The preamble to the Constitution of India, which came into force on January 26, 1950 put “Justice, Social, Economic and Political” as the first among the objectives of constituting India into a Sovereign, Democratic Republic. The Directive Principles promised every one “the right to an adequate means of livelihood”, “living wage”, “a decent standard of life” and all that and also declared that the operation of the economic system must not “result in concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment”. Like the Constitution, the Five Year Plan documents also generated huge expectations. But even after an elapse of five decades, poverty still persists to be a major agenda of the nation of about 100 crore people.

The persistence of traditional agrarian structures and production relations is believed to be one of the root causes of mass poverty in rural India. A highly skewed land distribution, proletarianisation of sizeable sections of rural population, widespread share tenancy and interlocked fee tail markets are some of the more regressive features of the existing agrarian production relations that are supposed to inhibit not only the transition to a more progressive agriculture, but block even the ‘trickle-down’ of the benefits to the rural poor of whatever little increase in farm production that occurs in such a socio-economic milieu.

It has also been contended that the strategy for the removal of poverty has to concern more with the institutional changes and other forms of direct attack on poverty such as the individual beneficiary-oriented programmes.
Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) is one such asset-based self-employment programme launched and implemented throughout the country since the Sixth Five Year Plan. It is disheartening to note that this huge programme has also met with a failure by and large and could not liberate the rural masses from below the poverty line. Three broad groups of deficiencies have been noted in relation to the implementation of the IRDP.

These relate to:

a) infrastructural support and required forward and backward linkages;

b) weak and uncoordinated delivery and marketing systems; and

c) inability of the selected household to undertake the risk and managerial functions particularly when it happens to be the poorest of the poor and is hopelessly involved in debt.

Several independent agencies, universities and non-governmental organisations, besides the government projects, have undertaken the evaluation of IRDP in various states from time to time and they emerged with more or less similar conclusions on the not-so-rosy picture of IRDP.

The present study is not at all an entirely different exercise. This study was taken up with an object of evaluating the IRDP for tracing out the regional specificities in the problems and prospects of the programme and to evaluate it in terms of income and employment generation in the hands of the beneficiaries.

At the very outset, I am extremely happy to place on record my sense of gratitude to my Research Director Dr. NOORBASHA ABDUL, M.Com., M.Phil., Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Faculty of Commerce and Busi-
ness Administration, Nagarjuna University under whose valuable guidance the thesis got the shape it has. In fact, no words would suffice to express my deep sense of gratitude to him whose sustained encouragement made this study presentable. His role will remain as a source of enduring inspiration to me throughout my life.

I am deeply indebted to my father Rev. Dr. K. NATHANIEL formerly president, Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church for sponsoring me for the L.W.F. I thank the authorities concerned Lutheran World Federation, Geneva, for financial support. I thank the management of Andhra Christian College, Guntur for the opportunity given to me.

I have received generous help from many quarters in initiating and conducting this research which I have the pleasure to put on record here.

I am grateful to the then collector Sri. Seshanka Goel for liberally permitting me to collect data from the DRDA and for extending all the cooperation in the initial stage of my research.

I am equally glad to place on record my sincere thanks to Mrs. B. Udayalakshmi, I.A.S., Project Director, DRDA Guntur district, who kindly permitted me to approach the officials of DRDA, and allowed me to retrieve the secondary data from computer section.

I specially thank Sri. M. Satyanarayana, Manager, Lead Bank (Andhra Bank), Koritipadu, Guntur for liberally permitting me to collect data from the Bank and extending lot of co-operation in the initial stage of my research.

I thank the Director, National Institute of Rural Development, Rajedra Nagar, for extending his co-operation and permitting me to collect the secondary data.
I thank all the APOs of DRDA, Bank Branch Managers and Mandal Development Officers of the selected mandals for obliging me by responding to my questions with regard to implementation of IRDP in their respective mandals.

I also thank Sri. N. Sundar Raj, Director, ASSIST, Chilakaluripet, Voluntary Organisation, for supplying data and various reports pertaining to Rural Development activities.

For secondary data, I approached the libraries of Nagarjuna University, Agricultural College, Bapatla and Andhra Christian College, Guntur. I am grateful to the librarians and other staff of the above libraries for their liberal help and cooperation.

I owe special thanks to Sri. M. S. Jaya Prasad, senior lecturer in the department of English, Andhra Christian College for his help in reviewing the language part of the thesis and for his continuous support in completing my thesis.

I thank Dr. Mani Jacob, General Secretary, All India Association for Christian Higher Education (AIACHE) New Delhi for the financial support.

My sincere thanks are to Mr. P. Samuel Sunil Kumar of S.S. Graphics Guntur, for typing and printing the thesis.

I thank my dearest friends Mr. K. Ananda Subhakar, M.Com., B.Ed., B.L., lecturer in the department of Commerce, A.C. College and Mr. T. Wilson Sudhakar, Director, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India for their encouragement.
I express my heartful gratitude to my mother-in-law Dr. T.M. Hilda, M.D., D.G.O. for her constant prayers and encouragement in all spheres of my life.

I specially thank my beloved wife Dr. T. Anita Susan M.Sc., Ph.D., lecturer, department of Zoology, Andhra Christian College, Guntur and my children Alfiia Rachel and Kamalesh for their encouragement, inspiration and co-operation during the course of the work.

K. VIJAYA PRAKASA RAO