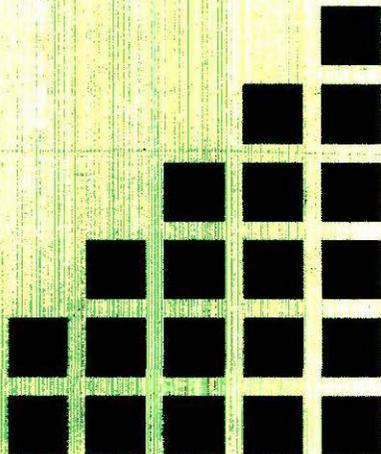
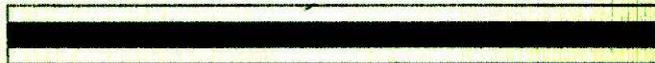


CHAPTER I



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Agricultural labourers form the most depressed section of the rural society in India as well as in West Bengal. In the last few decades, a considerable volume of literature has accumulated on the material conditions of agricultural labourers in India. Given that the definition of agricultural labour has been a controversial subject, due to a number of conceptual, methodological and statistical difficulties (vide National Commission on Rural Labour Report, 1991, vol.2. Ch.1), it may be useful to state here that by agricultural labourer we mean a person who sells his / her labour power to work to another person's land for wages in money, kind or a share of the crop. According to the currently prevalent census definition, 'A Person who works on another person's land for wages in money, kind or share is regarded as agricultural labourer. He or she has no risk in cultivation, but merely works on another person's land for wages. An agricultural labourer has no right of lease or contract on the land on which he or she works' (Census of India, 1991, paper – 3 of 1991, p. 6). Thus, the Census definition clearly excludes tenants as well as marginal farmers and includes only landless labourers. The definition adopted by us would be broader in the sense that it would include all those for whom sale of labour power in the agricultural sector is a source of livelihood. It may also be noted that throughout our study, 'agricultural labour force' and 'agricultural labourers' would be used interchangeably, and 'agricultural labour households' would refer to the households of the agricultural labourers.

In the early 1970s it was pointed out by a number of economists (P. Bardhan, 1970, 1973; Krisnaji, 1971; Jose, 1974) that, in spite of the process of planned economic development having been in existence for quite some time, the agricultural labourers continued to face a grim situation in most parts of the country. The institutional reforms that were undertaken during the post-independence period largely ignored them (Joshi, 1975, 1987). Results of the various large-scale surveys (e.g. Agricultural and Rural Labour Enquiries) on important economic variables relating to agricultural labourers, such as wages, employment etc. revealed that,

except in a few pockets, there had been no perceptible improvement in their material condition. The performance of six to seven major states, accounting for almost 75 percent of the agricultural labourers in the country, had been particularly dismal in this respect (P. Bardhan 1970, 1973; Krishnaji, 1971; Jose 1974; among others). Thus, the existing scenario did not seem to hold much promise for the majority of agricultural labourers. However, not every researcher shared the depressing view on the changes in the economic condition of agricultural labourers (e.g. Lal, 1979). Given the nature of the evidence, based primarily on large-scale data systems, there was lively discussion on the issue relating to the changing conditions of agricultural labourers.

Broadly speaking, the present study hopes to make a modest contribution to the large and growing literature on the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers during the post-independence period. However, the present study mainly focuses on the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers in contemporary West Bengal, where agricultural labourers constitute about a one fourth of the total work force. Their number has been rising faster than the rate of growth of rural population. From the existing literature it appears that very few studies have been undertaken in West Bengal on this problem, although there have been quite a good number of studies in other states of India. Whatever studies are there for West Bengal those pertain mostly to the 1970s. These studies (Bandyopadhyay, 1977; Bardhan and Rudra, 1980; Dasgupta, 1984) have drawn a very grim socio-economic and living condition of agricultural labourers in West Bengal. Since the eighties till the late nineties vast changes have been taken place in the rural socio-economic scenarios. A large area has come under the new agricultural strategy. Along with bio-technological change in agriculture, there has been a perceptible increase in agricultural production and productivity. It is common knowledge that the new agricultural technology has two types of effects on employment of labour, viz., labour displacing and labour absorbing effects. Therefore, the pertinent central question that arises in this context is: how the living conditions of agricultural labourers are changing under this socio-techno-economic milieu? To get answer to this question we would like to seek answer to another question: What has been the direction of change in agricultural wage rates and the number of days of employment per agricultural labourers in West Bengal during the 1980s and the 1990s? We focus on this question, as wage rate and employment availability are the most important quantitative factors that determine

material conditions of agricultural labourers. However, along with this question we shall also try to find answer to several other relevant questions for our purpose of finding answer to the central question.

Since there is a large gap in literature providing answer to these very significant questions related to a vast section of the poor and depressed rural population in West Bengal, we find this point of time, the beginning of the third millennium, very appropriate to study their living conditions. However, given the time and resource constraints of an individual researcher we have chosen Uttar Dinajpur district, a predominantly agricultural district of West Bengal, for the purpose of an in-depth study. The present study is an in-depth analysis at micro-level of employment, wages and other factors that affect the living condition of agricultural labourers. However, we have also used some macro-level data wherever applicable.

We have enquired into the above-mentioned questions at two levels: first, at the level of the state, on the basis of the existing literature and the secondary data available to us; second, by undertaking micro-studies in six villages of Uttar Dinajpur district of northern West Bengal. As regards the choice of the study area for village studies within West Bengal, it has largely been influenced by the fact that the researcher was inhabitant of a village of this district as well as due to the fact that the district happens to be primarily agricultural.

The concept of living condition of agricultural labourers may be taken to mean the state of economic life of the labourers. It, however, depends upon a number of factors. Asset holding positions, availability of farm and non-farm employment, wage rates etc. are the obvious quantitative factors which determine their living condition. In the case of micro-study, it is possible to take a look at many of these factors, so as to be able to present a relatively comprehensive picture with reasonable confidence. This is one of the objectives of the present study. In our study we have made an effort to construct such a picture of the material condition of agricultural labourers, at the end of the 1990s in the selected villages by looking at factors such as ownership of land or livestock, agricultural wage rates, availability of employment in agriculture and non-agriculture for agricultural labourers, migration from labour households, remittances, income from other sources, extent of indebtedness, levels and pattern of consumption, access to and utilization of public goods such as primary education and health facilities etc.

