CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
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The labour force in the rural areas seeks employment in the traditional sector in India. The conditions of rural labour in India are simply appalling. The rural labourers are miserably poor and their level of living is very low. They have no social status. In certain areas, they lead the lives of serfs or bonded labourers.

All workers are assumed to be efficient enough to do agricultural operations. To put it in other words, no special skills are demanded from agricultural labourers. The discrepancy between demand and supply of labour force accounts for lower wage rates of Indian rural labour force.

By and large, agricultural labourers in India are landless and underprivileged. They can't negotiate from position of strength and are unsuccessful in bargaining. Their agricultural operations are uneconomic due to their meagre landholdings. The employed techniques are unproductive. The returns do not suffice them to sustain even at the subsistence level.

Agricultural labourers are unorganised. Employment is irregular and uncertain. All the casual labourers make
a hand to mouth living, while most of the attached workers end up as bonded labourers. The bonded labour is due to stringent conditions of labour contract. The seasonal employment affects the living standards and the life of rural labour.

More than one mode of payment of wages exists in Indian agriculture. Wages are paid partly or wholly in kind. Casual labourers are paid daily, while attached workers are paid periodically. Wage rates differ overtime and among regions. Wage differentials are observable among adult male, female and children. There is no uniformity in wage rates among different states.

Three-fourths of population of Kurnool district lives in rural areas. Agriculture is the main stay of the people in Kurnool district. The district is drought-prone. Irrigational facilities are meagre. Mostly, rain fed crops are raised in the district. Understandably economic conditions of rural labour force are far from satisfactory.

An analysis of the structure of agricultural labour and rural labour during the period of 1961-61 in Kurnool district throws some light. Total workers account for 49
per cent of the total population in Kurnool district, as per the 1961 census. However, the ratio of workers to total population declined to 42 per cent in 1971. Again, the ratio in question increased to 44 per cent in 1981. The decrease and increase in ratio is attributable to the adoption of different definitions in census enumeration.

Most of the workers are agricultural labourers in Kurnool district. The percentage of agricultural labourers to total workers went on increasing. However, the percentage of the cultivators kept on declining. This is largely due to urban pull and rural push. Small and marginal farmers, whose farms are not economically viable due to failure of monsoons, dispose of their meagre land holdings, and seek gainful employment as workers. They are pulled towards urban areas, when pushed out of rural areas.

Rural workers account for about 52 per cent of rural population in Kurnool district. A proper dimension of the size of the rural workers is not possible. Moreover, proper classification of the rural workers is difficult to arrive at. Again most of the workers of the different categories are inter-connected with agricultural operations. One finds the degree of mobility among rural workers, shifting from agriculture to Transport or manufacturing depending upon pros-
perous or adverse conditions in agriculture.

Agriculture in India has been a way of life. About seventy per cent of the people have been in agriculture. May be, some are owners of land. The rest are cultivators and labourers willingly or otherwise. The water tight divisions are difficult to make in Indian agriculture. Such a difficulty is more pronounced over a period of time. Again, a cultivator in one period may be compelled to join the category of agricultural workers.

In 1961, in Kurnool district, about 39 per cent of rural workers were engaged in agriculture. Such percentage of workers rose substantially in 1971 and fell marginally in 1981. In all the three decades, female workers outnumber male workers. A taluk-wise analysis of distribution of agricultural workers in Kurnool district is revealing. In 1961, in 8 taluks of the district, the percentage distribution of agricultural workers to total rural workers did not fall within one standard deviation from the mean value for the district as a whole. Interestingly, the deviation which was noticed in 5 taluks was confined to one taluk in 1971. However, in 1981, 3 taluks registered percentages lower than one standard deviation from mean. To account for higher percentages occurring in certain taluks a comparative analysis between the per-
percentages of agricultural labourers and percentages of cropped area to total area was made. But no correlation between the concentration of agricultural workers and cropped area is revealed. No inter-taluk variations could be explained with reference to total irrigated area to total cropped area. Hence, explanation for inter-taluk variations in percentage of agricultural labour force has to be found in the collective agricultural activities as a whole - cropped area, cropping pattern, nature of the soil, percentage of gardens and orchards and several other factors.

