INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER I

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Poverty and unemployment have for long been the twin crucial problems of India, each compounding the other. An estimate of unemployment and underemployment in India (Khanna, 1992) indicates that, out of the 875 million people in the country, only 300 million are employed, whereas 362 million persons in wage-dependent families live in absolute poverty. Persons living below the poverty line in the rural areas alone are estimated to be 211 million, of whom 94 million belong to wage-dependent families. Thus, unemployment is a primary factor leading to poverty.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the majority of India's rural population. Due to unfavourable climate and weather conditions, agricultural production has fallen considerably in India's rural areas. As a result, the quantum of work available to the labour population has decreased considerably. Further, the growth of the population in the rural areas has led to massive addition to the already unemployed labour
force. Since only a part of the labour force could be absorbed in the agricultural sector, the constantly growing labour force in rural areas needs to be diverted to non-agriculture-based and non-conventional occupations suited to the local conditions, if the basic problem of rural poverty is to be tackled effectively.

The commitment to poverty-alleviation reached a peak in India in the seventies. Several programmes were introduced from time to time to eliminate poverty in the country, especially in rural areas. During the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74), programmes such as Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers (MFAL) scheme were launched. In the mid-seventies, a special programme, Development of Drought Prone Areas (DDAP), was introduced and, in the late seventies, Desert Development Programme (DDP) was launched. The Food for Work Programme (FWP), later designated as National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), was started in 1977 so as to provide work for the rural poor, particularly during the slack periods of employment in the year and, at the same time, to create durable community assets.
During the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79), Command Area Development Programme (CADP) was launched. All these special programmes were implemented simultaneously in the same area, and for the same target group. All these programmes did contribute towards bringing about some improvement in the conditions of the poor people. But none of these programmes covered the whole country.

It was felt at this juncture that, in order to deal with all the dimensions of rural poverty in the country, a far more ambitious programme was required. Therefore, a new programme known as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was launched in 1978-79. The objective of this programme was to identify the rural poor families and enable them to cross the poverty line by providing productive assets and inputs. The takers of this scheme were seen opting solely for conventional agriculture-based and allied trades like dairy, cattle-rearing, poultry etc., which had very little scope for expansion in areas with dwindling natural resources. This trend prompted the policy-makers to launch another supplementary programme in 1978, called Training Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM). The objective of this programme was to equip
the rural youth in the age group of 15-35 with the needed know-how, do-how and temperament for starting viable micro-enterprises in non-conventional trades like tailoring, mat-weaving, gem-cutting and food-processing. In both IRDP and TRYSEM, the package of benefits were reserved for women and also for the socially-disadvantaged groups belonging to Scheduled Castes and Tribes, considering their socio-economic and cultural backwardness.

In 1982, in line with the recommendations of the Committee on Status of Women in India and the directives of the International Women's Decade, a new scheme called Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was launched at the national level as a pilot project for ensuring effective utilisation of both TRYSEM and IRDP for generating employment among women. Under this scheme, which has now blossomed into a regular programme, it is expected that women, after their training, will make use of the credit facilities offered to build up assets for starting self employment and this, in turn, will raise their personal and family income and savings, thereby paving the way for their all-round development.
In the current decade too, in order to empower women of the weaker sections, special schemes like Rashtriya Manila Kosh, Manila Samridhi Yojana and Indira Manila Yojana, focusing on credit, savings and empowerment of women respectively, have been implemented at the national level. The success of all these programmes rests on the effective implementation of TRYSEM and the employment generated in the right type of trades. In these circumstances TRYSEM could be regarded as the core programme for empowering women from the disadvantaged groups and hence its evaluation in the right perspective becomes necessary.

TRYSEM has been in operation for more than one and a half decades. Upon review of the relevant literature it was found that no in-depth study, focusing on the extent of utilisation of the scheme by the disadvantaged groups, has yet been made, even though such studies are essential to confirm whether the scheme reaches the target group or not, whether it fulfils the objective of optimum employment-generation or not and what needs to be done to make the scheme relevant and appropriate. So, with a view to fulfilling
this programme requirement, this in-depth evaluation of the programme was conducted with reference to the most disadvantaged group in society, namely the Scheduled Caste women.

