CHAPTER – ONE

INTRODUCTION AND PLAN OF THE STUDY

Our first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in his speech at the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, on 14 August 1947 reminded the country that the task ahead included 'the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity' ¹

1.1. Problem of Poverty in India

Like any developing country poverty and unemployment are two paramount problems in India. Through her journey of planned economic development during the last 60 years India had achieved some successes e.g. industrialisation, green revolution etc., yet the ugly faces of poverty and unemployment are still noticed in the vast rural areas of the country. Indeed there is no dearth of discussions, no lack of programmes and no marked scarcity of money for removal of poverty; it is unfortunate that at least 27 percent of our people do not get adequate food to maintain their lives even after ten five year plans. These people are below the poverty line and are most vulnerable section of the society. But the conditions are no better for the people who are just above the poverty line. These 'hand to mouth' people (so called Above the Poverty Line People) remain out of the purview of Government's major poverty alleviation programmes or welfare schemes. But it should not be forgotten that these people might not get two square meals a day after rendering back-breaking labour. They remain half-starved and undernourished. They have no other source of income except their labour and toil. They are assetless, futureless and helpless. So the problems of the people living just above the poverty line should not get less importance in our policy-making process. Appropriate policies should be taken so that they may not fall back to poverty trap.

Under this context poverty should be judged in a wider perspective, not merely by any expenditure or income level. In his key-note address at the workshop on 'Poverty Measurement –Monitoring and Evaluation' held in New Delhi on January 11-12, 2002, K.C Pant, then Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission mentioned that policy makers should utilise a broader concept of poverty that encompasses human development as well as other aspects of deprivation. There are numerous studies and enormous discussions on the problem of poverty in India. Inequality of income, wealth and asset, inequality of land,

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru's speech at the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, on 14 August 1947; mentioned in Dreze and Sen (1995), India - Economic Development and Social Opportunity, page - 1.
inequality of skill, working capacity and labour power, inequality of social and economic opportunities are some of the causes of such severe poverty that we know from the earlier studies.²

The Second Five Year Plan pertinently mentioned - 'the benefit of economic development must accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society and there should be a progressive reduction of concentration of incomes, wealth and economic power'.

Government had taken various policies and programmes to reduce these inequalities from time to time. In fact poverty eradication was one of the primary objectives of our planned economic development. While stating the aims and objectives of the economic programme for independent India, the economic programme Committee appointed by Congress Party said, "a quick and progressive rise in the standard of living of the people should be the primary consideration ---"³

The national consensus on poverty alleviation provided the necessary background for launching various schemes and programmes aimed at achieving this objective. But the persistence of poverty during last 60 years suggests that the national consensus on the objective did not and could not provide sufficient impetus for poverty alleviation.

1.2. Various Programmes for Poverty Alleviation

Soon after independence Government of India launched the Community Development Programme. The aim of this programme was to build infrastructure at the local level (Community Development Blocks) and investment in human resource development through the provision of education and health services. During the pilot phase of the programme some remarkable results were obtained in a number of Community Development Blocks. But the positive effects of this programme subsided when it was expanded to cover the whole country. The basic causes of the failure of this programme as diagnosed were weaker socio-economic system, weak administrative structure and class dominated social system. Another


³ All India Congress Committee (1948); Report of the Economic Programme Committee New Delhi (mimeo).
vital deficiency was that the programme was not supported by appropriate technological and institutional reforms (S.K. Dey, 1969)

At the beginning of 1950s a frontal attack on poverty was attempted to be launched by redistribution of land, abolition of functionless intermediaries and tenancy reforms, all culminating to principle of ‘land to tiller’ expanded to cover the whole country. Unfortunately, the launching of redistributive measures coincided with a growing deficit in food grains. So the government decided to assign a high priority to ‘grow more food’ campaign and more or less abandoned far-reaching structural changes. The net result was that redistributive land reforms could make a dent only on very large holdings and that too in a few states. It could directly benefit very few marginal farmers or landless labourers. Similarly tenancy reforms benefited mainly the middle sized tenants. The position of the small tenants deteriorated in many areas where the land was resumed by the landowners on the plea of ‘self-cultivation’, thus reducing small tenants to the status of ‘tenant-at-will’

