CHAPTER - V

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION
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In the rural sector, the rural labour including agricultural labourers form a sizeable proportion. Agricultural labour constituted about 25 per cent of the total labour force in the country as per the 1981 census. The proportion of agricultural labour to the total labour force increased from 19.72 per cent to 24.94 per cent during 1951-1981.

That the development process in the Indian economy has bypassed the agricultural labourers - the vulnerable sections of the society - is a well-established fact. The conditions of agricultural labourers as reported by the various enquiries are not satisfactory. These indicate inadequate and unsecure employment, low real wages, low income and consumption and growing indebtedness. The agricultural labour force has not been benefited much by the technological revolution brought about in the agrarian sector. The realisation in the recent past that the fruits of development will not trickle down unless specific policy measures to help these vulnerable sections are evolved, has led to the formulation of a series of developmental programmes. Studies on the working of such programmes have revealed that they have failed to improve the socio-economic conditions of these weaker sections.
Unlike the industrial labour force, which is well-organised and is fully protected through adequate legislation and its proper implementation, the unorganised agricultural labour force, is left to fend for itself. The Minimum Wages Act and the abolition of Bonded Labour Act have, by and large, failed to bring about any change in the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labour force.

India is a vast country with striking regional differences. There are differences even within the district, mandal, panchayat and village. The present study was undertaken to examine and gain an insight into the region-specific socio-economic conditions and problems of agricultural labour in Maddikera Mandal of Kurnool District of Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh and seek alternative strategies for their socio-economic betterment.

The present study aims at a comparative study of the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labour in two sample villages - Perayall village which enjoys a relatively better irrigational facilities and Buruzula village which is rain-fed and agriculturally backward village of Maddikera Mandal in Kurnool District. A ten per cent sample of agricultural labour households was selected on stratified random sample basis from the list of agricultural labour households of the two villages. In all, one hundred
agricultural labourers were selected for an in-depth study. Of the two sample villages selected for an in-depth study, Perayali in Maddikera Mandal is a revenue village with fairly good irrigation facilities. As much as 80 per cent of the farming population comprises small and marginal farmers who were workers-cum-owners. Majority of the labour households pursue agriculture as their principal occupation, whereas only a few were found to be pursuing subsidiary occupation. The wage rates that prevail in Peravali village were not the same in all operations and seasons. During the busy agricultural season, a male agricultural labourer gets Rs.15 and he gets Rs.8 per day during the slack season. Further, women and child labourers receive less wages as compared to male workers.

Buruzula is another sample village with agriculture as its main activity. The village does not enjoy irrigational facilities. Small and marginal farmers constitute the major segment of the farming population. A majority of the labour force is engaged in non-agricultural activities. The workers receive wages at prevailing local rates. During the busy agricultural season a male agricultural labour gets Rs.15, whereas he gets Rs.10 during the slack season. The female agricultural labourers get relatively lesser wages as compared to male workers. There is not much of difference in regard to the number of hours of work turned out by the agricultural labourers in both the villages.
An attempt had been made to examine the socio-economic conditions of one hundred sample agricultural labourers in two sample villages. It was found that the majority of the respondents belong to Backward Caste category constituting 55 per cent. Next in order comes Schedule Caste respondents who constituted 20 per cent. The sample respondents in the Other Caste and Scheduled Tribe category constituted 15 and 10 per cent respectively.

A scrutiny of the social profile of the sample respondents revealed that all the agricultural labourers are the Scheduled Tribe category belonged to 'joint family'. Ninety per cent of the respondents in Scheduled Caste category belonged to 'joint family' category. Thus, it is evident that the majority of the respondents (82 out of 100) belonged to the 'joint family' category. Ninety-six per cent of the respondents were found to be married and there were no unmarried respondents in the category of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe category. Nearly, 46 per cent of the sample respondents were found in the age group of 16 to 35 years and 30 per cent in the age group of 36 to 55 years.

