Mathur (1980) reported that poverty is multidimensional notion sense of deprivation and related to food shelter and clothing and so also to the dignity of man which needs to be changed in developmental process for maintaining the dignity of rural poor.

**Demographic Position of Agricultural Labourers in India**

The collection of statistical information regarding the position of agricultural labourers in particular and occupational distribution of population in general in India began after 1871-72. For the preceding period, hardly any reliable and accurate information is available in this respect. Nevertheless, it is possible to obtain a rough picture of the general pattern of occupational distribution of the agricultural population prior to 1871-72 from a study of the accounts dealing with the rural society in those days.

The agrarian society of pre-nineteenth century, India consisted of largely self sufficient and self-perpetuating village communities. In these communities, the cultivators and the artisans working in domestic industries had lived together for centuries on the basis of traditional arrangements, regulating the exchange of the cultivators' products and the artisans' services. Each cultivator carried on the cultivation of his farm with the assistance of his own family. In such a society, founded on the integrated unity of agriculture and handicrafts, there was no room for the existence of an independent and distinct class of agricultural labourers whose main source of livelihood was to work on the land of others for which they received compensation in kind or cash.

Sir George Campbell (1852) followed by Dutt (1947) had insisted that there were no considerable numbers of landless agricultural labourers during 1842 and as a rule, farming was not carried on by hired labour. The
absence of a large class of agricultural labourers is also revealed by other accounts dealing with different regions of India.

Growth of Agricultural Labourers

For understanding the living conditions of the agricultural labourers, it is necessary to understand their origin and the causes, which have contributed to their rapid multiplication.

i) Origin of the agricultural labourers

The traditional form of rural society began to disintegrate rapidly after the advent of British rule in India. During the British Government policy, the native traditional industries started declining and there were no modern industries to provide the work on employment bases to craftsmen and artisans living in villages. Because of no other means of alternatives, these persons were forced to serve as agricultural labourers for their life (except tea and jute work).

Therefore, the destruction of native industries and the primitive character of agriculture; the system of commerce and enterprise; considerable increase in the income of landholding and cultivating classes; the nationwide famine of 1896-97 and 1899-1900 created the class of labourers depending on the regular wages. Further, along with poverty of agriculturists, the great depression of 1929-33, when prices of agricultural products touched rock bottom levels, made many more small owners of land sell their property and swell the class of agricultural workers.

ii) Increase of agricultural labourers

Agricultural labourers constitute the largest segment of rural labour. The number of agricultural labourers is growing over the years. According
to 1951 Census, it was 27.50 million. The 1991 census has put them to staggering figure of 74.60 million. In fact the growth of agricultural labourers during the past decade (between 1981 and 1991) has been 3.5 per cent per annum.

Of the 74.60 million agricultural labourers in 1991, 46.16 million (61.88%) were males and 28.43 million (38.11%) were females (Table 1.1).

**Population wise distribution of total workers and agricultural labourers for the census years from 1901 to 1991†**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total Workers</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>236.28</td>
<td>110.71</td>
<td>17.26</td>
<td>51.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>252.12</td>
<td>121.30</td>
<td>24.06</td>
<td>58.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>251.35</td>
<td>117.75</td>
<td>19.65</td>
<td>61.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>279.02</td>
<td>120.67</td>
<td>22.11</td>
<td>57.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>356.86</td>
<td>139.42</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>69.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>439.24</td>
<td>188.68</td>
<td>31.52</td>
<td>79.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>548.16</td>
<td>180.48</td>
<td>47.49</td>
<td>78.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>665.16</td>
<td>244.61</td>
<td>64.41</td>
<td>102.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>838.60</td>
<td>514.13</td>
<td>74.60</td>
<td>110.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other important aspect of the agricultural labourers is their social composition. According to 1981 census, the percentage of Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes agricultural labourers among the total number of agricultural labourers were 32.88 per cent and 12.93 per cent respectively which together accounted for about 46 per cent of the total agricultural labourers in the country.

† Sources: Ministry of Home Affairs, Office of Registrar General of India, Government of India.
2) (a) Indian Labour Statistics, 1977 (b) Census of India, 1981
National Sample Survey also provides data on agricultural labour households. According to 1987-88 survey, there were 108 million estimated rural households in the country of which 37.5 million were agricultural labour households.