By the late 1960s the second phase of ‘Poverty Alleviation Programme’ (PAP) started with measures that promised to address directly and exclusively the poor in the rural areas. This target group oriented approach started with the programme for backward areas, graduated to programme for the development of small and marginal farmers, landless labourers etc. and finally culminated in some major programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme and National Rural Employment Programme of 80s and Jawahar Rojgar Yojana of 90s and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme of the present time. Other remarkable programmes include TRYSEM (1980), Prime Minister Rural Infrastructure Programme (2000) Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana (2001) etc. The distinguishing features of these programmes were the emphasis on creating employment opportunities and distributing renewable assets among the poor. This was in sharp contrast to the intentions in the earlier phase i.e. redistributing existing, nonrenewable assets. Similarly, heavy emphasis was placed during this phase of poverty alleviation programmes on transfer of income to the poor in indirect ways, e.g. through food subsidies and ‘dual pricing’ of essential commodities. Some important Programmes are Antyodaya Yojana (2001), Annapoorna Yojana (2002) etc.

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4 Thus they are bound to live at the mercy of these owners
It is generally agreed that improving the access of the poor to assets and increasing the productivity of assets owned by them constitute a viable strategy for poverty alleviation. These assets may include livestock, raw material for arts and crafts for artisans, small implements or even a better means of transport (a bullock cart or a bicycle). Access to these assets could provide additional income to the poor. Within such conceptual framework IRDP has been conceived essentially as an anti-poverty programme. The NREP (National Rural Employment Programme) was to provide wage employment to fill in the periods of seasonal and sporadic underemployment. Indirect objective was to enlarge the absorptive capacity of labour in rural areas in non-agricultural occupations by creating infrastructure and thus increasing productive capacity of the economy.

The case studies reveal that IRDP has been successful in very special circumstances where the asset and employment base of the poor is less insecure. IRDP has shown good results mostly in developed and prosperous areas. But its performance in backward and remote areas has been poor. IRDP has benefited those of the poor who are nearer to the poverty line. For the very poor the scenario is mixed. In Gujarat, for example, those at the bottom have either not been reached by the programme or have not been able to use the assets made available to them productively (Hirway, 1984). However in Andhra a good number of the very poor could retain the assets given to them under the programme and also show an appreciable increase in income, though not to the extent that would enable them to cross the poverty line (Parthasarathy). In Rajasthan, too, because of IRDP small and marginal farmers have done better than landless labourers (Sagar). The same is true in Karnataka where the programme has benefited the poor who have land, but not so much the landless poor (Vyasulu).5

The strategy of IRDP has been questioned on the ground that it is isolated from the main growth process in terms of resource allocation, technology as well as sectoral development strategy. It is not planned along with other programmes of an area, it is a household based programme, and the schemes are not integrated with the development need or resource base of the area.

The design of the schemes is also an important drawback as they generally reflect inadequate financial assistance for inadequately planned activities (Kanan). Besides, IRDP

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5 Quoted from the studies of nine states undertaken by the mentioned scholars and others in VS Vyas and Pradeep Bhargava (1995) EPW, Vol.41 and 42.
expected too much in terms of entrepreneurial capacity of poor households (Hirway, 1984). The management of IRDP has come under severe criticism - poor co-ordination among the multiple agencies involved, weakness in the areas of finance and credit, marketing, raw-material supply, training, technical assistance and follow up. Other limitations are - too much bureaucratisation and centralisation in planning and implementation of the programme by the officials, who have limited faith in implementing the programmes, inefficiency and corruption at all levels and lack of participation by the people (Hirway, 1984).