Finally, one of the objectives of the present study is to enquire into processes and relations in which agricultural labourers are centrally entangled issues such as evolution of labour relations, process of wage formation, strategies of control adopted by employers etc.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to study the stated problem we frame the following research questions:

- (1) What is the origin of agricultural labourers?
- (2) What factors have contributed to the steady growth in the number of agricultural labourers in the post-independence period?
- (3) What are the terms and conditions of employment?
- (4) Do the agricultural labourers remain fully employed throughout the year?
- (5) Does the seasonal variation in farm employment still exist?
- (6) What is the prevailing pattern of wage rate for male, female and child labourers in the study villages?
- (7) What are the determinants of wage rates?
- (8) What accounts for the wage differentials with respect to sex, age and space?
- (9) Do the labourers get the minimum wages fixed by the government?
- (10) What is the nature and pattern of non-farm employment in the study area?
- (11) What are the problems and prospects of non-farm employment?
- (12) What are the nature, causes and consequences of indebtedness of agricultural labourers?
- (13) How much indebted are the agricultural labourers in the study villages?
- (14) Is the level of income of agricultural labourers from all sources sufficient to maintain a reasonable standard of living?
- (15) What is the consumption pattern of agricultural labourers?
- (16) What is their asset holding position?
- (17) What is the relative level of poverty of agricultural labourers?
- (18) What measures have been adopted by the Government to improve the lot of agricultural labourers?
- (19) How far these measures have been effective?
- (20) What major conclusions can be drawn from the whole study about the living conditions of agricultural labourers?
- (21) What suggestions can be made to improve the levels of living of agricultural labourers?

1.3 The Conceptual Framework

Over the last several decades a large number of village studies have been done by social scientists and analysts dealing with Indian rural reality. Besides the well-established tradition of village studies, India has a long history of large-scale statistical surveys of rural areas. The votaries of these different ways of understanding and analyzing rural economic change have been engaged in a lively debate for a considerable period of time. The basic argument for favouring village-studies approach is that the intense localized examination by a participant observer not only offers a better understanding of various processes and relations (i.e. the qualitative dimensions), but may also give better quantitative results, compared to the 'bureaucratic' investigation of large-scale statistical surveys. The contrary view of course would contest this claim and in addition, point to the limited relevance of the wisdom gained from micro-studies, without adequate statistical controls, for the macro-contexts. The debate is quite rich as scholars have investigated the advantages and pitfalls of these alternative methods of studying rural economy and society.

Obviously there is little sense in trying to prove the superiority of one method over the other, in an overall sense, while counterpoising them. What get obscured in such a process is the complementarities between different methods. To the extent that the underlying objectives are different at different levels of aggregation, village-studies approach and large-scale surveys can play very useful complementary roles.

Our motivation for undertaking village-studies is primarily due to our interest in some issues, related to the level of living of agricultural labourers, for which large-scale data systems may not be particularly useful. While providing the possibility of appropriate contextualisation of quantitative information, the village-studies approach is likely to yield better results when one is attempted to understand the various economic processes influencing the material conditions of agricultural labour households, such as the evolution of labour-market, the process of wage-formation, the strategies of control used by the employers and the labourers' response to it, or more generally, the relational attributes underlying a host of economic variables. We had chosen to undertake village-studies with the hope that such studies would facilitate a better understanding of some of these critical issues, compared to what the large-scale surveys permit. However, to get a comprehensive and more complete picture of the different issues of the phenomenon under study we have also used state,

district, block and even village level (to be obtained through Gram Panchayets) secondary data to compare and tally with collected primary data.

1.4 Methodology

As is evident from the above, the present study is, in part based on the existing literature and in part on field surveys. To find out the direction of change in the major determinants of the material conditions of agricultural labourers at the state level and at the district level, we have drawn on the existing literature. This literature to a large extent is based on the large-scale secondary data systems. For the literature and data we have used the resources of the Library of the University of North Bengal, Raja Rammohunpur, Darjeeling; the National Library, Kolkata; Visva-Bharati Central Library, Santiniketan; Palli Samgathana Vibhaga Library, Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan; Palli Siksha Bhavana Library, Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan; Indian Statistical Institute Library, Kolkata; Secretariate Library, Writers Building, Kolkata; the Library of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata; Library of the District Collectorate of Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts, and Block Development Offices of the district as well as other relevant and useful sources.

As regards the methodology of the village studies, a detailed statement is made below.

1.4.1 Universe of Study

For the whole study, the universe of study is the state of West Bengal and for the field survey parts it is the district of Uttar Dinajpur.

1.4.2 Sampling Frame

Three types of sampling have been used, viz., the stratified, the purposive and the random sampling.

1.4.3 Sampling Procedure

First, we have stratified the blocks in three strata according to their level of development. These three strata represent highly developed, moderately developed and least developed blocks respectively. Then two blocks have been randomly chosen from each stratum, i.e. altogether six blocks have been chosen. Then one village from each of these blocks, i.e. in total six villages has been selected. We have selected 30 households together from the categories of landless agricultural labourers and

marginal farmers-cum-agricultural labourers. For the purpose of selection of villages, at first we made a list of those villages from the District Census Handbook 1991, where the population of agricultural labourers has been shown as 150 or above. This is because on the assumption of (which may be regarded as reasonable) a 5 – member average family size, to get a number of 30 families from the above mentioned two categories, the agricultural labour population size of the village should be 150 if it happens that in an extreme case all the 5 members of the family work as agricultural labourers. Then from each of the six selected blocks, we have chosen one village randomly. From each of the six selected villages we selected at random 30 households, who sell labour for agricultural work, who may either be landless agricultural labour households or marginal-farmer cum agricultural labour households or both. We also selected for investigation five cultivator families from each village at random from the categories of small farmers to large farmers.

1.4.4 Units of Observation and Sample Size

As noted above, the unit of observation is the household and the total size of sample is 210 households.

1.4.5 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

Data have been collected by the researcher through structured questionnaire by personal interview with the relevant respondents. Data on farm and non-farm employment and wages, other sources of income, indebtedness, consumption level and pattern, asset holding position, investment expenditure, education, health etc. have been collected.

1.4.6 Data Collection

Two types of questionnaire have been used for data collection, viz., the Labour Questionnaire which contains specific research questions as noted above and the Cultivator Questionnaire which contains research questions regarding production, productivity, income, labour employment and wages, mode of cultivation etc. Replies to the questions of the Cultivator Questionnaire have also helped us to compare and tally the replies to some of the questions given by agricultural labourers.

1.4.7 Data Processing

After the collection of data, these have been processed for relevant statistical calculation manually by using calculator and through the computer. The tools used for analyzing data are simple frequency counts, cross tabulation, simple averages, percentages and some statistical tests.

1.5 A Brief Overview of Literature, Work already done in the Area of Study

A large volume of literature has been developed on agricultural labour in India. We have selectively reviewed below some of the literature relevant for our study under different sub-heads.

