

Culture of Tobacco

Culture of Tobacco:
An Ethnographic Enquiry
into the Socio-Economic Mobility
of Dalits of Rural India

By

Chikkala Kranthi Kumar

Foreword by N. Sudhakar Rao, Ph.D. (Rochester)

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P U B L I S H I N G

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FOREWORD

Accepting the dictums “no society is static” and “change is ubiquitous” social scientists have been relentlessly trying to capture the dynamic nature of society. Various theoretical frameworks and models have been developed for comprehending the social and culture change round the world in order to understand not only the present but also the future of society. In the present book the author attempts to describe the micro-level changes observed by him closely in a rural community in coastal Andhra Pradesh.

The subject of social change in India has drawn the attention of anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists for a long time. Starting from the social reforms initiated during the colonial regime to the globalization in the 21st century, scholars are concerned with the orthogenetic and hetero-genetic changes in Indian society. Historical and civilizational approaches are employed to account for the changes, and the changing processes are explained using the concepts sanskritization, westernization, modernization and so on. Urbanization and industrialization are other important forces that affected the Indian society. Another new concept that has come into circulation to explain the changes is globalization which connects with the global markets and global communities with communication networks. Given the complexity, historicity and the scope of the subject no single theoretical perspective would be adequate to address the issues related to social and culture change in India.

Attempts have been made so far to understand the micro-level changes occurred in the post-independence period in the areas of socio-economic conditions, health, communication, infrastructures and so on, as a result of the government initiatives that changed administrative structures, policies made and programmes implemented in the modernization of Indian society. At the micro level the focus has been on the changes in the traditional social hierarchy, economic and gender inequality among others. A major thrust has been to find out the impact of programmes and scheme launched for poverty alleviation and empowerment of women and marginalized sections of the society. Some studies also attempted to study changes as consequences of industrialization, urbanization, mining and so

on. The recent trend is to gauge the impact of globalization. A few have focused on specific social categories such as scheduled castes and tribes.

This book is about documenting the changes observed in rural Andhra in the particular instance of tobacco cultivation, processing and market. The macro changes brought about to affect micro changes are linked with the institutional framework of international trade of tobacco and development of tobacco industries in the country. Government intervention to modernize tobacco cultivation and help tobacco growing farmers is a conscious effort to modernize the Indian economy. The present work keeps Dalits in the centre of rural community having social networking with others and tries to examine the impact of tobacco cultivation and the tobacco industry on the Dalit. Today, the scheduled castes (SC) who prefer to call themselves as Dalit, the oppressed, rather than SC or Harijan, and feel the new term gives dignity and respect and is appropriate to describe their condition, others being derogatory.

The commercialization of crops has played significant role in changing Indian rural society following the introduction of capitalist economy by the British. With the land regulations initiated by the Colonial state and land reformations brought by the Indian society, the traditional rural agrarian society has got disturbed. The setting up of industries locally and the spread of Indian market worldwide has certain impact on the rural population, but this has not attracted much attention from anthropologists and sociologists in India. During the colonial period the rural society was greatly affected by the cultivation and export of cotton and indigo, but around the Second World War the export of tobacco became significant. It was imported by the former Soviet Union, UK and USA where cigarette manufacturing companies existed and the consumption of tobacco in various forms was high. The farmers in coastal Andhra Pradesh who were experts in agriculture with skilled labour got attracted to tobacco culture for its high return due to its export to foreign countries. The success of tobacco has also encouraged the farmers beyond the coastal area. The profits were so good to the farmer that governments at the state and centre set up regulatory mechanisms for ensuring good crop with local research inputs and market regulations to avoid the middle men. Further, the local industries set up in Bombay, Hyderabad and other places increased the demand for tobacco. Of course now tobacco cultivation has been under government control due to health hazards associated with tobacco consumption, but tobacco cultivation has not declined but has continued to grow, so farmers do not suffer from losses.

Since a large number of Dalits in coastal Andhra Pradesh are engaged in tobacco cultivation and tobacco processing set up in small towns, it was felt necessary to study if there is any impact on the lives of the Dalits in particular and rural community in general. The research has been well planned with a quasi-experimental design wherein two villages in the same cultural zone were selected. These villages are located in Prakasham district, one of the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh where the main workers fall under the category of agriculturalists and agricultural labour. In the district tobacco has been cultivated in some of the villages for more than 50 years, and in the same district there are villages where tobacco has never been cultivated. One village from each of the categories has been chosen for conventional anthropological study in a comparative perspective.