It is to be admitted that sporadic successes have been achieved from these policies regarding reduction of inequalities and economic upliftment of the poor people. At the time of independence, Indian economy was caught up in a vicious circle of poverty characterised by one of the lowest per-capita consumption and income level among the countries of the world. But in a recent report of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India ranks 115 in a list of 162 as far as human development is concerned. There have been a substantial declines in age specific mortality rates and the expectations of life at birth in India today (just about 60 years) is certainly higher than at the time of independence in 1947 (around 30 years) (Drèze and Sen, 1995).

Despite some achievements, it is also to be admitted that poverty alleviating policies have given results not up to their expectations. The money allocated for the welfare of the poor people has not reached to the appropriate hands. Lion’s share has remained either misused or underutilised. The subsidy element of the major policies has added much scope for corruption. Government machineries have been rarely able to control vested interests, malpractices and corruption at the grass-root level. Sometimes government has taken the help of NGOs for utilisation of money.

But all these facts open a basic reality that any external help to improve the economic conditions of the poor people involves political, administrative and financial problems. These problems can hardly be checked by giving maximum effort. Again any form of external help can only be temporary solution to the poverty stricken people. In most cases such type of help which ultimately takes the form of charity can not solve the problem of economic backwardness permanently. Further these type of help involve a huge amount of money. This huge amount of money may not be available in future without high opportunity cost. Particularly in this era of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation, rules may not allow huge subsidies in direct poverty alleviating programmes.
1.3. *Alternative Approach*

There is a difference of opinions about what the policy-makers suggest for the upliftment of the poor people and what the poor people think about their own welfare. How much importance should be given to the opinions of the poor people? At the individual level and at the household level, these opinions are important. From the long tradition of social and economic life, a poor person knows better the avenues of his development by using local resources and his own skill. In a highly irrigated area a landless labourer may not seek agricultural land for his development because of his lack of infrastructure for profitable farming. In a forest area a poor person may seek free access to the forest resources. In other conditions a poor person may seek adequate capital and marketing facilities for his handicraft product. In urban or semi-urban areas a poor person may seek even road-side settlements for his small shop. Any policy designed in any apex body must incorporate these individual judgments of subsistence and development.

When we get Planning Commission’s estimate that at all India level, percentage of all people below poverty line has declined from 38.9 percent in 1987-88 to 36 percent in 1993-94, we simply understand that another 2.9 percent of the poverty stricken people who were without adequate food, get food alongwith other basic necessities. The question is – can such information give a deeper insight into the problems that the poor people face? In West Bengal 20 years ago, poor people did not get adequate food, proper shelter and drinking water facilities. At present rural poor people are getting these benefits. This may be observed by anyone even when one takes a superficial view of general economic condition of rural people.

But this overall superficial picture is insufficient to know the real economic condition of a poor household. A poor household may get food, shelter, drinking water etc. Here the pertinent question is – what are the costs for obtaining these basic necessities of life? If all the members of a family – from a child to an old man have to work for their daily bread, this does not obviously mean that economic condition of this family is good. Thus child-labour, old-age labour are the costs for subsistence living of a family. If a labourer becomes exhausted by performing hard physical labour and gets a disproportionately low wage, it indicates that cost of living is unreasonably high. Insecurity of income and employment, risk of joblessness, future debility are also some types of cost which are involved in poor man’s life. Submission to any kind of injustice and a sense of apprehension are also another type of
costs that are involved in attaining minimum standard of living. Apart from food, shelter and drinking water such factors reveal something about the real economic conditions of the poor labouring class of the society. All these factors denote very poor conditions even for those people who are just above the poverty line. So reduction of the head-count ratio is not just enough for confirming the upliftment of the poor people in rural areas.