**Increasing Landlessness**

In 1983, about 44 per cent of agricultural labour households possess some land while the rest 56 per cent did not possess any. One alarming feature of rural economy is the growing marginalisation of operational holding. Over the years, it has been found that the number of marginal holding is increasing either because of fragmentation of holding which is due to devolution of family or alienation of land from small and semi medium farmers. This results in increasing number of agricultural labourers and decline in employed farmers. The distribution of holdings over major size classes shows that in 1985-86 the highest increase was noticed in the case of marginal holding followed by small holdings. Another important feature is that average size of holding is declining thus registering declining per capita landholding. While the population is increasing, the land - man ratio is decreasing thereby more and more farmers and farm women are finding them out of work. Per capita land availability has declined from 0.89 hectare in early 1950s to 0.37 hectare in mid 1990s and expected to reduce further below 0.19 hectare in 2020.

The Table 1.2 indicates that the majority of farmers are marginal (58.99%) in the country. As the farm size is increasing, the numbers of farmers are decreasing.
Number of land holding (in 000 nos) as per 1991 Census

Table 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Category of farmers</th>
<th>Number of Farmers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>62110</td>
<td>58.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>19970</td>
<td>18.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Semi Medium</td>
<td>13910</td>
<td>13.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>7630</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>1670</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poverty among Agricultural Labourers

In 1988 about 360 million people lived in poverty which accounted for 43 per cent of total population. About 80 per cent of these poor were living in rural areas and invariably all of them were agricultural labourers and marginal farmers. The poor live in households, which have few assets other than labour resources, and poverty arises fundamentally because these labour resources can not find adequate and sufficiently remunerative employment. Underemployment is the basic cause of poverty. This is obvious from the fact that households with members in regular wage employment are rarely poor. The poor generally belong to either casual labourer households or self-employed households in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, the majority belongs to casual labourer households while in urban areas, a majority belongs to self-employed households.

Though a large number of poverty alleviation programmes have been launched, the capacity of these programmes to eradicate poverty has not been very high. Consequently a large number of people are still living

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1 Source: Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), 1995
below poverty line. Table 1.3 shows that largest number of rural poor is constituted by agricultural labourers.

Number of all India rural poor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Households Type</th>
<th>Poor (million)</th>
<th>Percentage Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Self Employed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Agriculture</td>
<td>66.74</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Non-Agriculture</td>
<td>20.10</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Rural Labour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) Agriculture</td>
<td>82.43</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) Non Agriculture</td>
<td>18.07</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Other Households</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Rural Poor</td>
<td>195.97</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agriculture Sector and Rural Employment

About 65 per cent of the total labour, i.e., 31.5 million labour forces in the country are employed in the rural sector where agricultural activity is the mainstay for large number of rural households. Over the years the share of agricultural sector in the gross domestic product has declined from 59.6% in 1950-51 to 25% in 1993-94. However, the percentage of workers in this sector came down considerably in 1992-93. This clearly suggests that despite the growth of agriculture labourers, and decline in the share of agriculture in GDP, the growing rural/agriculture labourers are squeezing themselves in the sector to eke out a meager existence.

Problems of Agricultural Labourers

Problems faced by agricultural labourers are many and are complex and interconnected. Almost half of agricultural labourers belong to Scheduled castes Scheduled Tribes. The figure may go up to 2/3 if other
backward classes are also included. Traditionally, the social status of these sections in existing social milieu has remained at the lowest rung of the hierarchical social order.

Agricultural labourers being too numerous in some regions do not find employment in their locality. In search of their employment they migrate to places and regions where employment is available. The migrant agricultural labourers are more vulnerable, and suffer doubly on account of migration. On the one hand money lenders of their village exploit their situation giving them loan at exorbitant rate of interest for their travel to the place of migration and on the other hand they are brutally exploited by their employers where they lack support of their own people. In addition being unorganised they are politically exploited by vested interest; and consequently their bargaining capacity for determining their wages, taking decisions for their development and participating in the planning and implementing process of programmes and schemes is minimal and sometimes insignificant.

Agricultural labourers, being economically disadvantaged, do not get adequate medical facilities. Malnutrition adds to their misery, they remain susceptible to many diseases and disabilities. Their ignorance and illiteracy also add to their physical suffering. Ill health often forces them to remain without employment and this increases their chance of deprivation and dependence.