The study has clearly brought to relief very significant impact of tobacco among the Dalits of Karavadi village where tobacco has been cultivated for decades when compared to the Dalits in Veerabhadrapuram where tobacco has never been cultivated. In the latter the traditional jajmani relations continue to exist, the Dalits experiencing oppression by the dominant caste without any voice to raise. They are excluded in all aspects of life; politically powerless, economically poor, dependent on the land owners, they have their own temples and some have converted to Christianity and built their own church. The practice of untouchability can be seen in one form or other in this village. On the other hand the Dalits in Karavadi have improved their economy due to employment available all through the year in tobacco cultivation, processing and industry. Some have purchased and some have taken agricultural land on lease from the dominant caste members who could not cultivate all their land due to the high capital investment required for tobacco cultivation. The improved economy enabled them to send their children to schools and colleges including professional courses like medicine and engineering as well as polytechnic courses. More government and private schools were established in the village as the villagers, Dalits as well as others, are able to support the education of their children. The Dalits are able to make use of the provision of reservations in educational institutions and employment. Their children are able to get employment in railways and other government departments, and this has further improved their socio-economic conditions. Another interesting aspect is the development of Leftist ideology with the establishment of tobacco industries. Left parties are keen on attracting the labour force into their fold for political gain and in doing so they have been demanding and have launched a number of protests for higher wages both in industry and in agriculture. In order to

strengthen the ground the progressive upper castes became liberal, breaking the rigidity of caste relations; the Dalits are allowed to draw water from the same well used by upper castes. The Dalits also participate in Hindu rituals in the temple along with non-Dalits. Even some of the lower castes consider that the Dalits in the village are socially and economically superior to them, though they grade them lower on the scale of purity and pollution. Political consciousness and integration seems to be very important as the position of village *Sarpanch* which is not reserved has been captured by the Dalits with the support of some of the non-Dalits. Non-Dalits do dine with the Dalit on occasions such as weddings, which cannot be dreamed of in Veerabharapuram village. All these radical changes, the author argues, can be attributed to the tobacco cultivation and tobacco industry in and around the village.

The study makes the very significant point that empowerment of the Dalit with economic improvement and political integration can bring radical change in rural India. There have been many government initiatives to improve the economic conditions of the Dalits but have had only a marginal effect. Tobacco cultivation, however, which is not a government initiative but has extended support to the tobacco farmers, has a lasting impact on the Dalits. Any ideology, whether that of the Left or any other genuine integrationist approach coming from the non-Dalits, will go a long way for a positive change in the traditional rural society.

The present book hopes to generate new interest among anthropologists and sociologists in looking at rural communities in global markets and globalization. Studies are needed to understand the changes of rural communities under non-governmental initiatives, particularly the commercialization of crops, to grasp the changes that are taking place in the rural society. More systematic studies are needed to test the hypothesis that government programmes are supplemental in nature if the rural poor are supported by strong local economic structures.

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GLOSSARY

- Agmark.** A certification mark employed on agricultural products in India approved by Government of India's *Directorate of Marketing and Inspection*. The *AGMARK* is legally enforced in India by the *Agricultural Produce (Grading and Marking) Act of 1937* (and amended in 1986). The present *AGMARK* standards cover quality guidelines for 205 different commodities.
- Ahadannam.** Left-over cold rice of the previous night. This is generally eaten with curds and some pickle.
- Almirah.** An Indian term for closet or cupboard.
- Alugu.** A wooden rod with an iron piece at its end.
- Ambathirunala.** A village religious festival held every six months in honour of the goddess Amba.
- Anganwadi.** Literally meaning "courtyard shelter" in Hindi. A typical *Anganwadicentre* provides basic health care in Indian villages. It is a part of the Indian public health-care system.
- Ankammathirunala.** A village religious festival held annually in the summer months in honour of the goddess Ankamma.
- Bajra.** A species of millet.
- Bhakti.** An Indian term for devotion to God.
- Bidi.** Indian cigarette filled with tobacco flake.
- Boad.** A Dalit caste, predominantly found in the State of Orissa.
- Cröre.** A number in Indian English, it stands for ten million.
- Dalit.** Dalit, a term that has become synonymous with Untouchable, is the name that many ex-untouchables, especially politically aware individuals, have chosen for themselves. The term means "oppressed" and highlights the persecution and discrimination they face on daily basis.
- Dante.** A type of spade.
- Darga.** A term for a Sufi Islamic shrine built over the grave of a revered religious figure, often a Sufi saint or dervish.
- Gitta.** A term used for the famous breed of Ongole bulls.
- Godown.** A warehouse.
- Gramamunsab (or Munsif).** A village level revenue official.
- Gramapanchayat.** A system of local governance at the village level.
- Guntaka.** The *giintaka*, or scuffle, which is peculiar to the Telugu country. It consists of a beam about four feet long to which the draught

pole is attached, as also an iron blade, which is fixed by two wooden holders to each end in such a way as to be forced into the soil when the implement is drawn along. The driver often stands on the beam so as to ensure that the blade sinks to an adequate depth. The surface of the soil being thus prepared, the land is ready for the plough as soon as sufficient rain has fallen.