In view of this we have to look into the total picture of the economic life of the poor households. How do they earn and how do they spend? Where do they earn and where do they spend? Is there any change in the mode of earning and is there any change in the mode of spending? In particular is there any change in the source of income, e.g. from hunting to agriculture, from agriculture to industrial sector and again from industrial sector to service sector? If the changes occur, how do the poor households adjust to the new areas of work, new types of work and to the new conditions of work?

From the received literature we shall try to get an idea of diversification of occupation of the rural wage-earners in recent past. Is it happening at all - at the level of the country - at the level of the state? If it does happen what are the emerging occupations and what are the impacts on general economic conditions of the poor people?

1.4. The Present Study

The conceptual framework of the present study is in line of the above aspects of poverty. We have considered that problem of poverty is closely related with problem of unemployment. The poor people seek more employment opportunities to avoid hunger, disease and ignorance. Towards these ends they are seen to work in various fields without depending on any external help. The present study by selecting a block of a backward district in West Bengal, describes in an analytical manner the course of actions of the wage earners in the labour market in the context of the conditions they have and the conditions they are likely to get.

Thus the broad objective of the present study is to encompass the economic struggle of those people who are either striving to cross the poverty line or to reach a minimum level of living and economic prosperity. Previously agriculture was the only readily available occupation for most of wage earners in rural areas and rural casual workers were primarily employed in agriculture and related activities. Overtime the size of the agricultural activities especially area under cultivation could not keep pace with the growth of population.
Consequently the level of income for a large number of agricultural workers fell below the level of poverty. Such workers were in frantic search for alternative more remunerative employment opportunities. Alongside this, non-agricultural activities too expanded in response to development activities started by government and other agencies. Now they get employment opportunities in a long array of activities which are not directly related with agriculture. Some of these activities are construction works, crushing of stones, brick making, sand-lifting, small transportation, servicing and repairing of different machineries etc. Apparently the economic conditions and working conditions of these different groups of labourers seem to be almost the same.

Agriculture, from the occupational point of view to the rural casual workers is the first as well as the last resort still today. Majority of the households still depends on the agricultural occupation. In the following chapters it has been shown that two activities, mining-quarrying and construction are two prominent activities in Kotalpur Block - our study area. In Kotalpur Block the activity of mining and quarrying has highest number of enterprises (given in table 3.3 of chapter 3). So a sizeable portion of rural workers have the opportunity to take such activity as an alternative to agriculture. From the same table we observe that the relative position of our study area (Kotalpur block) in respect of number of construction enterprises is not less important as compared to Onda block which has the highest number of villages and highest number of construction enterprises in the district of Bankura. As a source of employment construction activity is undoubtedly important in Kotalpur Block.

So we have selected construction activity, particularly building-construction and mining-quarrying, particularly of sand-lifting variety which have emerged in our study area as the most widely accepted alternative occupations to agriculture. These activities are the immediate alternative to agricultural activities and are treated as the initial tier of the non-agricultural sector to the casual wage earners in our study area. In the present study, these two activities have been selected in a purposefully selected area. The construction activity is rurally located and also rural linked but sand-lifting activity is rurally located but often urban linked.

These constitute a segment of activity where a part of rural casual labourers is engaged. Only the poor people from the lower strata of society are engaged here for their livelihood. It is also the first tier of the development ladder where unskilled casual workers
are employed as an alternative to agricultural activities. Selecting these two activities as subject of study an effort has been made to focus on some uncovered aspects through a micro level analysis at the household level.

1.5. **Problem of Research**

Given a recent trend in our study area that unskilled casual workers are going to work in non-agricultural activities rather than working in agriculture, our basic objective is to examine the justification such behaviour of the workers. We shall try to know whether the behaviour is rational on the part of the workers. Unskilled casual worker while taking the decision to work in any sector is surely motivated by some factors. Our aim is to find out the factors that motivate them to work either in agriculture or in non-agricultural activities. What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of different occupations from workers' point of view? Do such diversifications of occupation in rural areas help poverty removal? How does it help the poor households to overcome poverty if at all? Whether such transfer of labour has any permanent impact on the livelihood strategy of the poor people?