In regard to the literacy levels of the sample respondents, it was found that 65 persons, out of 100, were illiterates and only 35 respondents were educated. Further, it was found that 85 per cent of respondents in Scheduled Caste and 80 per cent among Scheduled Tribes were illiterates.
Housing is one of the basic needs which must be fulfilled as it provides security of shelter and means of livelihood to the agricultural labourers. 87 respondents in the two sample villages had houses of their own - either owned or built under 'Weaker Sections Housing Programme.' Only 13 respondents were staying in rented houses. The respondents in the category of weaker sections took advantage of the housing programme.

Health is the key to individual well-being and higher productivity of agricultural labourers. It was observed that nearly 57, out of 100 respondents were suffering from one disease or the other. The respondents among the weaker sections were more prone to disease because of high incidence of poverty.

Among the rural population, agricultural labourers continue to be the poorest section of the village community. In the two sample villages of our study, it was found that fifty per cent of the respondents were marginal farmers and forty four per cent were small farmers. Evidently, majority of the agricultural labourers were marginal and small farmers. Another striking fact observed was that 96 per cent of the respondents owned only unirrigated lands.

Jowar and korra are the principal food crops and cotton and groundnuts and the cash crops raised in the sample villages. 46.16 per cent of the cropped area
was devoted to groundnut, followed by 33 per cent of the cropped area to tomato, a commercial crop.

It was found that in sample Peravali village the average number of earning members 2.21 and in Buruzula village it was 2.00 and it was less than that of the State average which is 2.40.

The 'permanent or attached labourers' are generally employed for one year on contact basis. Therefore, their employment period is longer compared to the casual labourers whose opportunities for employment are determined by the seasonal needs for hired labour. It was found that the respondents both in the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe category had 258 and 257 days of work in a year respectively. The agricultural labourers in the Backward caste category had the highest number of days of self-employment. Further, it was noticed that the number of days unemployed was less among Other Caste and Scheduled Tribe respondents.

As agriculture in India is a seasonal occupation, agricultural labourers have to seek employment in non-agricultural work. The employment status of agricultural labourers in the sample two villages revealed that majority of them were getting fully employed for a period of only 151 to 200 days in a year. Further, that the sample agricultural labourers were employed in non-agricultural sector
only for a period of 51 to 100 days. Another observation made was that the agricultural workers were found to be working for about six to seven hours in 'slack season' and seven to eight hours in 'peak season'.

Lack of employment opportunities seem to be the major cause for the agricultural labourers remaining unemployed. They remain unemployed during the off-season or forced to migrate to urban areas in search of employment.

Labour is subjected to the law of demand and supply as any other commodity. In villages, wages are influenced by the demand and supply factors in the context of agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Higher wages are paid to non-agricultural activities compared to agricultural activities. In the sample survey, it was found that the highest wage paid was ₹22. The male agricultural workers seem to have an edge over female workers in respect of wage payment irrespective of the activities performed by them.

Agriculture remains to be the main source of income for the agricultural labourers. In addition to agricultural income, they have income from non-agricultural work and self-employment. In the sample two villages, it was found that the average income per household was high (i.e., ₹2,758) among the respondents of the Backward Caste
community followed by 'Other Caste'. Agricultural labourers choose alternative employment opportunities during slack season. The subsidiary income per household among the respondents of the Scheduled Tribes was high in the sample two villages.

The per capita income of respondents of Backward Caste was high, followed by Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe respondents. Further, it was found that majority of the respondents had income in the range of Rs.5,100 - 10,000. Four per cent of the respondents had income below Rs.5,000. Evidently, a major percentage of the respondents were found to be below the poverty line.

In regard to the expenditure pattern, 67 respondents were found in the range of Rs.5,000 - Rs.10,000.

The main food items of agricultural worker comprise cheap variety rice, low quality ragi flour, salt and green chillies. It was found that nearly 36.19 per cent of the family budget was spent on food. Evidently, a major portion of the income was spent on food, clothing and ceremonies.

Most of the agricultural labourers borrow money for meeting family expenditure. In the present study, 111 respondents borrowed money for family expenditure. The major portion of the loan was raised from money-lenders.
Lack of sufficient income and therefore the low ability to save accounts for the small percentage of respondents who save with the banks. The percapita savings of the respondents of Scheduled Tribe was more because the income they earn from subsidiary occupations was relatively higher than that of other respondents.