Idly. A traditional breakfast cake in south Indian households, made by steaming a batter consisting of fermented black lentils (de-husked) and rice.

Indiramma. A welfare scheme being implemented in Andhra Pradesh. Named after the late Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, the scheme aims at providing subsidized houses to families below the poverty line (BPL).

ITI. Industrial Training Institute.

Jajmani. The jajmani (or yajmani) system was an Indian social caste system and its interaction between upper castes and lower castes. It was an economic system where lower castes performed various functions for upper castes and received payment in kind – usually in the form of grain.

Jeetha. A local term which means a bonded labourer. This system has survived for many years and is hereditary in nature.

Jowar. Sorghum, one of the major staple food grain crops in India. Next to wheat, the biggest cultivated land in India is utilized to produce jowar.

Kaifayat. Historical accounts.

Katcha (or **kutchha**). A house is made up of mud or hay stack or tin roof, which cannot withstand extreme weather conditions.

Kirana. A small neighbourhood retail store.

Korra. A type of millet.

Kula panchayat. Caste-based body of elders generally set up to resolve disputes of the members of the community.

Lakh. An Indian English term for one hundred thousand.

Lungis. Also known as a sarong, a traditional garment worn around the waist.

Madiga. One of the Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The traditional occupation of this caste is leather-making.

Malas. One of the Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh. Traditionally Malas are agricultural labourers.

Manikalu. A unit of measurement: one *manika* is equal to two kilograms.

Mandal. Another word for Tehsil, an administrative division of some countries of South Asia.

Masjid. Mosque – the Muslims’ place of worship.

Mutah. A group of labourers mobilized for performing a given task like agricultural operations.

Natu. Transplantation of paddy.

Neem. A tree (*L. AzadirachtaIndica*) highly valued in India for its medicinal properties. Its bark, leaves, roots and seeds are used for preparing medication for a number of ailments. The neem twigs are very commonly used for brushing teeth.

Paisa. A unit of currency in India, one-hundredth of a rupee.

Palle. A residential area predominantly inhabited by persons of a particular caste.

Paleru. A system of bonded labourers.

Pan (or **paan**). A stimulating preparation of betel leaf combined with areca nut and/or cured tobacco. Slaked lime paste is commonly added to bind the leaves. It can be consumed with or without tobacco.

Panchayat. Local government at the village or small town level in India; the Sarpanch is in charge of it.

Pucca. Dwellings that are designed to be solid and permanent. Pucca homes are typically made of concrete, stone, clay tiles, and/or metal, in contrast to kutcha homes made of mud and organic material.

Puja. Prayer.

Purikosa. A thin rope, thicker than the thread or twine used for binding purposes. Its Hindi equivalent is *sutli*.

Rabi crops or **Rabi harvest.** Agricultural crops sown in winter and harvested in the summer season.

Ragulu. An annual plant widely grown as a cereal in the arid areas of Africa and Asia.

Ryotwari. One of the two main systems used in some parts of British India to collect revenues from the cultivators of agricultural land. These revenues included undifferentiated land taxes and rents, collected simultaneously. Where the land revenue was imposed directly on the *ryots* (the individual cultivators who actually worked the land) the system of assessment was known as ryotwari. Where the land revenue was imposed indirectly, through agreements made with *zamindars*, the system of assessment was known as zamindari.

Sadda. A type of millet.

Sannalu. A variety of rice.

Sarpanch. The head of the local government institution, the Panchayat.

Savara. A measure for gold. It is a corruption of the English term “sovereign”.

Scheduled Caste. All those ex-untouchable castes that are listed in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 under the Article 341 of the Constitution of India.

Scheduled Tribe. All those tribes or tribal communities that are listed in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 under the Article 342 of the Constitution of India.

Subah. A province.

Taluk. 1. (Government, Politics & Diplomacy) a subdivision of a district; a group of several villages organized for revenue purposes. **2.** (Government, Politics & Diplomacy) a hereditary estate. From Urdu *ta'alluk*, estate, ultimately from Arabic.

Upasarpanch. The second highest functionary in the Panchayat, after the Sarpanch.

Variga. A variety of millet.

Zamindari. A way of collecting taxes from peasants. The zamindar was considered a lord, and would collect all taxes on his lands and then hand over the collected taxes to the British authorities (keeping a portion for himself). The similarities to medieval feudalism are evident. Under the British, they resembled landed gentry (although they lived similarly privileged lives under the Mughals) and sometimes styled themselves as little kings, or rajas. Some new zamindars were old rajas. Many descended from eighteenth-century revenue speculators and military adventurers. Several families are of very ancient lineage, like those claiming Gujjar ancestry, and had always been independent rulers at earlier periods of Indian history. They frequently intermarried with the ruling families of the princely states. Their tenants numbered from dozens to many thousands, and under imperial law had to pay rent to zamindars to retain rights to their land. Under the zamindari system all the public lands were brought under the zamindar's control.