In other words our basic hypothesis would be that diversification of workers from agriculture to non-agriculture can raise the economic condition of the poor households above the poverty line. However an alternative hypothesis may be examined that such improvement may not sustain and even the actual condition may deteriorate in the long run.

1.6. **Research Design**

To find the causes we have tried to study two aspects:

1. System of work and working conditions in selected non-agricultural activities and advantages and disadvantages of workers in comparison with agricultural activities.

2. A comparative study on the existing economic conditions of households depending on agricultural activity and on non-agricultural activities. Benefits of participating in the non-agricultural activities have been analyzed also. Benefits like wage differential, employment differential, stability of income, consumption pattern, job guarantee, social security, have been emphasized.

To know the effects or impacts of such occupational diversification on the general economic conditions of all the casual labourers a general analysis of income and consumption and living standard has been documented and the relative positions of different category of
households have been sorted out. Three broad indicators to see the effects of occupational variations on the economic conditions of the wage-earning households are emphasized.

(A) How the variations of occupations affect potential of income to overcome poverty?
(B) Impact of income variations on consumption expenditures.
(C) Impact of income variations on quality of consumption.

Are there any marked differences among the households primarily employed in different occupations? Which one of the factors, asset or occupation is important in the difference in economic conditions?

To this end our first task is to see the income distribution of the households. We have considered both functional distribution and personal distribution of income. Functional distribution states the returns to different activities based on different sources, such as labour, assets etc. In personal distribution our interest is to see how many families earn a particular level of income. The following figure gives a hypothetical illustration of the above process for five households only.

![Diagram of income distribution]

The first set of arrows describes how income is generated in various forms. First of all, it is earned in the form of wages through working mostly as casual workers in various fields. Second, it may be earned from cultivating tiny plots of lands owned by the households. Third, it is earned through holding of some livestock like cow, goat or hen/duck etc. Fourth,
it may also be earned in non-monetized form through collections of fuel woods. The distribution of income under these various categories is the functional distribution of income.

The second set of arrows tells us how incomes from different sources are transferred to households. Households with only labour power receive only wage income. In the above scheme all the five households have such incomes. Households who have land receive some income from its production. Households first, third and fifth have such income. Only second and fourth household have income from livestocks. Only three households, first, fourth and fifth have non-monetised income. By combining the functional distribution with the distribution of factor ownership, we arrive at the personal distribution of income - a description of income flows to households. Following the above scheme we have calculated the daily income of each family in our study.

Admittedly this is principally a descriptive study. It is concerned with describing the relation of workers to the jobs in which they are engaged in. It is expected to explore the ways in which rural poor are maintaining their livelihood keeping pace with the development of other sections of people.

We have selected an area which is agriculturally developed. The purpose is to see why in an agriculturally developed area workers' occupational choice goes against agricultural activities and in favour of some non-agricultural activities. Why do they not prefer to work in agriculture? To what extent it is influenced by their individual choices and to what extent it depends on other factors - economic and non-economic. We have selected Kotalpur Block of Bankura district in West Bengal as our study area purposively. This is one of the few developed blocks in Bankura district.

Undoubtedly our study area is small. We have not taken the district or state as a whole. Our consideration is that the narrower the field of investigation the more intensive becomes the study and investigation and more detailed may be the results.
1.7. **Data Base of our Study**

In this study basically primary data collected from field survey have been used. The researcher has collected it by individual effort. Along with questionnaire method several other methods like observation, interviewing, cross checking etc. are adopted for collection of information and accuracy of data. Secondary data have been used for describing the overall economic conditions of the study area and the structure of non-agricultural occupation of the study area in relation to the district and state. The sources of secondary data are State Economic Review, W.B., Census Report -2001, The Report of the Economic Census-1998, District Statistical Hand Book – Bankura – 2002, Agricultural Development Office - Kotalpur Block, Block Development Office –Kotalpur

