Rural Development is defined as improving living standards of the mass of low income population residing in rural areas and making the process of their development self sustaining.

It embraces all those programmes that touch all levels of human living including agriculture and related matters, irrigation, communications, education, health, supplementary employment, housing, training and social welfare.

The initial strategy of agricultural and rural development focussed attention on institutional reforms like the abolition of zamindari and jagirdari systems of land tenure. Though some attempts were made to introduce land reforms and tenancy regulation, they were not whole heartedly implemented. The emphasis in the strategy of rural development was on area approach. For example the Community Development Programme viewed the village as a community. In recent years emphasis has shifted to target group approach. This approach is illustrated by Integrated Rural Development Programme launched during the Sixth Five Year Plan.
The IRDP has been devised to revolutionise rural life by bringing about socio economic transformation in the country side through the eradication of backwardness, ignorance and poverty within a time frame. The programme envisages the optimum utilisation of natural and human resources of a cluster of villages for the material upliftment and overall betterment of the life of all sections of people living there. A broad frame work of coordinated activities is devised for rural development of the backward districts ensuring simultaneous promotion of agriculture and allied activities. In Andhra Pradesh Anantapur is considered to be the worst backward district. The geographical position of the district in the middle of peninsula, renders it, the driest part of the state of Andhra Pradesh. The district experiences frequent famines right from the beginning of this century, the district has been hit by severe drought conditions for 27 times.

The main objective of introducing Integrated Rural Development in this district was to assist the small and marginal farmers, agricultural and non-agricultural labourers, artisans, persons belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe, economically backward section, weaker section including women by providing gainfull employment.
and necessary resources to cross the poverty line. For this purpose the strategy is to initiate and accelerate production and growth, create employment opportunities in the agricultural as well as non-agricultural sectors and arrange a specific benefit by positive discrimination in favour of the weaker section so that distributive justice is attained and the benefits reach the poor.

The study advocates regional economic planning as against the present pattern of functions devolving round the planning commission at the top of the Pyramid. Instead of thrusting uniform models, irrespective of their needs and suitability, it is better to allow the regions to decide on their own the developmental parameters and strategies. It is not only the question of planning at the regional level but also taking decisions at the micro levels which are relevant to economic change as centralisation is likely to act as a constraint to quick development.

The relevance of this study lies in its devising an appropriate approach and methodology for integrated Rural Development. While the literature in this area is growing in plenty, hardly any of them speak on how the programme had its impact on the rural development of
Amantapur district. In that, the study is an useful addition to the body of knowledge in area planning. The value of this study is further enhanced by a discussion on blockwise comparison hitherto neglected by project designers.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters covering importance of rural development, Gandhian approach to rural development and strategies of rural development in the introduction chapter. The second chapter covers special schemes like Command Area Development Programme and Drought Prone Areas Programme. Development of IRDP in Anantapur District and also its development in 16 blocks covered by the programme are dealt in the third and fourth chapters. The fifth chapter covers conclusion.

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