CHAPTER ONE

CULTURE OF TOBACCO TRIGGERED EMPOWERMENT: AN INTRODUCTION

Agricultural economy remains the foundation of Indian rural social structure. The agricultural changes, in terms of land tenure, landholding, and supply of irrigation facilities and commercialization of crops, have brought substantial changes in the social relationships among the rural communities. The post-independence era and the more recent liberalization era have witnessed commercialization of crops in a big way, and also created new occupational categories that are impacting traditional social relationships. Among the commercial crops that are being grown in Andhra Pradesh, tobacco holds a very important position. Women play a significant role in cultivation of tobacco by performing various types of work, unlike in the cultivation of other crops.

This book seeks to understand the socio-economic impact of tobacco cultivation on rural society – particularly the agricultural labourers in Andhra Pradesh, who are mostly Dalits. They add up to the large unorganized labour force in agriculture. These women belong to the class of small and marginal farmers and landless agricultural labourers (Census of India, 1991). As in other agricultural sectors, child labour is prevalent in tobacco cultivation, particularly in areas where poverty is endemic. Often the entire family is involved in the cultivation and harvesting process. Children provide “adjustable labour” at peak periods and can contribute to a third of the labour input. Tobacco cultivation, unlike that of other crops, is labour intensive, provides better wages, generates employment almost all the year round and imparts skills to workers which cause migration of families. Since tobacco cultivation has instigated changes in the traditional social system, it is imperative to study such changes.

History of Tobacco

The tobacco found in cigarettes, *bidi*, snuff, etc., is the product of the tobacco plant, which grows naturally in North and South America but is now being cultivated in other parts of the world as well. The tobacco plant first grown in America is believed to date as far back as 6000 BC. The American Indians were the first to realize the potential healing powers of the tobacco plant. Tobacco leaves were used for both medicinal and religious purposes, as far back as 1 BC.

Tobacco: Indian Scenario

About 100 countries produce tobacco in the world, but the major producers are China, India, Brazil, the United States, Turkey, Zimbabwe and Malawi, which together produce over 80 per cent of the world's tobacco. China alone accounts for over 35 per cent of world production, and thus variability of production in China directly affects the production figures at the world level.

India is the third largest producer of tobacco, next only to the US and China. Tobacco is one of the commercial crops grown in India which has good export value. It is also an important source of employment and income for a large number of growers and labourers and provides employment to more than 60 lakhs people who are engaged in the farming, curing, redrying, packaging, grading, manufacturing, distribution, export, and retailing activities.

An amount of Rs 10,000 crores is added annually to the national income through excise collection and export earnings. The cultivation of tobacco is only 0.3 per cent of the total cultivated area in the country. The area under cultivation for tobacco in 1998–99 was 510,000 hectares, which decreased to 260,000 hectares in 2001 before picking up again. On the other hand, the productivity of tobacco has steadily increased from about 750 kilograms/hectare in 1949–50 to about 1451 kilograms/hectare in 1998–99 and then to about 1506 kilograms/hectare during 2002–03. India is a major world producer of tobacco, with an output of approximately 600 million kilograms (Central Tobacco Research Institute, 2002–03).

There is regional variation in tobacco production in Andhra Pradesh, where this crop is mainly used for producing cigarettes. It is followed by Karnataka. *Bidi* tobacco is grown in Gujarat and Karnataka, while *hookah*

and chewing tobacco are grown mainly in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. Different varieties of tobacco are grown in the country, but only the Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV) is exported (Uniyal, 1980: 43–44).

Indian Virginia Tobacco (also known as Indian cigarette tobacco) was first planted in India in 1920. Earlier, the Indian Leaf Tobacco Division of the Imperial Tobacco Company had been manufacturing cigarettes in India by importing tobacco from abroad, mainly from the United States. Till 1928, the Virginia tobacco produced was exported as sun-cured; it was only from 1929 that the curing was being done in India. The USSR starting importing Indian Virginia tobacco from 1956 on a small scale, which slowly grew in volume. Some other East European countries have also regularly imported Indian tobacco (Venkateswarlu, 1980: 73).

Tobacco in Andhra Pradesh

In India, tobacco was initially grown in the Deccan region (South Central India), during 1605, and later spread to other parts. The Virginia variety of tobacco was introduced in Andhra Pradesh in 1920 by the British officers of the Indian Leaf Tobacco Development Company.