1.8. **Selection of Sample Size and Method of Data Collection**

As stated in section 1.4 two occupations alternative to agriculture are selected in this study to see the impact on the economic conditions in terms of poverty eradication. To make an effective analysis and get useful results we have considered three categories of households dependent primarily on wage earning in agriculture, sand-lifting and construction. These households may or may not have some tiny plots of land but primarily they work as casual labourer and earn daily wages. At present it is generally observed that workers dependent on agriculture are engaged in some non-agricultural activities as subsidiary occupation, while principal status non-agricultural workers are engaged in agricultural work on the subsidiary basis. Thus different occupational structures within the households are found in our study area. These are:

i) Some households where there is one worker (who is the only bread earner of the household) with a particular occupation as his only occupation without any subsidiary occupation.

ii) Some households where there are more than one worker and they may be engaged in one occupation (either in agriculture or in non-agriculture) as their principle occupation or they may be diversified in different occupations in agriculture or non-agriculture as their principal occupation with or without taking any subsidiary occupation.

Under the above conditions the assignment of a household to an occupational category is done by reference to the activity in which the workers of the household has spent maximum days during the reference period. As for example agricultural household is one, workers of which are engaged in that occupation for most of the days of the year in
comparisons to other occupations available to them. Likewise we have identified a household as construction household, workers of which are engaged in construction activities for most of the days in a year and have maximum employment days in construction in comparison to other activities.

It is to be noted that such households are spread over different villages in the study area. For a uniform representation of the block in our database we have divided the block in four zones – North, South, East and West. The centre is Kotalpur which is the block-headquarter and a prosperous locality. So we have taken it as a separate Zone. Number of sample households as found in each zone is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Zone</th>
<th>Number of Sample Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kotalpur</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the number of villages in the east of Kotalpur is small so we have taken less number of households from the east Zone. In two sides of Kotalpur west and south there are large number of villages. To give importance we have taken relatively large and equal number sample households from the west and south zones. But the maximum villages lie in the north side of the Kotalpur. So we have taken maximum number of households from the north side. The rest of the sample households are taken from Kotalpur zone itself.

We have taken fifty households in each occupational category as our sample size. Though the number of households dependent on agriculture is larger than that in other two alternative occupations in the study area we have selected 50 households belonging to each of these occupations to compare appropriately workers' income potential of each of these occupations and to get an idea of actual poverty removal capacity of three occupations. Data were collected by individual effort from the households on the basis of detailed household and individual questionnaires. We have used the method of random sampling for collection of data. The usual procedure of such sampling is to make a list of all such households with a mention of each household occupation as defined by us, then to get three strata consisting agricultural, sand-lifting and construction households and then to draw sample with the help of random numbers. Instead of listing households, following Prof. A. Rudra⁶ we have used

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the principle of randomizing the population and then drawing an arbitrary sample. Prof A.Rudra states that -

"Randomizing the population does not involve listing of population. It can be achieved by adopting a selection procedure such that the sample consists of the first few members of the population which has been arranged in random permutation".

Following this principle we have randomly selected 50 households into any occupational category considering the maximum employment days of households in that occupation. Following the same principle 50 households are randomly selected in each of sand-lifting and construction occupations. Thus 50 households were surveyed in each category of occupation. We have visited the households twice in the period of our collection of data and used six months recall period to know the field of employment of any worker of any households. The data were collected during June-July, 2002 to June-July, 2003.

So our total sample size is 150 households which consist of 50 sample households each in agriculture, sand-lifting and construction. Data are collected on major aspects as give below:

(1) Organisations in alternative occupations - Some observation are made on the relative advantages and disadvantages of different occupations. These are made on the basis of discussion with labour contractors and related people with sand-lifting and construction.