Certain distinct trends are observable as far as behaviour of wage rates in Kurnool district is concerned. Wages have been on the increase and wage differences continue to widen. An analysis of wage rates during a 12 year period commencing from 1970-71 is revealing. There exists a close linkage between different classes and subgroups. The wage structure remained intact and did not get disturbed.

The highest average wage is paid to the skilled labour in Kurnool district. Among the three sub classes shown, Carpenters lead over Blacksmiths and cobblers. The lowest wages were paid to Herdsman in most of the years in Kurnool district.
The wage increases of other Agricultural men labourers in Kurnool district are irregular. The increase in the daily wage of Herdsman is as fluctuating as it is in the case of other Agricultural Men labourers. The average daily wages of all categories of labour are lower in Kurnool district compared to the State of Andhra Pradesh in 1970-71 and 1981-82. The skilled labour more than doubled its earnings in the State of Andhra Pradesh. The increase in the earnings of skilled labour in Kurnool district were less than proportionate increases in the wages for the state of Andhra Pradesh. This is equally true of other categories of labour. Lower wage rates in Kurnool district may be less intensive demand for labour. Given the adequate supply of labour and its uniform distribution over the State, the lower wage rates may be attributed to the inadequate demand for labour. This is understandable. The percentage of irrigated area to total cropped area is not even one fifth. Crop failure and consequent drought are normal occurrences. Hence the demand for labour for agricultural operation is seasonal and inadequate.

The relative wage rates of men and women subgroups of field labour, Herdsman and other Agricultural labourers in Kurnool district are lower than in Andhra Pradesh. Of men and women, women seem to be relatively less worse off. Among
skilled labourers, the wage rates of Blacksmiths and Cobbblers are lower in Kurnool district compared to Andhra Pradesh for all most all years. However, the Carpenters get higher wage rates in four years and lower wage rates in 8 years during the period under reference. On an average, the Carpenter’s wages throughout the period under reference are less in Kurnool district.

Peddapadu village, selected for a case study is predominantly agricultural. Agriculture and allied activities constitute the main economic activity in the village. However, the village offers meagre irrigational facilities. The farmers raise rain fed dry crops. Small and marginal farmers account for 2-3rd of total number of farmers. Scheduled castes and others ranked in the lower social hierarchy constitute the bulk of the landless labourers. They reap the benefits under different economic welfare programmes.

However a good number of people of the Peddapadu village have to manage the secured employment outside the village in non-rural activities. This is attributed to the proximity of the village to Kurnool town. Again construction activity and work in factories in Kurnool town attract the sizable labour force from the village. In spite of these urban influences,
Psddapadu village and it's base continues to be agricultural. More than half of the house-sholds derive their income from agricultural activities.

The big farmers do not soil their hands in their farming functions. Other farmers are all workers with additional responsibility of ownership and management. As small and marginal farmers, they offer for work and employment under certain constraints to utilise fully their idle time. The distinction between the self-employed farmers and the hired labour has limited significance.

A self employed person is not a hired labourer, as long as he has enough of work on farm; but joins the rank of the labourers once this demand on his farm disappears.

Dairying is the most important allied activity in Psddapadu village. The people engaged in it received financial assistance for the institutional agencies like Rayala-seema Grameena Bank towards the purchase of milch cattle. (In search of remunerative price, milk is sent to Kurnool town by these people.)

An analysis of the functioning of Rural Labour Market of Psddapadu village throws interesting light on certain aspects. The landless labourers account for the supply side
of the market. Some of them may have their own land to cultivate as beneficiaries of social welfare land distributive measures. When monsoon does not fail then a significant fraction of the agricultural labourers may withdraw from supply side and join the demand side. The changing role of farmers is more probable and common. Excluding those categories of farmers and workers by necessity, they remaining can be either on the demand side or on the supply side depending upon type of the situation. They may change positions even between days. Seasonal and local conditions do influence the functioning of the rural labour market in Peddapadu village. Hence it is not possible to demarcate between the supply side and the demand side.

Any mechanical application of supply and demand analysis in Peddapadu village disregarding institutional and other agricultural forces may turn out to be an unrewarding analysis.