In order to promote tobacco cultivation, the Central Tobacco Research Institute was established in 1947 at Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh by the government of India. Later on, the government set up the Tobacco Board in 1976 with its headquarters in Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. The Board was mandated to provide guidance for the integrated development of the industry (Trader, 1980, p. 57). As a result, several tobacco factories were set up in Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Bengaluru. For supplying the tobacco of the required quality, several redrying factories were established. At present, more than 50 redrying factories are functioning in AP. Among the commercial crops, cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, coconut, and groundnut are prominent in Andhra Pradesh. About 90 per cent of the Flue-Cured Virginia tobacco grown in India is cultivated in Andhra Pradesh alone.

In 1989–90, the tobacco crop occupied 163,523 hectares and production was 203,134 tonnes, whereas it was 649,691 hectares, 931,345 tonnes in the case of cotton and 2,282,376 hectares and 2,081,607 tonnes respectively in the case of groundnut. In 1991–92, the tobacco-cropped area tremendously increased to 205,508 hectares, while its production also increased to 256,783 tonnes. Thereafter, the tobacco cropped area and its

production decreased. In 1998–99, the tobacco-cropped area decreased to 193,193 hectares and its production decreased to 246,137 tonnes. In 1990–91, 191,484 tonnes of tobacco was exported from Andhra Pradesh, but it rapidly decreased to 40,109 tonnes in 1998–99. So, since 1993–94 the tobacco-cropped area, production and exporting quantity has been gradually decreasing in Andhra Pradesh. Tobacco is sown during the *Rabi* season under rainy conditions. Irrigated tobacco is also cultivated in the higher soils in the districts of Guntur and Prakasam. Two varieties of tobacco, namely Virginia and *Natu*, are grown in the state. These are grown in Guntur and Prakasam districts besides East Godavari, Krishna, Nellore, Mahabubnagar and Karimnagar districts (Duvvury, 1986).

Tobacco was introduced in India by a subsidiary of the leading cigarette conglomerate British American Tobacco (BAT). Since the colonial period, tobacco crop has been dominant in Guntur district, which was split in 1970 into Guntur and Prakasam districts. A part of the tobacco growing area was taken into the Prakasam district (Reddy, 1985).

Agricultural labour in India has seen rapid feminization over the last four decades. According to the Indian census data, over the period 1961–2001 the percentage of rural women workers classified as agricultural labourers increased from 25.6 per cent to 43.4 per cent, compared to the increase from 16.2 per cent to 27.4 per cent for men (Duvvury, 1989; Government of India, 2001). Female agricultural labourers now constitute 46.9 per cent of the labour force. Census data also indicate that, in a number of states, there are as many or more female agricultural labourers than male. For instance, women constitute 53.5 per cent of the agricultural workforce in Andhra Pradesh, 58.2 per cent in Karnataka, 56.3 per cent in Maharashtra, and 50.1 per cent in Tamil Nadu (Government of India, 2001).

In Prakasam district, the food-cropped area decreased from 1,015,034 acres to 783,849 acres during the period 1989–90 to 1998–99. Non-food crops increased from 627,016,991 acres to 68,600,051 acres during the same period. Among the food crops, paddy area has gradually increased. In 1987–88 it occupied 213,877 acres, but rose to 360,992 acres in 1998–99. The area for food crops also decreased slightly. Among non-food crops, the tobacco-cropped area increased from 66,340 acres to 154,992 acres during the period 1987–88 to 1991–92. Thereafter, it slightly decreased. In 1997–98, the tobacco crop occupied 195,448 acres, but the area decreased to 166,987 acres in 1998–99. Hence, it can be seen that

among the food crops, paddy is the most important crop and among non-food crops tobacco is the most important one in Prakasam district (Agricultural Abstract, Prakasam district, 1989–90 to 1998–99).

Bank credit to the tobacco trade flows by way of credit to farmers, small packers and exporters. Crop loans to the farmers cover a wide range of operations like raising of nurseries, preparations of main fields, transplantation and other agricultural operations such as harvesting, curing and even marketing. Vijaya Bank has a wide network of branches in the main tobacco growing centres of Andhra Pradesh. These rural based branches are equipped with specially trained staff able to render all possible assistance to the small farmers. The size of crop loans thus being extended to the small farmers ranges from Rs 1000 to Rs 10,000 for a season, depending of the size of the operations of the individual farmer. The amount would sometimes even go up to Rs 50,000 based on individual requirements. Every season, crop loans are made available by the bank to about 3500 small farmers operating in the tobacco growing centres like Kovvur, Ongole, Buttaigudem, Chilakaluripet, Gopalapuram, etc., in the state of Andhra Pradesh (Hattangady, 1980:53).