(2) Family Structure – Family members, earning members, Sex and age of family members

(3) Employment and wage structure – Days of employment of different working members in different occupations, daily wage incomes earned by different members

(4) Asset holding – Holding of different assets, however small, like land, cow goat, duck or hen of each households.

(5) Expenditure pattern –Expenditure on major items like food, clothing, medicines, education and entertainment etc.

(6) Living conditions – Type of house along with possession of some basic consumer durables like bicycle, torch, transistor etc. Along with this information regarding the positions of households in terms of enjoying some social consumption goods like drinking water, social security etc are collected.

There may arise some respondent’s bias in the process of collecting data in the form of memory lapse and falsification. To solve the problem of memory lapse particularly on the expenditures on different items I have asked them on individual items on minute specificity which is also followed by NSSO. Regarding the problem of falsification we believe, following Prof. Asoke Rudra, that very poor people seem to have little tendency to falsify
information relating to employment, income and wealth. Still to have accurate information we have made use of cross-checking of some of the information with some knowledgeable people by joining them at tea-stall. Thus I have tried to obtain a comparative picture of the economic conditions of the poor labouring people engaged in the above three activities in the block.

1.9. **Methodology**

In this study we want to examine the possible impact of occupational diversification on the general economic conditions of poor households depending primarily on wage earning. The object is to test the justification of the behaviour of the workers in respect of their moving away from agriculture to other occupations as wage laborer. To that end primary data are analysed in support of our observation on the variations of economic conditions of different groups of households. Here primary data are presented in tables and figures in a systematic way. Data are analysed by total numbers, average numbers and percentage figures.

To explore the choices of workers to work in different occupations we have used the findings on organizational aspects of different occupations. This gives us an idea on the factor affecting the choices of workers to select an occupation as their principal occupation. In justifying the workers’ choice standard behavior of a worker is taken into account and workers’ response are justified on the basis of such behavior.

To see the economic benefits of the households three indicators, namely potential income from different occupations, improvement in consumption pattern and level of living have been used. To get the income potentials of different occupations, the level of income of individual worker under different occupations are tried to be calculated considering the annual employment variations and wage variations. But at the household level, income levels are calculated considering the functional distribution of income. How much does a household earn from different sources like labour, assets or from non-monetised sources? These are tried to be calculated from the primary level data collected from the sample households. From such functional distribution we have tried to obtain personal distribution by calculating incomes of each household under our study. Then we have made a comparative study on the economic conditions in terms of income. For an indepth view of the economic status of households we have compared this with the poverty line. *Our basic hypothesis that dependence on non-agricultural occupation may improve the economic conditions of poor households is tested on the basis of obtained results.*
To find out the effects of such income variations on the consumption pattern, expenditures of sample households on major consumption items are presented on the basis of data collected from the individual households. A study is made on the expenditures on items taking major proportion of total family income as income levels vary from one occupation group to another. For more specific results regression analysis is done to know the impact of increment of income on their total expenditure.

Considering the level of living as an indicator we have used the households responses regarding the enjoyment of some selected items which makes life more comfortable. Through calculating percentages we have tried to know how much of them enjoy such commodities. Moreover to give a precise picture of the possession of such goods a collective picture has been worked out and provided. Thus for each of the above aspects our efforts go to test our basic hypothesis by accepting or rejecting it on the basis of obtained results.

In this study data are analysed by using some statistical measures. To know the average holding of various assets like agricultural land, cow, goat, duck etc. of the families and also the average wage income, average income, average expenditure of the families in respective occupations arithmetic mean is used. Co-efficient of variation is calculated for different sets of wage and incomes of different category of households. By this measure we can compare the inequality among workers and households. To see the extent of asymmetry in wage incomes earned by different workers and in incomes of different households coefficient of skewness is used. Gini coefficient is used to show the intra-occupational inequalities in per-capita daily incomes of households under different categories of occupations.

