includes changes in the allocation of labour in different economic activities. The most important change concerns with the participation of women in the economic activities.

In the era of globalization, women entered the labour market in greater numbers than ever before. They did so in a situation dominated by the watchwords of liberalization, privatization and flexibilisation. Women are often more vulnerable than men, disproportionately concentrated in low-wage sectors or occupations and often segregated into the informal sector.

Women constitute nearly half of the adult population in India and 77 per cent of them belong to the rural area. The major occupation of rural women is agriculture and related activities and thereby they contribute about three-fourth of the labour required for agricultural operations. Considering this background, prosperity and growth of not only a nation but also the remaining half of the population depend on the status and development of its female population.

Women contribute in innumerable ways to the development process. Broadly their contribution to socio-economic development has two fold, say, within the home as well as outside the home. In the home, women’s role as a daughter, wife and mother cannot be underestimated. A woman as a
caretaker of the members of the family attends to food requirements. She looks after the health of all members of the family. These two things are very important in maintaining the productivity of working force.

Woman is also the first teacher. The training imparted by her to the child forms the basis of future skills formation among the workforces. Women are the harbinger of human culture. It is rightly said that women who rocks the cradle rules the nation. Outside home, a woman tries to be an equal and able partner in the economic activities. In agriculture, she is engaged in seeding, planting, weeding, irrigation, processing and harvesting operations.

Women, quantitatively, supply labour force through her reproductive function; qualitatively, improve productivity of workers through her proper care at home; and supplement income of the family and thus helps in improving the standard of living and also helps by contributing to savings. But women’s contribution in terms of production, employment, earnings have been overlooked and labeled as ‘supplementary’, ‘casual’, ‘optional’ and ‘supporting’. Far from these, their contribution is substantial. It is unfortunate that her role is not adequately recognized and her contribution not quantified properly. There is gross under estimation of this invisible force. Woman, as an active worker, producer of goods and services is not duly recognized by this male-dominated society.

The discrimination faced by women in the economic sphere reinforces their low status as their contribution goes unrecognized and remains
undervalued. Women in India, which is predominantly agricultural, participate in economic activities and contribute their labour actively. Yet, due to the nature of their work, which is intertwined with household activities at times and is often unpaid, on the one hand, and the flawed definition of economic activity, on the other hand, women’s economic participation remains statistically invisible.

The role played by the women in the care sector activities, namely, their reproductive work, bearing, rearing, nurturing children and household maintenance, falls outside the national accounting systems followed by different countries. While these activities are crucial for household members’ well-being and effective participation in different spheres, say, economic, social and political, they continue to remain non-economic activities, which are not considered for direct contribution to national incomes. By virtue of women performing these roles, which are statistically not counted as economic and hence not monetarily valued, women’s role and their contribution are assigned low status.

In the overall situation, women exploitation is more in the Indian society. She became slave and served the dominant sections of the society. Even for the same type of work, wage discrimination is there particularly, if the women belong to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe or backward classes, as they are poor, landless and illiterate. A large proportion of female earners in agriculture are mainly from low castes, because it was considered derogatory for higher castes to allow their women to work on the fields. Thus
the Indian women are exploited in every field in the society. These are the drawbacks in the process of development and production.

With the development of agricultural economy and other economic activities, the demand for women’s labour in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors has been on the rise. Women may work on the farms owned by them or on family farms or as tenants or as wage earners and as such they form large proportions of agricultural workers.

1.1 Concept of women agricultural labour

The definition of women work underwent many changes since 1901 and more particularly since 1961 census. During the three censuses, 1901, 1911 and 1921, the total population was divided into two categories i.e., actual workers and dependents. The term actual workers referred to all persons who actually did work or carried out business, personally or by means of servants, renters, pensioners etc. The persons who were not actual workers were categorized as dependents.

The concept has been changed from 1961 census onwards. A worker was the one who was associated with economically productive activity rather than the capacity to earn. Hence, a young person who is learning work or undergoing apprenticeship is a worker and a property owner who lets out her/his property and collects rent or hires changes is not a worker. On the basis of 1961 census, the total population was broadly classified into two categories, i.e., workers and non workers. According to 1981 Census of
India, a person who worked in another person’s land for wages in cash, kind or share of crop was regarded as an agricultural labour.

The first Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee (ALEC), 1950-1955, defined agricultural labour as “those people who are engaged in raising crops on payment of wages”. The second Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee, 1956-1957, enlarged the definition to include – “those who are engaged in other agricultural occupations like dairy, farming, horticulture, raising of live-stock, bees, poultry etc”. In the context of Indian conditions the definition is not adequate, because it is not possible to completely separate those working on wages from others. There are people who do not work on wages throughout the year but only for a part of it.