Cultivation of tobacco in Guntur and Prakasam Districts in Andhra Pradesh has brought tremendous changes in the profiles of rural areas by providing employment to thousands of poor families. Employment in the tobacco industry has affected not only the social relationships in rural areas, but also the health of individual workers, who are mostly Dalits. It has created a variety of new occupations and more income and has imparted new skills. The skilled workers have started migrating to Karnataka where there is dearth of expertise in the tobacco industry. The increased incomes have also empowered families to send their children to schools.

Further, there appear to be links between these changes and Dalit activism, and political consciousness in the Districts. It is in this context that the study on impact of tobacco cultivation on the Dalit labourers in Guntur and Prakasam Districts assumes significance.

In light of the above discussion, the author has sought to find out what impact tobacco has had on the lives of Dalit labourers working in the tobacco farms and industry, the changes brought about in the traditional intra- and inter-caste relationships in villages and the economic conditions of the agricultural labourers. It is generally believed that commercialisation of

agriculture generally makes the rich farmers and moneylenders richer and the small farmers poorer. The impact of this phenomenon on the labourers and farm workers in the two villages studied is explored. We need first to ascertain whether commercialisation of crops has brought in any change in the traditional social system that is based on the rural agricultural economy. Second, we also need to find out whether the studies of tobacco cultivation and industry throw any light on the lives of labourers. Third, we also need to examine the nature of changes that are taking place among the Dalits who constitute the major labour force in the rural areas. Here it may be stated that the agricultural labourers mainly come from the lower castes and “untouchable” castes.

Commercialisation of Agriculture

There was a surge of studies on commercialisation of agriculture in India during the 1970s and 1980s. These include Raj & Reddy (1985), Rao (1985), Reddy (1985), Duvvury (1987), Bhaduri (1985), Satyanarayana (1991) and Rajashekar (1991). These studies have discussed changes in the cropping pattern, commercialisation of agriculture and its impact on employment, wages, and income distribution and land ownership at the macro level, in general, before globalisation. But these studies do not reveal any changes in agrarian relations.

Some economists and scholars like Reddy (1985), Satyasai & Viswanath (1997), Nadkarni & Vedin (1986) and Roy (2000) have observed that the commercialisation of agricultural crops has clearly increased employment opportunities for the labourers. Reddy (1989) shows that the economic, as well as the living, standards of the landless agricultural labourers are better in the villages where commercial crops like tobacco and cotton are raised. But some economists and scholars like Sen (1984), White (1984), Mukherjee (1985), Reddy (1985) and Rao (1985) have observed that the impact of the commercialisation of agriculture has made rich farmers more resourceful than the poor farmers and rich farmers often became the local money lenders. Small farmers, faced with the problems of credit and prices, depend upon traders. However, some economists and scholars such as Reddy (1985), Choudary (1985) and Rao, Rajashekar and Satyanarayana (1991) maintain that the commercialisation of agriculture has increased unemployment among casual labourers. Thus, there are contradictory opinions about the economic impact on agricultural labour due to commercialisation of crops.

The case study of Chandrasekhar Rao, Sharif, Raja, Shareb and Srinivasulu (1992) examined the impact of commercialisation of agriculture on the human labour employment in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh during 1988–89. They selected two Mandals for this case study, one with the lowest level of commercialisation (LCM), namely, Tarlupadu, and another with the highest level of commercialisation (HCM), namely, Parchur, based on the index of commercialisation. They divided farmers in the selected villages into small and large categories.

From the chosen villages in the two Mandals, 120 farmers were selected randomly. “Pre-tested schedules” were used to collect data through the survey method. The main findings of this study are: i) the expenditure on improved seeds, pesticides, machine labour and human labour alone was having a significant influence in Tarlupadu, the least commercial Mandal; ii) the marginal value product of labour was higher in both the Mandals – labourers were paid properly; and iii) the farmers of Tarlupadu Mandal (LCM) resorted to distress sale, while this problem did not arise in HCM, where mainly commercial crops were cultivated. Mono-cropping with cotton, without any rotation for years, was found to have a negative impact on farm employment and thereby on farm income in Parchur Mandal, which is highly commercialised. However, this study does not touch on the conditions of labourers or their relationships with the farmers with reference to LCM or HCM. There are studies of the farmers’ attitudes and crop selection with reference to cotton, sugarcane and tobacco (Sahai and Rahman, 2003, Janaiah, Raju and Krishanaiah, 1992), but these studies do not focus on the sociological aspects of the farmers and labourers.

Harriss-White (1984) outlines the process of commercialisation in commodity markets with reference to four regions in India. The author collected data from various government reports and other publications. The objectives of this study were to study: i) the magnitude of commercialised production; ii) the impact of commercialisation on food production; and iii) the impact of commercialisation on non-food crop production.

The study observed that with reference to Bihar, commercialisation can aid the differentiation of the peasantry and that for the bulk of producers, commercialisation was superficial. In the case of Tamilnadu, by the 20th century Tamilnadu agriculture was more commercialised than that of India as a whole with cultivators engaged in cash exchange of their major

products. In the early 20th century there was a vast increase in commercialisation of rice. In Punjab and Tamilnadu, where the market for commodities is not dominated by a separate class of merchants and where producers and merchants are one and the same persons and where production credit is not linked to the marketing of commodities, the process of commercialisation is not necessarily predatory and does not thwart progressive expansion in production. In Bihar, Tamilnadu and Mumbai, where the penetration of the market economy is not relentless, the system of commercialised agriculture may collapse and revert in some cases to subsistence. Harriss-White concludes that pre-existing production has determined long-term paths and the patterns of commercialisation in all the regions.

Tobacco

Venkateswarlu (1961) analysed the regulated cropping of tobacco in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. Because of the importance of this area in the tobacco trade, the Madras Commercial Crops Markets Act (1933) was applied to the District for regulating the marketing of tobacco. The Guntur Tobacco Market Committee was constituted in 1939. This historical account shows that the British government continuously encouraged tobacco cultivation in the country to provide raw material for the factories established in England.

Hattangady (1980) examined the system of bank credit to tobacco farmers, small packers and exporters. Crop loans to the farmers cover a wide range of operations like raising of nurseries, preparations of main fields, transplantation and other cultural operations, harvesting, curing and even marketing. But the study does not inform us about the impact of tobacco growing on the social system.

Singh and Bhatnagar (1984) attempted to study the relationship between yield of flue-cure tobacco (*Nicotiana tobacco*) and various phases of crops grown, with a view to forecasting the yield before harvest.

Singh (1992) discussed the economics of tobacco cultivation, especially in India, where the major portion of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood. He compared tobacco growing with that of other crops – cereals, pulses, oilseeds, cash crops and other crops – and identified some problems of tobacco cultivation such as capital, labour, middlemen, storage, marketing and taxation.

Chojar (2002) provided an analysis of marketing operations of the tobacco industry with special reference to Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco, which is predominantly cultivated and marketed in Andhra Pradesh. A significant impact has been found on the internal and external environment of marketing operations of the industry, and on the higher behaviour of the major buying segments, which are mainly manufacturers, domestic traders and exporters. Thus, all these studies are oriented towards economy, market, production and prospects of tobacco, rather than on the social phenomenon or relationships between producers and labourers.

Women Agricultural Labourers and Tobacco Cultivation

There are several studies about agricultural women labourers relating to their wages for different operations (Burnette, 2004; Chattopadhyay, 1982; Goyal and Kaur, 1974; Gulati, 1978; Olusi, 1997; Rajuladevi, 2000), the role and participation of women in farm businesses (Dayal and Sharma, 1993; Kaur, 1994; Saradamoni, 1987; Sisodia, 1985; Duvvury, 1989), problems of agricultural women workers (Bhattacharya and Rao, 1989; Ranjan 1982), the role of women in livestock and agriculture (Setti, 1991), the role of women on their own farm (Raghuram, 1993), conditions in contract farming (Singh, 2003), the economic conditions of men and women agricultural labourers (Jose, 1953), employment and unemployment of men and women in agriculture (Unni, 1976) and so on.

There are some other studies relating to the drudgery of women in firewood collection (Naghrhamam and Sam, 1983) and employment patterns among women and hurdles for their survival (Gulati, 1976; Shobha, et al. 1998). There are some studies about women in mushroom cultivation (Tirupati and Kaushik, 1999), girls working in cotton fields (Rayalu et al., 1999), seasonal flexibility in earnings of women (Oughton, 1993) and so on. But there are no studies on the role of women in the cultivation of tobacco, either in Andhra Pradesh or anywhere else in India. The present work attempts to fill this gap using the comparative and holistic framework of anthropology.

Social Change among Dalits

Since the author focuses on the agricultural labourers who are predominantly Dalits, it is only proper to review the socio-economic changes brought about in their lives. There are several studies of Dalits,

but only a few discuss social change or mobility among them, much less in the case of Dalits in Andhra Pradesh.