In a tradition-bound society, with caste and class playing a predominant role in deciding its structure and functioning, the "Sudras", the lowest caste group known as the Scheduled Caste, constitute one of the most oppressed and deprived sections of the population. In pre-Independence India, they were treated as untouchables and they led a life of slavery and serfdom. It was in 1936 that, by an ordinance promulgated by the British Government, such depressed castes were listed on a schedule and so notified. All the caste groups on the list constituted the Scheduled Castes. They constituted 11.5 percent of India's population as per 1991 census. Several programmes were initiated from time to time, starting from the British period, to bring them forward to the same level as the rest of Indian society.

The Scheduled Caste women constitute a sizable proportion of the deprived categories of women. In the
report on "Status of Women in India" (1971), the Secretary of the Committee has pointed out that, "though most women in India are backward in general, there are Scheduled Caste women in our country who are backward among the backwards and, therefore, deserve special consideration, not only to raise their status in their own communities, but also to bring them at par with other women in all spheres of life" (Jauhari, 1990).

Recent women's development studies increasingly show that Scheduled Caste women are the poorest of the poor, often trapped in conditions that leave them worse off than their counterparts. They are more illiterate, discriminated, socially neglected and overburdened and form the poorest group of the society. A majority of the poor rural women are from the families of landless labourers, artisans and marginal farmers. Their common characteristics are poverty, lack of assets, a constant battle with insecurity, unemployment and underemployment, consequent indebtedness, and lower wages. It is against this backdrop that such women are given topmost priority in all development programmes (Gupta et al., 1989).
Unskilled women in rural areas have to rely entirely on wage employment both on the farm and outside. Wage rates are meagre by any standard and employment is not available all the time. The low level of employment, its intermittent nature, and lower wage rates along with long spells of off-season unemployment give rise to inadequate income and make life hard for these groups, particularly during the slack agricultural season (Reserve Bank of India, 1989).

Education and training of women to create new opportunities in traditional, non-traditional and highly productive areas of employment with a view to promoting self-reliance, assisting in income generation, and improving access to credit, has been one of the main strategies adopted for the advancement of women all over the world since the International Women's Year. It is one of the themes set by the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women for 1997-2000. Everyone having concern for women is committed to working towards this goal. TRYSEM being a scheme intended to serve this purpose, a close look at the implementation of the programme with focus on Scheduled Caste women is required to study the chasm between the
plan and the action-programme and to work out the modalities for building a "Commitment Bridge" between the two.

Further, the enrolment data maintained in the office of the District Rural Development Agency revealed that the drop-out rate among Scheduled Caste women trainees was three times that of non-Scheduled Caste women. One out of every eight Scheduled Caste women enrolled between 1 April 1990 and 31 March 1993 dropped out of the training programme, as against one out of every 25 among non-Scheduled Caste women. This alarmingly high rate of drop-out among Scheduled Caste women compelled the investigator to concentrate on a study of the situation among this particular section so as to suggest a programme of intervention appropriate to this target group.

The Government of India report (1992) shows an expenditure of Rs. 3260.93 lakhs in 1990-91 and Rs.4879.31 lakhs in 1991-92 on TRYSEM. During the study period of 1990-91 to 1992-93, in Dindigul District alone, a sum of Rs.12.8 lakhs was spent on TRYSEM (District Rural Development Agency, Dindigul Anna
District, 1995). This worked out approximately to Rs.2,550 per trainee. This is a sizable investment in human capital building. The optimum utilisation of this amount for the intended purpose needs to be ensured for making this huge investment purposeful. Until 'and unless all the loopholes are identified and steps taken to plug the same, this investment will become unfruitful. With this end in view the present study was initiated.

The study is an in-depth evaluation of TRYSEM, a skill-training programme for the uplift of the poor. By concentrating specifically on the Scheduled Caste women in the lowest rungs of social life, it will bring to light the extent of utilisation of the scheme by the poorest of the poor and its related significance to the family and the society. Also the study will throw light on the problems of the beneficiaries of the programme and the programme implementers and suggest ways and means for making the programme meaningful to the target group.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE