Economic aggregates such as output, income or employment can only be defined with reference to the relations of production specific to a socio-economic formation. The conception of competitive capitalism as a mode of production characterised by the emergence of wage labour (i.e. labour power itself having become a commodity) enabled Marx to define labour in general. That the vast differentiation in conditions of production, social forms of labour and modes of livelihood prevalent in rural India does not permit such an aggregation of labour is implicit in the title of this study, the purpose of which is to understand the relation between commercialisation and changing rural labour processes in the regional context. Apart from the ongoing discussion on diversification in rural employment in India, the study is inspired by the need, now increasingly felt among economists, to view the development process itself in terms of what is happening to the life and work conditions of labour.

This thesis was conceived, and the field survey completed, under the supervision of Professor Krishna Bharadwaj who, sadly, did not live to see the drafts of the main chapters. It was a privilege to have been her student for six years, the first two of which were spent in writing an M.Phil dissertation under her supervision. Over time, she had come to mean more to me than just an erudite professor and an elegant researcher. To a perplexed student returning to the study of economics after a work life of seven years, it was a joy to discover with her the broad contours of economic theory, its successes and failures and above all the potential of Classical Political Economy as a theoretical and methodological tradition in the study of economic development. The many stimulating discussions we had, not to mention her motherly kindness, would never cease to inspire me to think.
Professor Sheila Bhalla, my alternate supervisor, exercised patience and control with the progress of my writing, besides offering many useful suggestions. I am in debt to her for this. Throughout my years at JNU, inspiration, help and affection came forth in abundance from all members of the faculty of the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning. In particular, I am obliged to Professors Prabhat Patnaik and Deepak Nayyar for their magnanimity in selecting me for the research programme at the Centre. Financial support for five years through the Junior Research Fellowship of the University Grants Commission has been vital in the completion of my work.

In the course of an year-long field work in Andhra, I incurred debts to individuals and institutions too numerous to mention. At Hyderabad's Centre for Economic and Social Studies, I had useful discussions with and received professional help from Professor R. Radhakrishna, Shri S. Sudhakar Reddy, Dr. S. Subramanyam and Professor N. Krishnaji. A meeting with Professor G. Parthasarthy at Waltair in the middle of field survey helped me resolve some puzzles. Among the officials and community leaders of East Godavari, I particularly remember Shri I. Satyanarayana, Deputy Statistical Officer, Kakinada; Shri Ch. Bullaiah, Village Assistant, Machavaram; Shri Ranganatha Rao, Village Officer, Singampalli; and Shri Nalla Subba Rao, Sarpanch, Singampalli.

Back at JNU, I had the benefit of continued moral support and help from several friends, especially Sunil, Rajiv and Sudha. Pradeep and Preet cheerfully took up the exacting task of reading the page proofs. Sarvashri Rajagopalan, Bhopal Singh and Bache Singh - all staff of CESP - and Mrs. Kakkar of the Dean's Office have never failed to help me with problems, small and big. I cannot adequately thank
Professor S.K. Goyal, Director of the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, New Delhi for coming to my rescue with last-minute problems in the wordprocessing of the thesis. His able team including Shri Chalapati Rao, Dr. Ranganathan, Sumangala, Usha, Sunil and Umesh, performed the actual operations.

As for Uma and Nitya, who have been through it all - especially that whole year at Ramachandrapuram - this thesis is theirs as much.

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