1.5.1 Evolution of Class of Agricultural Labourer

Jain (1971) made a study on the conditions of India labouring classes mainly agricultural labour, industrial labour and slave labour from the Vedic period up to the Gupta age. Agriculture was undoubtedly the chief occupation of the Rgvedic people, but regarding agricultural labour, we get very little information from Veda. During this period, every householder was practically a farmer. They took pleasure in doing the agricultural work with their own hands, rather than leaving it to be done by others. Some of the farmers had grown rich by the excessive income from agricultural products. The difference between the wealthy farmers and poor farmers grew in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. This period witnessed the concentration of land in the hands of a few farmers and the reduction of poor farmers to serfdom. But in the Vedic period, slave labour did not exist but industrial labourers like carpenter, goldsmith, ivory workers and stone cutter gained importance. Later on mainly during Budha, Kautlya and Manu period, slavery increased to a considerable degree. Artisans and craftsmen formed guilds for their protection. However, guilds did not exist in the Vedic period. After the Maurya period, the guilds showed sign of independence and by the Gupta period, their position became very high in the socio-economic scale. The labourers in Vedic period were paid in kind like food, clothing and other essential commodities in lieu of wages. In the Buddhist and the Maurya periods, the wage structure followed the general economic development, but it appears that the conditions of the labourers belonging to the lower categories were not very good. However, the law provided them ample protection against the caprices of employers.

Bandyopadhyay (1977) has investigated the causes of sharp rise in the number of agricultural labourers from 1961 to 1971 in Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Malda districts of North Bengal. He has found different reasons in different districts for the rapid increase in the number of agricultural labourers. In the case of Jalpaiguri district, the reasons are the break down of the *giri-adhairy* system of cultivation, the ravages of the 1967-68 floods in Tista and its tributaries, spill over of tea labour into agricultural operations, possible inclusion of populations inhabiting unauthorized villages in and around forest areas of the district, growth of comparatively more intensive farming methods and rapid expansion of pineapple plantations in the stretches between Jalpaiguri and Siliguri. However, the last three reasons do not seem to be very much convincing. In the case of Drajeeling district, the incidence of increase in the number of agricultural labourers in Darjeeling district took place mainly in the Siliguri subdivision. Here the causes identified were the eviction of sharecroppers and rapid conversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes around the town of Siliguri. In the case of Malda district, in addition to eviction of sharecroppers, the other causes for the swelling of the ranks of agricultural labourers were the natural increase in population vis-à-vis the lack of scope of cultivation and limitation of cocoon rearing and mango cultivation to absorb additional labour force.

Usta Patnaik (1983) conducted a study on the historical origins of agricultural labourers in the pre- and post independence period and has also discussed the problems of organizing labour in the context of a far from polarized peasantry. In the pre-capitalist economy and society, the property less labourers existed in the form of hereditary servitude to the landed families and were termed as 'outcastes' in the Hindu hierarchy of the established village. The position of hereditary labour tended to change under the capitalist mode of production during the British period. The traditional forms of servitude were undermined; they were replaced more and more by monetised forms of bondage i. e. debt bondage. The British commercial policy led to massive displacement of artisans on the one hand and pauperization of large sections of the indebted poorer peasantry into landlessness on the other. These both lowered the land-man ratio steadily and raised the share of agricultural labourers in the rural work force.

In the post independence period, the adoption of land reforms legislations, initiation of new agricultural strategy and the indirect effects of an expanding domestic market for agricultural products influenced Indian agriculture and agrarian

relations. The net effect of the implementation of land reform laws on the labouring poor, so far, has been to perpetuate the old, semi-feudal forms of bonded and attached labour on an increasingly more monetized basis while providing an impetus towards capitalist production for profits. The ranks of landless were swollen by evictions of the poorer peasants, to a much greater extent than they were reduced by meager allotments of homestead land in few areas. The substantial investment in new technology by the landlords – turned – capitalists and rich peasants, on the basis of cheap institutional credit from the banking system. It was also found that there was a strong tendency on the part of the new capitalists, to pay labour increasingly in cash rather than in kind. This is more profitable for employers in a situation of rising prices and almost invariably means falling real wages for labourers.

Dasgupta (1984) delineates the history of the evolution of agricultural labourers in West Bengal in the pre-British period and then traces the growth of agricultural labourers under the British colonial regime. In the pre-British period, caste system determined the occupational pattern, which has been discussed on the basis of 1872 Census. The population was then divided into four major caste categories in hierarchical order: higher castes, agricultural castes, artisan castes and personal service castes. The fourth category indicates the lowest level of occupation; largely people performing various personal services such as barbers, washer men, sweepers, servants, agricultural labourers etc. The two major sources of supply of agricultural labourers were the so-called 'semi-Hiduised aboriginal groups' and the migrant labourers who came from outside the state. Landlessness as a characteristic of agricultural labourers began to emerge with the large-scale entry of these two groups in the settled agriculture to Bengal. In the pre-British period, the agricultural labourer was usually a small farmer making some additional earning from hired work. The proportion of labourers was very low during pre-British period. However, although in the pre-British days there was no labour market worth its name in the villages, under the impact of the colonial rule a labour market had come into operation. Given the caste tribal influence, the working of the 'patron-client relationship' and the debt bondage, as well as many other ties, which linked them to their employer, they were never 'free' in the Marxist sense to constitute wage labour of the capitalist type. However, towards the end of the British rule, a number of vital changes began to occur whose significance was more clearly understood after independence. Dasgupta

has also discussed the major programmes taken by West Bengal Government for the agricultural labourers.

Bose's (1986) paper focuses on the impact of the global crisis of the 1930's on the agrarian economy and society of the region – especially the differential impact on the types of social structure that pre-dominated in the different areas and the implications it had for the nature of peasant politics in the climatic decades of British rule in India. The depression of 1930's disrupted severely the system of rural credit relation in Bengal. The old money lending groups stopped lending because of low recovery and credit came to be concentrated in the hands of more substantial creditors. Credit in cash no debt declined. The cultivators had cut down their expenditure in various directions and had been living on savings by selling ornaments. With fall in prices and the absence of credit, many peasants' small holders were in the doldrums and the *khamar* sector took long strides all their expense. Political agitations involving the peasantry occurred against tax enhancements in times of economic stress and demand for reduction of interest for loan.

The share cropping system that predominated in frontier Bengal was also affected by the economic crisis. The first *adhiar's* challenge to *Jotedar's* dominance in the frontier regions was launched at a time in 1939-40. The better off among the *adhiars*, demanding more direct access to the grain market and a larger share of the product, led the way against the *jotedars* whose strange hold on the agrarian economy as creditors had been shaken by the shock of the depression. A distinct class line between *jotedars* and *adhiars* ensured that the agitations of 1939-40 and 1946-47 were conducted on the basis of clear-cut economic demands.

Bagchi's (2003) study deals with the evolution of land tenure system in a northern part of West Bengal known as Duars region from the Bhutanese period to the post independence period, based on field survey of six villages of Western Duars during 1985-86. The study points out that in the post-independence period, the land tenure system has undergone major changes. With the enactment of new legislation, all sorts of intermediary interests in land have been abolished and direct relationship has been established between the state and the tenants. Under Operation Barga (OB) programme, some *bargadars* have been able to record their names and they are now in a secured position than unrecorded ones. Some arrangements have been made to provide finance to *bargadars* from institutional sources, but on the whole they still depend on other forms of non-institutional sources of finance for which they borrow

mostly on unfavourable term. The study also highlights the fact that recording has nothing to do with increasing the productivity of land. Big landowners have evicted the large sections of *bargadars*, who are not able to record their names. They have been reduced to the status of agricultural labourers. The enormous growth of agricultural labourers may be considered as one of the most important changes that the Duars economy of North Bengal along with other parts of West Bengal has witnessed since the attainment of independence of India. Breakdown of *jotedari-adhiary* system, the rate of growth of population, absence of alternative sources of livelihood of the rising number of population, eviction of *bargadars* and the decline of the *bargadari* system are some important causes identified by the author.

Pandit's (2003) work is a micro study of the Bengal agrarian labour force from 1885 to 1952, which tries to explain the history of emergence of wage labourers and the problems of poverty and production in the region in the context of commercialized agriculture under colonial rule and after. There are various factors such as the cash-crop cultivation, the pressure of population on lands, price rise of the articles of daily use and indebtedness of the indigent cultivators, which accounted for the emergence of the agrarian wage labour. These factors were directly and intimately related to commercial agriculture. The spread of commercial agriculture in jute riveted the process of pauperization of the peasantry instead of reinforcing their bargaining power. The author has also been discussed about mobility of wage labourers across the villages, districts and states, variation of wage rate and involvement of wage labourers in the agrarian movements in different districts of West Bengal. The variation in wage rate in agriculture has been due to the variation of lands, person and items of work. Lower wage rate to immigrant labour, women and children indicated while the daily wage rates at different times have been mentioned along with some yearly and monthly wage rates in agriculture. The wage labourers would live almost like destitutes in the villages. They would fail to earn an amount needed for their bare subsistence. To raise the level of their wage rates and to stop exploitation, agricultural labourers had actively participated in the agrarian movements in each district of Bengal and many *kishans* or wage labourers died in their struggle against the joint attacks of their police force and land owner's resistance partly of armed guard. Wage labourers were first enlisted as members of the Bengal Provincial Kishan Sabha (BPKS) in 1937 and no political organizations in villages thought about them as a separate section of the farmers to be protected by political means. But they were not

able to assert their rights, get a gainful employment and raise the level of their wage rates by any form of agitation.

1.5.2 Farm Employment Pattern of Agricultural Labourers

Bardhan and Rudra (1980) in their study have focused on different categories of agricultural labour. On the basis of a survey of 110 villages, it attempts to assess the relative numerical importance of these categories. By analyzing the variation in employer-employee relationships of attachment and dependence, it suggests possible approaches for investigations of rural labour. There are various types of labour relation in agriculture not only in different regions of India but even in the same area. These different relations differ because of different number of factors. Bardhan and Rudra have classified agricultural labourers according to attachment. They found out that the bases of attachment were allotment of land, current consumption loan and old debt. In West Bengal, none of the labourers were found to have hereditary debt or long-term debt incurred by labour as a basis for his attachment to the employer. Majority of them takes consumption loan as wage advances from employer on the basis of attachment. Most of the loans are interest free. It has been revealed from the study that in West Bengal term and conditions of labour contract involve: (a) duration of contract, (b) basis of payment, (c) frequency of payment, (f) interlink age with other contract in credit or land relation with employer, and (g) freedom to work for different employer.

Unni's (1988) paper provides a description of the trends in employment, wage earnings and incomes of agricultural labourers in rural labour households during 1956-57 to 1977-78 at the all India level and for the 14 major states of the country. The changing employment situation of agricultural labourers has been discussed in terms of earner population ratios (EPR) and days of employment available in agriculture. Total earner population ratios (male and females of all villages) fall between 1956-57 and 1964-65, rose in 1974-75 and fell again in 1977-78 at the all India level. At the all India level, both male and female days of employment per agricultural labourer in agricultural labour households raised between 1956-57 and 1964-65, declined in 1974-75, the year of poor agricultural output and increased earner population ratios. The average daily money wage earnings for all agricultural operations by the agricultural labourers in rural labour households, increased steadily and sharply between 1956-57 and 1977-78 for both males and females at all India

level and for all states. Annual money wage earnings per agricultural labourers also rose steadily and sharply between 1956-57 and 1977-78 for both males and females in all states. This increase was, however, much slower between 1964-65 and 1974-75 due to slower pace of increase in an average daily money wage earnings and fall in days of employment per worker during this period. Annual real wage earnings per agricultural labourers, both male and female, fell between 1964-65 and 1974-75 and rose again in 1977-78 at the all India level and in most states.

Kailas Sarap (1991) has conducted study on the variety of contractual arrangements between employers and agricultural labourers in six villages of Orissa. He also analyzed the dynamics of changes in the contractual arrangements in the context of technology and state inventions and the implications for the parties. The agricultural labour market consists of several sub-markets – farm servants, casual labour for a day or many days, and group's labourers with piece rate. Payment may be piece or time rate. The labourers may be indebted to his employer or have to work to pay for the loan borrowed earlier. The contracts of farm servants are informal. The nature of contract, working hours, mode of payment of wages and wage rates of above types of agricultural labourers are not same in the wet and dry villages in Orissa district. The employers have resorted to a variety of strategies, such as the provision of interest free loans, other loans, tie in with casual and group labour, incentive payments besides the provision of house sites to the semi-permanent workers and tiny pieces of land for cultivation to farm servants; not just to reduce the cost of recruitment, the moral hazard and incentive problems, but also to discipline the labour and help in the exercise of social control. The agricultural labour market in the study area is segmented on the lines of caste, tribal, kinship, gender, local / migrants and so on, suggesting lack of collective bargaining or collusion among the labour households for demanding higher wages.

Sukumaran's (1997) study is an attempt to understand the labour scarcity in the avowedly labour surplus rural economy of Kerala. It is hypothesized that there is a situation of relative labour shortage in rural Kerala caused by the small holder tree crop character of agricultural sector accompanied by high transaction costs due to various imperfections and segmentation of the rural labour market. The demand for labour depends upon some factors such as distribution pattern of land, cropping pattern, cropping intensity, mechanization of agriculture, and the fragmentation and consequent multiplication of tasks. On the other hand, the labour supply function in

the rural economy of Kerala has been made complicated by the interaction of a number of inter-connected and varied factors. These are landholding size of labour households, caste composition of labour households, the size of labour households and wage rates. A detailed household survey was carried out in the Parthanamthitta district of Kerala in 1989 and the necessary data were collected on two rounds, one during the peak season and other during the lean season from 241 labour and 241 cultivating households. The analysis has shown that while there is a very high demand for labour, the supply has not been elastic enough to respond to the increasing demand. But when the supply and demand were separately analysed, arises a situation where the total supply of labour exceeded the total demand in the sample villages. At the same time there is excess demand for labour. So the paradoxical situation arises in the rural economy of Kerala. The reasons for the mismatch between supply and demand are collection of data through sample one instead of census one, market imperfections, information asymmetric, adverse selection in the labour market, operation of backward slopping supply curve, market fragmentation, increasing transaction and supervision costs.