The first ALEC used the concept of agricultural labour household. If half or more members of household have wage employment in agriculture, those households should be termed as agricultural labour household. This concept was based upon the occupation of the worker. The Second Committee submitted that to know whether a household is an agricultural labour household, we must examine its main source of income. If 50 per cent or more of its income is derived as wages for work rendered in agriculture only, then it could be classified as agricultural labour household.

According to the National Commission on Labour “agricultural labour is one who is basically unskilled and unorganized and has little for its livelihood, other than personal labour”. Thus, persons whose main source of income is from wage employment fall in this category. Some of the
economists have stated that all those persons who derive a major part of their income as payment for work performed on the farms of others can be designated as agricultural workers.

All these definitions, with little difference, accept broadly the principle that an agricultural labour is one who is engaged on wage employment either permanently or casually.

1.2 Classification of Female Agricultural Labour

To understand the nature and rural class structure, rural women are classified into two categories, namely, landless agricultural labour and very small cultivators. Landless labour in turn can be classified into two broad categories, say, permanent labour attached to cultivating household and casual labour. Permanent or attached labour generally works on annual or seasonal basis and they work on some sort of daily wage. Their wages are determined by custom or tradition. On the other hand, temporary or casual labour are engaged only during peak period for work. Their employment is temporary and they are paid at the market rate. They are not attached to any landlords.

The second category very small cultivators can again be divided into three subgroups, namely, cultivators, share croppers and leaseholders. Small farmers possess very little land and therefore have to devote most of their time working on the lands of others as labour. Share croppers are those who, while sharing the produce of the land for their work, also work as
labour. Tenants are those who not only work on the leased land but also work as labour.

Agricultural labour are not organized like industrial labour. They are not organized into unions. They are illiterate and ignorant, it is difficult for them to bargain with the land owners and secure fair wages. Most of the labour have no land of their own.

An important characteristic of the female agricultural labour in India is that women get low wages because hired labour can be substituted by the family labour. Economic conditions of women labour are very pitiable. The hours of work are not fixed. The wage rates paid are also low compared to the male workers for the same work. Illiteracy, lack of awareness, low level of skills, suppression, nature of employment, lack of knowledge about Minimum Wages Act, lack of bargaining power and migration are the disadvantages of women labour.

In the process of development women labour suffers in many ways. She believes that men and women both have equal strength and that none is inferior to her. Women in overall activities as well as household works were higher than men. It was lower in agriculture compared to men. Women hired as farm labour invariably do transplantation of paddy and weeding operations amongst various crops. In paddy transplantation women from neighboring farms would gather and help each other.

Women workers play a significant role in agricultural development and allied fields including in the main crop production, livestock production,
horticulture, post harvest operations, agro/social forestry, fisheries etc. Women also play vital role in allied agricultural activities such as entire management of dairy animals starting from collection and cutting of fodder to feeding, cleaning of cattle and cattle shed, collection of dung, milking, preparation of milk products, etc. Their role in sectors like poultry, piggery, duckery, goatery, sheep rearing, rabbit rearing, fisheries, sericulture and mushroom cultivation is also overwhelming. Sericulture is another area where women perform better than men.

Moreover, studies dealing with women and their development indicate that the economic and social gains of development have been unevenly distributed not only across gender and social classes, but also across regions. The women in agriculture sector are disadvantaged in many aspects of socio-economic dimensions. Studies on rural development in India have revealed that rich farmers have grown richer and the poor have become poorer. Over a period of time, there has occurred a marginalization and pauperization of women labour in agriculture. In the developing countries, studies show that apart from the economic marginalization of women, the efforts of economic development have resulted in an increase in the work activities of rural women on the one hand, and shrinking of their resource base and opportunities for well-being as persons on the other. Lack of facilities to acquire other skills and unavailability of opportunities to enter into other fields has turned them desperate and depressed. Apart from the pressure of unemployment, mechanization of agriculture has further displaced women from their traditional work.
1.3 Research justification

To find the reasons which led to marginalization of women is crucial in order to address the problem adequately. This assumes most significance in view of the importance of female labour contribution to the agricultural economy in the state. The need to study the status of women agricultural labour in the socio-economic ladder and its impact on poverty and agricultural economy are therefore of paramount interest in both academic and policy circumstances. Much has been written on the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labour but little information is available on the status of women across the levels of socio-economic settings. This study attempts to present an insight view of the status of women across the levels of socio-economic settings. The study also tries to shed light on the government initiatives towards the development of rural women.

