In an agricultural predominant and developing country like India, labour plays a vital role in keeping economic developing, alike and reconstructing the economic foundation of the country.

It is stated that about 70 per cent of our population is engaged in agriculture and agricultural labourers constitute nearly 31 per cent of the total rural work force, who mainly depend on wages for their livelihood. But the employment and earnings of this section of population is very miserable and they lead their life below the poverty line. According to All India Rural Household Survey conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (1963), agricultural labour households were at the lowest running of the income ladder in rural areas. The survey revealed that about 60 per cent of the agricultural labour households were having no land and depended entirely on wage payment for their livelihood.

But it is pity to note that we have not been able to solve the problems of surplus labour in the country, which bids fair to aggravate sharply every year, giving a rigid occupational structure as the rural areas have a rapidly growing labour force in increasingly being thrown back on a more or less fixed area of cultivated land resulting in to a precarious living in the absence of employment opportunities being thrown up in the non-agricultural sector of the economy. There are some theorists who believe that even it all the
surplus labour be drained of from land in to other occupations, 
agricultural productivity would not be adversely affected. What should, 
otherwise be a great asset to the country has become a net liability 
in the present set up and this anomalous situation needs rectification 
as early as possible.

Agriculture in our country is a gamble against monsoon. The 
rainfall and its distribution varies from year to year and so varies 
the employment demand and income of the agricultural laboursers. The potentiality of employment for those workers also vary with the degree of agricultural development including use of H.Y.V. crops, land use and means of irrigation, use of implements and machinery, nature of crops grown, intensity of cropping and overall the rate of adoption of modern agricultural technology on the other hand supply of labour is mainly determined by the growth of population, working force real wages etc.

The available statistics indicate that the number of 
agricultural labour has increased tremendously during the last 100 
years. The Census Report for 1881 put the total number of land less 
aricultural workers at 7.50 million this number increased to 18.7 
minute in 1891, to 21.6 million in 1981, 47.5 million in 1991. The main causes operating to bring about the growth of this class have been a higher growth rate of population, indebtedness due to low income leading to transfer of land from the small owners to the creditors, resulting into becoming agricultural labourers; subdivision and fragmentation of holdings leading to emergence of people without land; displacement of means of subsidiary occupation and decline of domestic
industries and handicrafts etc. In this occupation Dr. Mukerjee observed that "Every circumstances which has weaken the position of the small holder has increased the number of agricultural labourers.

The position of unemployment has aggravated since the mid seventies only when the growth process has tended to be even grossly distorted than earlier. A dispropotionately faster growth of the tertiary sector, stagnation in secondary (industry) sector and relative decline of primary sector in the generation of national income has restricted rather than widened opportunities for grainfull employment in the economy in general and the rural community in particular.

As Economic Advisory Council noted that the agriculture which still generates work for about 60 percent of the labour force has however shown a slow down in employment growth on account of stagnation.

A first labour enquiry Committee Report had defined agriculture labour on the basis of number of days of employment in agriculture, while the second Labour Enquiry Committee Report had defined agricultural labour. Both the Committees having emphasized the picarious conditions of agriculture labour and have suggested several remedial measure to ameliorate their living conditions. Since then several rural development programmes have been uner taken by the Govt. of India to raise the level of income and employment of farming community in general and that of rural poor consisting of agricultural labourers in particular.

In the recent past the problems of agricultural labourers have attracted the attention of Policy Makers to ameliorate their
condition on priority basis. With the establishment of S.F.D.A., M.F.A.L. and R.D.A. in all part of country, their problems have been viewed in a different perspective and corrective steps are being introduced for ameliorating their economic conditions. In the new economic programme enunciated by Prime Minister in the 20 Point Economic Programme, the need for improving the economic conditions of the agricultural labours has also been emphasized.

The share of secondary sector in G.N.P. had been at 18.50 per cent in 1994-95 as for back in 1966-67 and has since been fluctuating between 2-3 per cent below that secondary sector, provides employment hardly 10 or 11 per-cent of the work force in the country. The tertiary sector however, already accounts for about 18 per cent of the labour force. In came generation in tertiary sector has swelled dramatically, more especially during the eighties and the share is now 45 per cent of the G.N.P. As Krishnamurthi (1984) and Vadyanathan (1986) have show that the share of non agricultural work force in total rural work force has increased in the late 1970s and is early 1980s. IN an other study Basant and Kumar (1988) provided a detailed break up of non agriculture sector and concluded that tertiary sector seems to have grown faster than the secondary sector for male more cover, it is admitted in the Seventh Five Year Plan documents that proportion of Casual in agriculture has tended to increase, this means that the number of those who are under employed has been increasing. At the same time self employment in agriculture sector has come down that is those employed in farming on their own land had declined. This attributed to changing pattern of land holding and pressure of population on agriculture land resulting in to a decline in land man ratio.
With the introduction of modern farm technology in agriculture, in agriculture there has been a change in the production pattern, cropping pattern and method of crop production. This changing pattern of agriculture in recent years has changed the employment pattern in agriculture to a large extent. While the introduction of short duration H.Y.V. of crops has increased the intensity of cropping resulting into higher employment of labour, the mechanization has adversely affected agricultural employment. It is in this context that the present enquiry entitled "An economic study of employment income and standard of living of agricultural labourers was undertaken in one of the agriculturally developed district Kanpur Nagar in Central U.P."

The present study will bring out a comprehensive picture of different categories of agricultural laboursers in respect of their employment and income pattern and systems of wage payment in different agricultural operations and in various enterprises. The study will also lead to analyse the problems of agricultural labourers and examine the prospects for increasing their employment and income in the study area. Thus, this will help to analyse the situations of the major sectors of our economy in order to formulate basic policy for reducing exploitation and providing due share of their labour in agricultural production, which in turn will raise their standard of living.

The finding of the study would go a long way in helping the Policy Makers, Economists and Extension Workers to formulate plan for ameliorating the economic conditions of the agricultural labourers.
Objectives:

The main objectives of the study were:

1. To study the family structure of the sample agricultural labour households.

2. To examine the pattern and level of employment of the sample household with and without land agricultural labourers.

3. To find out the wage and income structure of the sample agricultural labourers of both the categories.

4. To study the level and pattern of income distribution and to estimate the standard of living of the sample households.

5. To find out the problems of agricultural labourers and suggest suitable measures to increase their level of employment, income and standard of living.