Sharma (2001) examines the trends in number and changes in quantum of employment days available to agricultural labour and also to examine the changes in the relative importance of different sources of employment like wage-paid employment, self-employment and employment on salary basis. Changes in the real wage earnings including gender differentials and the effect of different factors on daily wage earnings has also been discussed. The data show a significant increase in the total numbers of employment days both adult male and female labour, in almost all the states. The evidence also suggests a trend towards diversification of employment, especially from land to non-land activities: as many as 10 major states (Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal), substantial decline in the percentage share of wage paid employment was associated with an equally significant increase in the percentage share of self-employment. In the case of adult female labour, the trend was mixed. In seven states (Bihar, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh), wage-paid employment became more important where as in seven others (Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu) as a decline in the percentage share of wage paid employment was accompanied by an increase in the

share of self-employment. The real wage earnings of both adult male and female labour increased continuously, practically in all states since 1974-75 except during 1983, both in agricultural and non-agricultural operations. There was no consistent trend in the male-female wage differentials. The regression analysis further shows that while productivity per worker and the promotion of rural workers employed in the non-farm sector have a positive and significant on daily money and real wage earnings, the proportion of landless households had a negative effect.

1.5.3 Farm Wages of Agricultural Labourers

Misra and Gupta's (1974) paper focuses the trends in money wages, real wages and the wage-productivity relationship across the districts of Gujarat during 1960-61 to 1968-69 and also to identify factors affecting inter districts wage-differentials for 1968-69 in Gujarat. The compound rate of growth of money wages across districts varied 5 percent to 8 percent per annum during this period except Surendranagar, Amreli and Sabarkantha, where as in real terms the wages declined at the rate of 1 percent to 3 percent in all districts of Gujarat except Ahmedabad and Surat, where it increased at the rate of about .87 percent and .30 percent per annum respectively. In view of the relationship between money wages and productivity, the regression analysis does not show serial correlation in most of the districts. The coefficient of productivity again turn out to be non-significant in all districts except for Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Amreli and Baroda, where it is influenced by the productivity changes probably due to the fact that there has been piece rate system of wages particularly harvesting of groundnut and cotton in these districts. Apart from productivity, there are several other variables such as distribution of lands holdings, irrigated area, availability of pump sets, tractor use, availability of agricultural labour, playing an important role in wage determination. However, only availability of pump sets and agricultural labour turn out to be significant. The former has positive sign for its co-efficient, where as in the latter the co-efficient have negative sign, indicating that the wage rate responds positively to the variations in the availability of pump sets and negatively to the agricultural labourers.

Jose's (1978) paper is primarily an attempt at defending the data that seems to support the 'new orthodoxy' hypotheses. The author also raises some questions on the validity of the hypothesis, implicit in all such studies, that wage rates of agricultural labourers are directly determined by the supply and demand conditions in the rural

labour market and that changes in the market situation can be measured by the movement of wages. He looks into the relative merit and demerits of the different sources of agricultural wage data. Making use of the information available in the various enquires, the author attempts to explain how in the Indian context factors other than wage rates might be crucial in the determination of real earnings of agricultural labour households. Then the author examines the relative changes in the real earnings of agricultural labour households derived from wage employment in different states between 1963-63 and 1970-71. A comparison of these indices of income with those agricultural wage rate indices for the period brings out clearly that the later are inadequate to explain trends in the income of agricultural labourers in different states.

Sidhu's (1988) paper is an attempt to identify the factors which play an important role in the process of wage determination in the most developed agricultural regions of the country i.e. Punjab and Haryana. The analysis of district level data of Punjab and Haryana shows that demand and supply factors are in fact, major determinant of wage rate. Where as productivity of land and inequality in the distribution of land holdings tend to push up wage rate, demographic pressure on land and segmentation in the labour market are dominant variables, which tend to depress wage rates significantly. Thus, if wage rates of agricultural labour and hence their incomes are to be improved, agricultural growth alone cannot do it. Population on land has to be relieved to some extent. The study also brings out the important role which rural labour organizations and their leaders can play in uniting the labourers as a class and getting their due share in increased agricultural productivity.

Partasarathy (1990) focuses on trends of wages and employment during 1985-86 to 1993-94 and provides functional analysis of variables influencing to the level of wages, employment and also unemployment. This paper also discusses the options in public interventions for improved conditions in agricultural labour. The post-1985 scenario, particularly the phase of economic reform, was marked by worsening of real wages since the prices of wage goods rose faster than in the earlier period. The functional analysis of money wage rates suggests that labour productivity, percentage of agricultural labour households in total rural households, diversification as measured by percentage of non-agriculture in total rural households, landlessness influence variations in wage rates and explain 85 percent of the variation across the states. Wage rate could be raised only by increasing productivity by decrease in the



supply of agricultural labour, diversification of non-agricultural occupations. Employment in agriculture by usual status measure showed little absorption in the 1980s. By daily status measure there was an improvement in absorption in agriculture. Employment of agricultural labour is found to be negatively related to money wage rate, to agricultural worker per hectare and is a positive function of irrigated area per agricultural worker. Rural unemployment is positively related to the supply of agricultural labour and negatively related to growth. Among policy options, the most important is an equitable agricultural growth resulting in higher productivity and higher demands for labour. This will imply effective implementation of land reforms to sustain the growth process. There is a need for sharper targets for distribution under PDS. Universal primary education among agricultural labour must be given top.

Bhalla's (1991) paper deals with some aspects of wage determination and labour absorption in Indian agriculture. Agricultural wage rates in India are systemtically below the marginal product of labour and the gap between the wage rate and productivity tends to widen whenever labour productivity goes up. The regression analysis has been done to determine factors influencing the real wage rate using time series data for each state separately or cross-section analysis for single year instead of the average long periods. The results show that inter-state variations in labour productivity constitute the most significant factor in explaining differences in real wage rates. Relatively high labour productivity, it appears, tends to push up real wage rates, while poverty among self-employed cultivators pulls wage rates down. The time series results indicate that the dominant factors in most states have been, first and foremost, the availability of non-farm work, and secondly change in the cost of living. Overtime, changes in labour productivity do not seem to have played a significant role in any state, except in Uttar Pradesh, in the case of the CPIAL deflated wage series.

The determinants of labour absorption in Indian agriculture are examined at two levels – at all India level for all crop combined, states combined and at the individual crop-cum-state level. The all India results show the general decline in the labour absorptive capacity of cultivation in country as a whole due to decline in labour intensity in agriculture. The crop wise decomposition of total employment changes into labour intensity and area change effects reveals that the big positive contributions to field crop employment have been made by paddy, cotton, jowar and soybean in that order. The big negative effects have come from the contraction of employment in the production of gram, mustard and barely. However, certain crops

recording a relatively small decline in employment need special mention, in particular wheat and sugarcane. Both these crops registered truly gigantic reductions in employment due to labour intensity changes.

Sharma (1993) examines the trends in the agricultural money / real wage earnings, gender differentials in the real wage earnings, the effect of rising agricultural productivity on money / real wage earnings and the number of employment days available to an agricultural labourer. The money wage earnings of both male and female agricultural labourers increased continuously practically in all the states since 1956-57, the trends in real wage earnings are mixed; these increased in a majority of the states between 1956-57 and 1977-78 followed by a decline of varying degrees between 1977-78 and 1983. Consequently, taking a long period view, in as many as nine states, namely, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, the daily average real wage earnings in 1983 were lower as compared to those in 1956-57. Nevertheless, the number of employment days available to male and female labour, despite fluctuations from one period to other' were significantly higher in 1983 compared with 1956-57. The study further brings out the declining male / female real wage earnings differentials and also supports the hypothesis that the per worker agricultural product affects the money / real wage earnings favourably.

Reddy's (1998) study deals with trends of money and real wages of agricultural labourers in paddy farming by size / zone in Andhara Pradesh during the period 1981-82 to 1991-92 and also analyses the factors influencing the variations in real wages. There was a steady increase in money wages during 1981-82 to 1991-92 at state level and all the zones though the magnitude of the increase differed from one zone to another. Money wages for all attached labourers were highest in zone-2 and lowest in zone-5. Money wages of casual labourers in zone-4 and 5 were higher than zone-2 in triennium ending 1983-84. The study shows an increasing trend in real wages with a little fluctuation at the state as well as zonal level. An attempt has been made to study the relationship between wages and yield and wages with output price per quintal of paddy using linear and non-linear functions. The results show significant positive co-efficient with respect to output prices at the state as well as at the zonal levels implying that money wages are positively associated with output prices. This indicates that the benefits, which accrued to the paddy farmers through a rise in the output prices, also percolated to the agricultural labourers. With respect to

yields also, the co-efficient were positive and significant for the state as well as in all zones implying that wages are influenced by changes in the yields. Thus, the benefits of technology have also reached the agricultural labourers at the state as well as at the zonal level, though not uniformly.

Sarmah (2002) focuses on trends and determinants of agricultural wages at two different levels of aggregation for the period starting from early seventies through late nineties. At the aggregate level, state specific agricultural wages have been analyzed while at the disaggregate level; the unit of analysis is a National Sample survey (NSS) region. Each region consists of several districts within the borders of one particular state, and each of the major states is divided into several regions. The trend analysis establishes evidence of deceleration in growth rates in majority of regions in the post mid-eighties and for almost all the states in the nineties. The study also show rising inter-regional and inter-state disparities in real wages in the second part of nineties. The results of the determinant analysis suggest that occupational diversification and agricultural infrastructure in the form of irrigation are effective ways of raising agricultural wage rates. Urbanization is negatively correlated with real agricultural wages. The variables relating to human development did not show any significant relation with real wages.

1.5.4 Non-Farm Employment

Dev's (1990) paper analyses trends in rural non-agricultural employment and factors influencing inter-regional variations in the share of non-agricultural employment. The growth rates of workforce by industry groups show that total agricultural workforce in the country grew at the rate of around 1.5 percent per annum while the rate of growth of non-agricultural employment across 56 regions are sought to be examined with person day unemployment (PDUR), Gini Co-efficient of the concentration in rural assets (GINIA) and land productivity or ratio of crop output to net sown area (O / NSA) / crop output per head of agricultural population (COH). The three explanatory variables (PDUR, GINIA and O / NSA) explain around 39 to 62 percent of inter-regional variations in the shares of non-agricultural employment for persons, males and females. The correlation coefficient between agricultural productivity (output per hectare of cropped area) and incidence of person day unemployment across 56 regions increased from .30 in 1972-73 to .53 in 1977-78. This may be due to increase in the labour displacing technology and attraction of

labour from neighbouring regions in high agricultural productivity regions. The incidence of person day unemployment in 'principal industry non-agriculture' was higher than that of 'principal industry agriculture' in 1977-78. The estimates on projections of non-agricultural workforce indicate that workforce in non-agriculture at the all India level would increase by 50 percent between 1977-78 and 2001.

Basu and Kashyap (1992) review the works and studies relating to labour absorption in the farm and non-farm sector. It also examines the the reasons of growth of non-agricultural sector due to agricultural growth and exploring rural-urban employment linkages through micro level study conducted in 1989-90 in different districts of some states of our country. Most of the available studies lend support to the 'residual' sector hypothesis regarding the emergence of the non-farm rural employment, implying that relative population pressure and unemployment are the determinant factors. The author argued that such a generalized hypothesis is not satisfactory, as it tends to conceal the role of agricultural development process. The micro level studies that were cast over different typologies of agricultural development give some clue to the process that lead to the emergence of non-agricultural sector. It turn out that it is not the level of agricultural productivity but the cropping mix, particularly in favour of cash crops, that lead to the emergence of the 'farmer-entrepreneur'. Wide spread distribution of cold storage facilities in Farukhabad district, growth of processing units in Hoshangabad district and emergence of agro-processing units such as sugar, champaign, raisin and tomato - ketchup units in Nasik district support this phenomenon. As a matter of fact, as the findings of micro level studies in nine districts suggest that growth of agro-based activities is more in small and medium towns than villages. Migration process and urban accessibility play important role in determine the non farm employment. Micro level studies demonstrate that temporary migration labour force from rural to urban area account for a sizable portion of work force in various economic activities of the urban centre.

Basant's (1993) paper focuses on diversification of economic activities at the household level and also analyses the factors, which determine the occupational diversification. This study was based on primary survey conducted by Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR) in 30 villages belonging to five different districts of Gujarat in 1987-89. Households mainly engaged in cultivation, scarcity

income than other households. Beside average number of source of income was higher among landed than among landless households. A significant proportion of non-agricultural workers based in rural areas was commute to nearby towns for work. The proportion of commuters was high in villages located near the towns. For both males and females, the WPRs and the number of activities per worker were higher in those villages where the proportion of poor households was high. Landlessness, proximity to town, density of population, literacy, secondary and technical education is negatively related to WPR and the number of activities per worker is positively to the proportion of non-agricultural workers. The proportion of irrigated area, availability of cultivated area per agricultural worker and the size of the village were not significantly related to any of the variables.

Chadha's (1993) paper focuses on steady expansion of non-farm sector in rural India, type of people engaged in non-farm against those in farm activities, earning / wage differentials between the two sets of employments, the modes of employment prevailing in agriculture against those in non-agriculture and so on. The rural workforce is gradually shifting from low productivity agriculture sector to more productive non-agricultural job of diverse variety, partly in rural areas themselves and partly in urban areas. By the close of the eighties, nearly one-fourth of rural male and about one sixth of rural female workers were engaged in different types of non-agricultural activities. In particular, the eighties witnessed a significant turning pointing of rural employment structure when the incremental rural workforce went mostly to non-agricultural sectors. While during the seventies, agriculture was a big absorber of incremental workforce. The mode of employment too is undergoing significant changes while self employment is on the decline, both in agriculture as well as non-agriculture, increase in wage labour and their risings pace of actualization are the emerging realities of the eighties. The wage rate for non-agricultural employment is significantly higher than for agricultural work. Gender differential in wage rate are also found. The wage rate for female workers for any specified variety of employment is lower than the corresponding wage rate for male workers.

Eapen's (1995) paper focuses on inter-district variations in non-agricultural employment of Kerala during 1970's and 1980's and also analyses the determinants of rural non-agricultural employment through a correlation analysis. The male non-agricultural employment increased from about 39 percent in 1971 to 43 percent in 1981. But in 1991, almost the same proportions of male and female workers were

engaged in non-agricultural activities i.e. 44 percent. The share of non-agriculture in rural employment varies from 23 percent in Idukki in 1991 to 57 percent in Kozhikode and 56 percent in Trichur (for males). Other districts of Kerala where it is substantially higher than the state average for males are Ernakulam (52 percent), Alleppey (49 percent) and Malappuram (46 percent). Female non-agricultural employment is much above the state average in Kozhikode, Kottayam, Alleppey, Quilan and Trivandrum while Palghat reveals a low and near constant share. For the state as a whole, the tertiary sector accounts for almost 30 percent of the rural male workforce while the share of secondary sector is about 15 percent. A high degree of commercialization, close rural-urban linkages, rapidly declining landman ratios, increase in the proportion of marginal holdings and growing level of literacy have historically played an important role in generating a high level of non-agricultural employment in rural Kerala.

Unni's (1996) paper focuses on diversification of economic activities and participation in non-agricultural employment from the perspective of an individual worker in a rural household. This study was based on intensive survey of 3,760 households consisting cultivators, agricultural labourers, households industry and other non-agricultural households in 30 villages belonging to five districts of Gujarat state in India 1988-89. Households in rural Gujarat diversify their economic activities through two processes. That is, by increasing the number of workers in the households and / or by each worker undertaking more than one economic activity. In this paper, the author analyzed the second type of process and also discuss the determinants of the individual household's member's choice of economic activities. These determinants are: (a) individual characteristics: age and education; (b) household's characteristics: value of land holding and value of other productive assets and (c) external regional factors: village wage rate, distance from the nearest town and density of village population. Participation in economic activity declines with age irrespective of the choice of primary sector. According to the model, while older men tend to specialize in agricultural activities, better-educated men specialize in non-agricultural activities. Men in households with a very high value of land and other assets also have a higher probability of specializing in non-agricultural activities. Specialization in one non-agricultural activity is also encouraged by external regional factors such as a higher population density, closeness to town and in better-developed villages. Diversification, in terms of multiple activities per worker is encouraged by

access to land, except at a very high value of land and other assets. Younger and less educated men and women also engaged in multiple activities. The probability of agricultural workers undertaking multiple activities is higher with greater distance of the village from a nearby town.

Unni (1998) in her article discusses the various issues related to the growth of the non-agricultural sector, the causes and consequences of such a development and its impact on poverty. This is attempted through a detailed review of the recent Indian literature over the last decades, on the growth of non-agricultural employment and poverty.

1.5.5 Indebtedness of Agricultural Labourers

Sajjad (1998) conducted a comprehensive survey in the years of 1995 and 1996 in 85 sample villages consisting of 850 landless labour households of Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh to study the conditions of landless labourers. The high growth rate of landless labourers in this district is the result of rapid decline in the number of workers engaged in household industries and in other occupations, fragmentations of holdings, and rise in the cost of agricultural inputs and increase in the number of intermediaries. Landless labourers did not get employment for the whole year in the agricultural sector. On an average a labourer gets work in the agricultural sector for 131.2 days in a year. The wage rates in the agricultural sector are also low and vary across sex, operations and seasons. The growth of employment in the non-agricultural sector in the study area is a result of distress phenomenon of unemployed agricultural labourers who are forced to undertake non-farm work either inside the villages or as daily commuters to nearby city area or as seasonal migrants to some far urban centers. The average annual per capita income of landless labourers was Rs. 2, 444 /-. The major share of family budget (68.6 percent) was spent on food and clothing followed by social ceremonies (5.2 percent) and education (3.2 percent). Most of the landless labour households (81.8 percent) were under debt. The debt was mainly taken from professional moneylenders, co-operative credit societies, landlords, relatives and friends.

Purukayastha (2001) conducted a study on the incidence and extent of indebtedness in rural areas of Assam. It is a great tragedy that when almost all the major states of India recorded a steady sharp fall in the share of informal sources in the recent past, the sample villages of Assam registered a reversal of the trend during

the economic liberalization period (1991). The share of the organized sector subsidized loan has declined considerably in recent times. In fact, not a single household was provided with a subsidized loan carrying rate of interest less than 10 percent. Out of 256 sample households, only 44 households constituting just 17 percent of the sample got loans different organized agencies over the last twenty years (1979-80 to 1999-00). The IRDP (SGSY) beneficiaries accounted for as high a 73 percent of all beneficiary households. The Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana' aims at covering groups of beneficiaries including self-help groups rather than providing assistance to individuals. In this respect, the situation of Assam is worst. This is a very significant move although the ground work for group loan is only in the infant stage in the country. The development of co-operative credit infrastructure in this region is the urgent need of the hour so as to replace the dominant position of the informal sources in the rural scene of the state of Assam.