The agricultural labourers of the two sample villages stated that low wages and delayed payment of wages, were the major problems. They were not satisfied with the benifits de from their labour and the treatment accorded to them by their employers.

A comparative study of the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers of the two sample villages revealed that the agricultural labourers in the partly irrigated Peravali village were seem to be better placed as compared to the agricultural labourers of the rain-fed, backward Buruzula village. The respondents of the Peravali village obtained better wages and their level of expenditure and rate of savings and the number of days employed was high as compared to the respondents of the Buruzula village. Another observation made was that the average income of the attached labourers in the two sample villages was high - as compared to that of the casual labourers. Further, the average income and expenditure of the attached labourers in the partly irrigated...
village, (i.e. Peravali) was high as compared to the rain-fed village (i.e., Buruzula). Evidently, the attached labourers in the irrigated, Peravali village were relatively in a better position as compared to those in the less developed Buruzula village. It is apparent that the levels of living in terms of income, expenditure and rate of savings of the casual labourers in both the sample villages was far from satisfactory as compared to those of attached labourers.

An examination of the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers in two sample villages revealed that the major malady afflicting agricultural labourers is the lack of adequate employment opportunities particularly during the slack seasons resulting in the widespread under-employment, unemployment and consequent low level of income. Any strategy aiming at the socio-economic betterment of the agricultural labourers should take note of the following pertinent points:

1. Maximising employment in agriculture is one sure way of creating more income in the hands of agricultural labour. Expansion of irrigation and adoption of an appropriate technology to subserve the interests of the agricultural labour should be the aim. Strengthening of rural infrastructure through the Minimum Needs
programme would benefit agricultural labour in getting more employment and income. Schemes like rural roads, rural water supply, rural electrification and rural housing under M.N.P., N.R.E.P., R.L.E.G.P., and the presently re-designated Jowahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) would directly make an impact on the living conditions of the agricultural labourers.

2. The policy approach for the agricultural labour should contain not only employment programmes but also a wage policy which helps lift them above the poverty line. It is heartening to note that the New 20 Points Programme announced by the Prime Minister on 14th January, 1982 focusses attention on persuading the State Governments to revise minimum wages and set up monitoring units in the Labour Departments to monitor the progress of the implementation of the amended Minimum Wages Act.

3. Periodic education programmes must be conducted to educate the agricultural labourers about the developmental welfare programmes launched by the Government for their socio-economic betterment.

4. The benefits of various statutory and non-statutory schemes have not reached the rural
workers primarily due to lack of organisation among the rural workers. Hence, the importance of educating the workers and helping them organise themselves into co-operatives, trade unions etc., to fight for their legitimate rights and benefit from the developmental programmes.

5. An act similar to the one time proposed Kerala Agricultural Workers Act, (1974) should be introduced for conferring on the agricultural workers benefits such as security of service, regulation of working hours, prompt payment of wages and provident fund.

6. Efforts must be made to engage agricultural labourers in schemes which provide continuous employment and generate income regularly. One such scheme is to bring about an effective distribution of land and enable the supply of all the essential agricultural inputs, which alone would give the agricultural labour a sense of self-confidence and social and economic security.

7. Legislative measures for liquidation of debts of agricultural labourers must be enforced strictly.
8. Institutional credit agencies, especially Regional Rural Banks and Co-operative Credit Societies should cater to the credit needs (both consumption and production) of agricultural labourers.

9. A holistic strategy must be devised to improve the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers. There should be interdepartmental co-ordination in the implementation of different developmental programmes meant for the welfare of the weaker sections which includes agricultural workers. For instance, the health programmes such as Integrated Child Development Service (I.C.D.S) and Family Welfare Programmes (F.W.P.), Adult Education Programmes (A.E.P.), Weaker sections Housing Programmes, Krishi Vignan Kendras which train farmers in new agricultural technology, Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and other rural employment programmes, Indira Awas Yojana, Anityodaya, Programme of Assistance to Small and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labour (PASMA), Training of Rural
Youth Self-employment (TRYSEM), etc., should be coordinated. So that the agricultural labourers in particular and weaker sections in general may be served better.