Governments' Initiatives for the Development of Rural Poor

It is indeed a paradox that those who work to feed the nation remain hungry and underfed. Since independence Government of India has taken several initiatives to alleviate the poor especially the landless labourers from their poverty and misery.
The government of India is implementing a number of programmes aimed at sustainable holistic development of rural poor. The thrust of these programmes is on all round economic and social transformation in rural areas, through a multi pronged strategy, aiming at most disadvantaged section of the society.

To tackle the problem of unemployment and scarcity of food grains in rural areas, Sampoorana Gramin Rojgar Yojna (SGRY) was launched in September, 2001 to provide gainful wage employment and food security to rural poor. Every worker seeking employment under SGRY is provided minimum 5 Kg of food grains (in kind) as part of the wages and balance in cash. SGRY is one of the schemes whose entire implementation is through three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Panchayati Raj Institutions constitute the core of decentralized developmental planning and its implementation. On 25th December, 2002, ‘Swajal Dhara’ a new initiative was launched to empower Panchayats to formulate, implement, operate and maintain drinking water projects. The Ministry of Rural development is mandated to provide safe drinking water in all rural habitation by 2004. To achieve this objective, programme like accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme is implemented to resolve drinking water crisis in rural areas.

Shelter is one of the basic human requirements for human survival. Under Indira Awas Yojna(IAY) of the government, so far 93 lakh houses have been constructed.

Concept of Sanitation connotes a comprehensive definition, which include liquid and solid waste disposal, food hygiene, personal, domestic and environmental hygiene. Central Government supplements efforts of the States in undertaking rural sanitation under Central Rural Sanitation
Programme which was launched in 1986. CRSP aims at improving the quality of the life of rural poor and to provide privacy and dignity to women in rural areas. Under this programme 1,46,114 individual household toilets have been constructed upto 2002. In 1999, Total sanitation Campaign (TSC) was launched to improve the quality of life, and to promote sanitation in rural areas. TSC follows participatory demand responsive approach, educating the rural household about benefits of proper sanitation and hygiene. TSC is being implemented in 185 districts.

Communication planning is an integral part of planning for sustainable development. Realising the importance of communication in mobilizing people towards participatory development, concerted efforts are being made by the Ministry of Rural Development to disseminate information and message on Rural development Programmes through most of the available modes of communication.

The Tenth Plan (2002-07) has also highlighted the need for poverty alleviation through rural development programmes. There is need to ensure effective implementation of Minimum Wages Act, upgrading of skills, creation of awareness and introduction of social security measures. In the absence of a consensus among states on bill for the welfare of the agricultural workers, the state specific approaches will have to be worked out. Some state governments have introduced group insurance schemes to protect the workers against accidents and provide insurance in case of death.

Despite these programmes for the rural poor especially the landless labourers there seems to be little that has changed for them. Several studies
have highlighted their conditions which is far from one that the nation focused to achieve.

**Studies Already Conducted in the Field**

Amongst the studies conducted on the problems of agricultural labourers the notable are the First Agricultural Labour Enquiry (1951-52), the Second Agriculture Labour Enquiry (1956-57) and the Rural Labour Enquiries of 1936-65 and 1974-75 conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India. The main objective of the Agricultural/Rural Labourer Enquiries was to collect information on the rural labour and to study the changes in socio-economic conditions brought about by economic development programmes with a view to formulation of action programmes for improving their living conditions. The data collected during these four enquiries related to the structure of households, employment and unemployment, average daily earnings, household incomes, expenditure and indebtedness.

With a view to reduce the gap between the Rural Labourers Enquiries and to rationalize the field programme of NSSO, which is responsible for the conduct of the field surveys, the Rural Labour Enquiries were integrated with the NSS General Employment and Unemployment and Consumption Expenditure Surveys with effect from the 32nd round of these enquiries (1977-78). The next five-yearly enquiries were carried out during the 38th round in 1983.