1.5.6 Level of Living of Agricultural Labourers

Lal and Mathen (1948) conducted a comparative quantitative study of the living conditions of shopkeepers, cultivators and agricultural labourers of rural areas in West Bengal. This study included 1136 cultivators, 218 farm labourers and 138 shopkeepers. As expected, the labourers are the worst off economically, educationally, and as regards additions. The housing and other environmental conditions are also less satisfactory. The difference is particularly marked in smoking habit. But for a few exceptions, labourers live under worst conditions of overcrowding and the shopkeepers live in relatively less overcrowded houses. Again the roofs of the hamlets of the labourers leak much more frequently than those of cultivators, while the shopkeepers have mostly good roofs over their heads. Besides, the premises and the rooms of labourer's houses are much dirtier than those of the cultivators and shopkeepers. In spite of these handicaps, their state of health, duration of sickness and nutritional status are apparently no worse if not better than the other two groups. But it is true that the reporting of sickness and its duration to the investigators was less satisfactory amongst the illiterate classes due to forgetfulness or less sensitivity to sickness.

Panikar (1978) has made an attempt to study the levels of living of selected agricultural labour households in Kuttanad, the 'rice bowl' of Kerala. According to him most studies on levels of living of agricultural labour are based almost

exclusively on trends in real wage rates of male agricultural labour, he has drawn different conclusions about the trends in the real wage rates of agricultural labour. According to him, for studying the levels of living of agricultural labour, the level of income is more important than the wage rate, nominal or real. The wage rate is only one of the determinants of income; the other crucial factor is the level of employment. This paper also shows that the incidence of under nutrition and malnutrition is a reflection of the very low level of income which in turn is due to inadequate employment opportunities. That such acute poverty and starvation prevails in a region, which has been in the forefront of the new agricultural technology, is a significant.

Singh, Gian (1986) made an endeavour to study the levels of livings of the agricultural labourers and marginal farmers in the rural areas of Punjab to the year 1980-81. The aim is to study the sources, composition and patterns of income and consumption of three income categories of the agricultural labourers and the marginal farmers in three differentially developed districts (Ludhiana, Bhatinda and Ropar) of Punjab. In addition, an attempt has been made to study their assets and liabilities. There is much similarity in the income and consumption pattern of agricultural labourers across the income categories and districts. By virtue of their being agricultural labourers, the main source of their income is agricultural wages. There is also much similarity in the income and consumption pattern of marginal farmers across the income categories and districts. The main source of income of marginal farmers is farm income. Both marginal farmers and agricultural labourers boost of their income by resorting to subsidiary occupations like dairying, shoe-making and trade on a very small scale. But the average household and average per capita income levels of the marginal farmers are marginally lower than those of the agricultural labourers in the rural areas of Punjab. Both spend the major part of their income on food grains, milk and milk products, clothes and sugar and gur / khandsari. They spend small proportions of the total consumption expenditure on services, marriages and other social ceremonies and durable commodities. The household durable assets account for the major proportion in the value of the total assets of agricultural labourers and marginal farmers over the income categories and across the districts. About three-fourths of agricultural labour households and four-fifths of marginal farm households in the rural areas of Punjab are under debt. The burden of outstanding loans is considerably high in all the income categories and the districts.

Lalita and Sharada (1988) conducted a study in three regions (Rajendranagar, Tirupati and Bapatla) of Andhra Pradesh on socio-economic conditions of 30 farms labour families. Most of the family members were found to be illiterate. The data showed that the total expenditure was more than the total income in two regions - Rajendranagar, Tirupati. The deficit between the income and expenditure was met by taking debts. The results indicated that a major percentage of total expenditure was on cereals in all three regions. The expenditure on pulses was slightly more in Rajendranagar than in Bapatla and Tirupati. The expenditure on non-food items showed that expenditure on clothing forms a major portion in all three regions. Most of the families were living in their own houses. The percentage of expenditure on maintenance of home was more in Bapatla followed by Rajendranagar and Tirupati. Least importance was given to education in all three regions. Majority of the families in Bapatla and Tirupati did not have separate bathroom, and they were taking bath in an open place only. Farm labour families in Bapatla were better than the families in Rajendranagar and Tirupati may be because of the dependence on wages as the major source of income in the latter regions.

Ansari's (1992) study has focused on socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers in one of the least developed regions of Uttar Pradesh, Bundelkhand where there is little economic activity except agriculture. Employment availability in agriculture is irregular and low. It is estimated that an agricultural labourer, on an average, was employed on wage in his household occupational activities for 216 days of the year. If full employment is being equated to 300 days of work in a year, an average agricultural labourer is found without employment for as long as period as about 3 months in a year. There is some evidence of a decline in the real wage rate over the 1970's and 1980's of farm work. An average agricultural labourer is estimated to have earned Rs. 840 during the years of reference. They spent a higher proportion of time in self-employment than in wage employment. The author also considers the likely impact of technological improvement in agriculture on the absorption of labour within agriculture.

Tripathy and Pradhan (1996) have dealt with the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers with special reference to Orissa. The study shows that most of the agricultural labourers are from the tribal segment and weaker section of the community and belong to the category of landless or marginal farmers. They are unorganized, scattered and illiterate. It has been revealed that a landless agricultural

labourer was employed about six months in a year. The prevailing wages were lower than the minimum wages fixed by the Government. The actual wages paid to the agricultural labourers lagged behind the real wages until 1988, which were not sufficient to meet their basic needs.

Jha (1997) in his study of agricultural labour in Purnea district of Bihar describes the conditions of agricultural labourers in the past and present and visualizes the future and utilizes secondary and primary sources of data. It is a study at macro, regional and micro levels. It tries to relate the findings of these in one direction, i.e. changes in the labour process in the changing socio-economic scenario in the process of agricultural development. He has rightly searched the need for analysis of this type. However, it seems that the findings are over shadowed on information collected from secondary sources and personal acquaintance rather than from information gathered through questionnaire / schedule. Though the author has attempted to make his study more analytical, it remains descriptive. It is a good collection of materials on the subject and it would be better to view the work in the light of raising more issues than solving them.

Rajuladevi's (2001) study attempts to measure variations in the levels of living of total 200 landless labour households equally distributed between BCs (Backward Classes) and SCs (Scheduled Caste) in wet (V_1 and V_1) and dry (V_3 and V_4) villages of Tamil Nadu, South India. The landless household's food intake data was collected during slack and peak season and compared to find variations in food intake among BCs and SCs within and between wet and dry villages. The per capita and per day cereals intake of 284.09 grams in wet and 262.24 grams in dry villages is very low compared to an intake of 460 grams per capita per day recommended by ICMR (1989). Consumption of clothing was also very low in the study villages of Tamil Nadu. Landless women labourers had suffered in diseases like fever and headache, back pain, chest pain, high blood pressure, asthma and ulcers. Most of the houses of landless labourers are kutcha houses which do not give protection against wind, rain and cold; they have inadequate lighting and ventilation, no separate arrangement for keeping animals, and lack basic sanitation, drinking water and the most fundamental requirements for hygiene. This study has described how the landless low incomes went hand in hand with other forms of deprivation, concerning fuel and water, quantity and quality of food intake, housing, clothing and access to healthcare.