Simple regression analyses between per-capita daily income and per-capita daily expenditure of sample households have been made to get an idea of the spending propensities of different types of households. As part of this, correlation-coefficients have been calculated to know the degree of association between per-capita daily incomes and per-capita daily expenditures of different households. Coefficient of determination has also been calculated between Income and expenditure of sample households to show the proportion of variation in expenditure explained by income. It provides an overall measure of the extent to which the variation in income is associated with the variations in expenditure.

1.10. Chapters of the Study

This paper presents a micro level study on the working and economic conditions of labouring households engaged in three fields of works. In the first chapter, the present one we have begun with an introduction about the problem of poverty and unemployment in India.
Various poverty alleviation measures taken in the past have been discussed and evaluated in brief. This chapter also gives a brief outline of the study we intend to undertake. Starting with objective of the study, the problem of research and its design, data base, sampling technique, methodology etc. have been discussed.

In the second chapter the structural change of employment opportunities in India is discussed and a growing tendency of the casual workers to participate in non-agricultural activities is observed in our literature survey. In this chapter we have also discussed the lacuna in the present literature and justified the relevance of the present study.

In the third chapter we have dealt with a general survey of the physical and economic characteristics of the district and also of the block we study. In relation to the district, the position of our study area has been pointed out. Based on various secondary data the growing non-agricultural activities have been observed in our study area.

In the fourth chapter various organisational aspects of construction and sand-lifting occupations are discussed. Among these aspects - the economic relations between builders and the contractors, relations between contractors and labourers, the role of capital etc. have been discussed. In this chapter attention has also been drawn to the agriculture and agricultural labourers. The problems of agricultural labourers in an agriculturally developed area - their choice between agricultural work and non-agricultural work, work in the village and work in the semi-urban centres; daily wage system and piece-meal system are included in our study. All these aspects are explored to understand how rational the behaviour of the rural workers is.

In the fifth chapter wage structure, employment opportunities and daily wage earnings of the different workers and households in different occupations, say, construction, sand lifting and agriculture are presented. Wage earnings are seen to be most important sources of income of the households engaged in different occupations.

In the sixth chapter asset structure and asset income of different categories of households along with inequalities have been analysed. In the asset structure the nature of holding of four assets, say, agricultural land, cow, goat, and duck are taken into account.

In the seventh chapter the income structures of different households under different occupational categories have been discussed. Are there any remarkable differences in daily incomes of the households under three categories of occupation? In this chapter I have
enquired the extent of inequality of daily incomes of different households of different categories and I tried to explain the causes of this inequality and effects of such inequality on the overall occupational choice of the people. I tried to find out the nature and extent of benefits that labourers derive from their participating in non-agricultural activities like sand-lifting and construction works.

In chapter eight, our concern goes to the study of family expenditure and its composition. Total expenditures are divided into three components—food expenditure, other expenditure and medical expenditure. I also tried to analyse the income-expenditure relationship by various statistical measures like co-relation coefficient and regression equations. I have tried to see whether income has any significant effect on total expenditure of the poor families.

Level of expenditure does not reveal all the facts. So in chapter nine, I analysed the overall living conditions of the concerned households. To see the living conditions I have used some indicators like having some private goods and access to some social goods. A total picture of housing conditions, sanitation facility, electricity, type of fuels, and possession of some basic consumer goods are given in our analysis of level of living.

Chapter ten, the last chapter is devoted to summarise the important findings of the study and to give some recommendations. The necessity as well the ways of expansion of non-agricultural employment may be considered for a sustainable welfare of the working households. In this chapter I have tried to discuss some particular welfare measures that may be taken to improve the economic conditions of the working households given their position and status. Such welfare measures may be related to their occupations—like regular revision of wage rates, mode of wage payment, improvement of working conditions etc. These may also be related to job security and social security. I have tried to see how far these measures can be implemented.