It has to be noted that the comparability of data collected during these surveys has been affected to some extent on account of changes in the concepts and definitions adopted and the estimation procedure followed for the different enquiries. In the First Agricultural Labour Enquiry, the Agricultural Labour Household was defined on the basis of employment
criterion while from the Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry the basis were changed to income. While only households engaged in crop production were covered for the first enquiry, all households engaged in activities like dairy farming, horticulture, raising of live-stock, etc., were also included in the Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry. The concepts and definitions adopted for the First and Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry were identical. However, during the Second Rural Labour Enquiry some additional information regarding educational standards, trade unionism and awareness of minimum wages act, 1948, was also collected. Some economists have also conducted various studies relating to the various aspects of agricultural labour. These studies have been from economic point of view only and lacked in the various aspects. First of all, these enquiries have mainly concentrated on economic issues like employment and unemployment, wages, income, consumption, expenditure and indebtedness to the virtual exclusion of the labourers social conditions such as caste, status, education, extent of membership in labourers organization, land alienation, working conditions, political affiliation and value orientation which are closely connected to the economic issues and are equally important for a proper perspective on their life. Secondly, these studies do not throw any light upon questions such as extent, cause and consequences of emergence of agrarian organization among the landless agricultural labourers, and the impact of various development schemes implemented under five year plans on the conditions of landless agricultural labourers. Thirdly, little has been suggested by these studies about the factors that determine the level of employment, wages and living conditions of landless agricultural labourers. Fourthly, the process of gradual conversion of cultivating families into agricultural labourers, which has been very well known feature of the Indian rural economy, has not been taken up by any of these
enquiries. Fifthly, the studies mentioned above do not throw any light on the legal aspects, particularly regarding social security and labour welfare of the landless agriculture labourers.

Therefore, the present study, "Socio-personal Conditions of Agricultural Labourers in Haryana State" is proposed to undertake the personal & demographic characters of agricultural labourers, their working and living conditions including their nutritional status, their perceived problems with which they suffer. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the personal characteristics and demographic profile of agricultural labourers in Haryana.
2. To work out the employment status and working conditions of the agricultural labourers.
3. To assess the knowledge and opinion of agricultural labourers about Labour Laws and Welfare Schemes of the Government for agricultural labourers.
4. To analyse the nutritional status of agricultural labourers household.
5. To study problems and constraints faced by agricultural labourers.

Statement of the Problem

We are in second phase of Green Revolution. The technological developments have brought a revolutionary change in agricultural sector. The agricultural productivity has shown a progressive trend. We are self sufficient, particularly in respect to agricultural products. We could achieve this development due to basic change in production technology. However we can not deny the contributions of agricultural labourers. The
scientific agricultural implements, hybrid seeds, pesticides, improved 
water management and other modern developments would have shown 
the tubeworm response, failing the efforts of agricultural labourers. And 
so, it would not be appropriate that while identifying the credibility, we 
ignore this vital force. Our past experiences have shown that agricultural 
labourers have not received their due, resulting in their low standard of 
living.

As discussed earlier in Table 1.1, data shows the constant rising 
trend in number of agricultural labourers. The problems of low wages, 
indebtedness, unemployment and deteriorating standard of living are on 
rise.

To appreciate and alleviate the problems of agricultural labourers, 
there is need to understand the personal, social, psychological factors that 
have resulted in failure of their development. There is need to enrich the 
quality of their life. This would not only result in raising their income or 
accelerating agricultural productivity, but this would also help them in 
sharing the benefits of modern agriculture.

Hypothesis
The following hypothesis were put to test:
1. The nutritional status of family has no relationship with their 
educational status.
2. There is no relationship in between knowledge of welfare programmes 
and schemes and educational status of agricultural labourers.
3. Employment status and working conditions have no relationship.
4. Employment status and communication behaviour have no relationship.
5. Family income and nutritional status have no relationship.
Importance of the Study

The respondents of the study will be the agricultural labourers of the sample areas. The study will cover the personal characteristics and demographic profile of the agricultural labourers. The personal characteristics will include socio-economic, psychological, political, and communication pattern. Their knowledge and opinion about various labour welfare programmes and Labour Laws, the employment status and working conditions including the problems that agricultural labourers are facing in day to day life, their nutritional status and such other aspects will also be covered, which in turn will help to describe the study. It is expected that this study will yield many micro level conclusions for practical use of planners, social workers and social welfare personnel for the consideration of future labour welfare and implementation of rural action programmes in the agricultural field.

Limitations of the Study

The study suffers from all the limitations of student's research project. Time and money being main constraints, the study was confined to only a few villages of the State. However, a proper care and considerate thought have been exercised in making the study as empirical and systematic as possible.