1.4 Need for the study

Women are the backbone of the village economy of rural India. Women take up different works to eke out their livelihood and the majority of the rural women depend on agriculture, which is the major unorganized sector in India. Many of these labour are landless belongs to lower social and economic status. The role and status of women are altered in the process of agrarian social transformation due to the technology of cultivation. The disaggregated pattern of development has varied impact on women members of every region, group, class and caste. In this backdrop, it is pertinent to examine the status of women across the levels of rural transformation consequent upon the technological and agricultural growth. Except a few
studies conducted here and there, no serious study is done to explain this social phenomenon. So there is a need to make an attempt to study the women labour especially in agricultural field of two Districts of Andhra Pradesh. So, it is proposed to make a study with the following objectives.

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to analyze the status of women labour in agriculture within the framework of economic and social perspectives. These variables are studied with the help of social and economic parameters. The study focuses on these specific objectives:

- To analyze the changing trends of women participation in employment
- To analyze the policy support to women agricultural labour
- To examine the socio-economic status of women agricultural labour
- To analyze the factors influencing the poverty among women agricultural labour

1.6 Hypothesis

1) There is an increasing trend of women participation in employment.

2) The female agricultural labour live at the lowest status of socio-economic ladder

3) There is a close relation between social hierarchy and poverty.
1.7 Scope of the study

The study is limited to the analysis of socio-economic status of landless female agricultural labour in the selected districts of Andhra Pradesh. The study area characterizes a semi-developed agricultural region in which both dry land crops and irrigated crops are grown. The study focuses on the socio-economic conditions and the factors influencing the poverty among female agricultural labour in the selected districts. The study is carried out on the basis of 300 households of female agricultural labour belonging to different social groups.

1.8 Research methods

Within the above mentioned scope of the study, the methodology has been designed to carry out the research work in a scientific way so that a comprehensive analysis of the research problem may be obtained. In this regard, the methodology applied in the study besides the methods of sampling and way of determining the sample size is discussed in the following paragraphs along with methods and techniques employed in the data collection.

1.8.1 Research design

The theoretical framework of the study combines economic as well as social aspects with the distress among women labour agricultural households. It deals with the relationship between poverty and social hierarchy. To study the distress among women agricultural labour both qualitative and quantitative methods are applied in the study through the collection of data by household survey and in-depth interviews.
1.8.2 Selection of the study area

Andhra Pradesh is the state with diversified regional dimensions where marked difference exists among the regions. Uneven and unparallel rainfall, natural resources, irrigation, infrastructure and agro-climatic conditions are distributed which have varied impact on livelihood settings of the people living in each region.

A Multi-Stage random sample is used for the study. The districts are divided into two categories, namely, agriculturally developed and agriculturally less developed districts. From each category, one district is selected at random. Thus Guntur district is selected from agriculturally developed region and Warangal district is selected from agriculturally less developed region. In the second stage, five mandals are selected from each district. In the third stage, one village is selected from each selected mandal. Thus a sample of 10 villages is selected for the purpose of the study. In the final stage, list of landless female agricultural labour is prepared in each of the selected villages. A sample of 30 respondents was selected randomly from each village. Thus a sample of 300 female labour household were selected for the study.
### SAMPLE DESIGN

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<th>District</th>
<th>Mandal</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td>Guntur</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phirangipuram</td>
<td>Ponugupadu</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sattenapalli Mandal</td>
<td>Kantepudi</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Tadikonda</td>
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<td>Chennaraopeta Mandal</td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**1.8.3 Data collection and sample techniques**

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. All the sample households were interviewed personally to collect the required primary data using structured questionnaire. The household survey was conducted to collect information on the socio-economic status which includes employment, income and consumption expenditure of women labour in agriculture. The secondary data was collected from the Directorate of Economic and Statistics, Government of Andhra Pradesh and from different reputed journals, articles and books. For showing trends, Census reports from 1981 to 2001 have been used. The data collected was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for statistical analysis.
1.8.4 Techniques of analysis

The analytical techniques used in this study are descriptive statistics and simple and logit regression analysis. Descriptive statistics form the basis of virtually quantitative analysis of data. Descriptive statistics are used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. To analyze the data, simple tabular analysis is used. The simple regression technique is used to verify the relationship between variables. The logit regression analysis is used to analyze the factors influencing poverty among women labour households. The detailed descriptions of the techniques are presented in respective chapters.

1.9 Organization of the study

The study is organized in eight Chapters. Introduction, problem of the study, objectives and methodology are presented in Chapter I. Chapter II provides a review of the past studies related to women labour in agriculture. Agro-economic profile of the study area is presented in Chapter III. Chapter IV analyses changing trends in women participation in employment. Policy support to women agricultural labour is portrayed in Chapter V. Socio-economic status of sample households is presented in Chapter VI. Determinants of poverty among women agricultural labour households have been analyzed in Chapter VII. Summary, conclusions and suggestions are presented in Chapter VIII.