Stephen Fuchs studied the Balahis of Madhya Pradesh in 1949, providing a comprehensive ethnography of them. Another important ethnography of the Dalit castes of Tamilnadu is by Moffat (1975, 1979). The latter argues that the Dalit castes of Tamilnadu show acceptance of the principles of the caste system, but reject their position in it. However, there are others who claim that Dalits reject the caste system itself, which is evident from the different cultural practices, perceptions of caste system and so on. In the latter argument, we find Vincentnathan (1987, 1993a, 1994b), Deliege (1994, 1996) and Mosse (1994). Khare's study of Dalits (1984), which focuses on Uttar Pradesh, also more or less agrees with the latter groups. Some studies, which include Brar (1985), Juergensmeyer (1982) and Kumar (1985), focus on the socio-religious reforms, protests and attempts to raise the status of Dalits. These studies provide information on the responses of the Dalits toward the caste system that castigates their being and relegates them to a lower position. These also throw light on the possible ways and means through which the Dalits show their resentment or compliance to their low status in the study area.

Gokhale (1980) argues that the *bhakti* tradition has incorporated the Dalits into the fold of Hindu society and brought in socio-cultural and religious change among them. Therefore, a new culture is being created, replacing the old one in which the traditional idea is serving the purpose of overthrowing the traditional culture and becoming an agent of modernisation of tradition by incorporating the Dalits. Lancy's (1993) study on the conversion of Dalits to Islam, Sikhism, Christianity and Buddhism, shows the Dalits have been in search of equality. Despite conversion to other religions, they continue to be treated as untouchables in the broader Indian society.

Linch (1969), while dealing with political assertion of Jatavs of Agra, describes their aspirations for and attempts at social mobility. Patwardhan (1973), Sachidananda (1977) and Malik (1979) discuss social change among the Dalits in general, not considering any particular caste or castes. Studies that have relevance for the study include Cohn (1955) on Chamars in Uttar Pradesh, Epstein (1962) on two villages in Mysore (now Karnataka) and Alexander (1968) on Pulayans and Palayas.

Cohn (1955) shows changes among the Chamars in a village dominated by the upper-caste Thakurs. Here, the Chamars have organised themselves to achieve new power and status. Along with the struggle for power, there comes about a curious change in the customs and religion of two caste groups. The Thakurs, influenced by Western models of conduct, have become more individual-oriented and secular, and relaxed some of the traditional rules. At the same time, the Chamars have sought to improve their status by tightening the traditional rules of commensality, by giving up despised occupations and adopting Sanskritic elements of customs. The author depicts changes in family structure, political changes and religious changes in the village. The small changes in family structure that could be noted especially among Chamars, who had attained some education, were not changes in the direction of a western-influenced family, but changes in the direction of a more orthodox "Hindu family".

In Mysore (now Karnataka), Epstein (1962) made a comparative study of two villages and discussed the impact of economic factors on social institutions. One of these villages could use irrigation, the other one could not, and prosperity through agriculture did not lead to any great change in the traditional social system. The social system of the dry village changed radically in the same period. There was diversification of economic roles and relations within the village. The economic change, in turn, led to political change that broke the traditional economic relations between peasant-masters and their so-called "untouchable" clients. This led to rupture in ritual relations among individual households. As the peasant-master did not give the untouchable clients the customary ritual services, the author finds a change in economic roles and relations, and corresponding change in political and ritual roles and relations.

Alexander (1968) reported on the changes which have occurred among the Pulayas, members of a scheduled caste of Kerala. Traditionally, the Pulayas have been at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. They have gained greater economic independence through education and enactment of laws prohibiting discrimination against them. They have attained a higher status by changes in their behaviour patterns, mode of dress and common eating and drinking. The Palayas, another scheduled caste, were formerly slaves. After the abolition of slavery, they became bonded serfs of the higher castes. Their dress and personal appearance were considered abominable. Their living conditions were filthy. Now they are changing their religious rituals and pattern of living. The spread of education among them has

undermined their faith in black magic. Village barbers and washermen now serve them.

A large number of Pulayas say that high castes do accept food from their houses. There have been cases of marriages between Pulayas and those belonging to high castes. The interaction pattern between the Pulaya and higher castes has changed considerably.

There are some other studies that discuss the impact of development programmes implemented by the government for socio-economic development of the Dalits (Kamble, 1995 and Chalam, 2004). Dahiwalé (1989), in his study of Kolhapur City, has tried to examine empirically the occupational and social mobility of ex-untouchables. For the purpose of this study, 230 respondents – 200 from those engaged in modern occupations and 30 from those engaged in their traditional caste-based menial occupations – were selected from four different castes, Mahar, Dhor, Chamar and Bhangi. He finds out that among the respondents belonging to five different castes, the Mahar have shown the largest proportion of representation in modern jobs, followed by Mang, Dhor, Chamar and Bhangi. The policy of protective discrimination in favour of scheduled castes adopted by the Government of India and the job opportunities that were given by Shahu Chhatrapati and Maharashtra Government have benefited them. The study further indicates that nearly all the respondents engaged in modern professions are satisfied with their jobs and as many as 95.5 per cent of them feel that they are well accepted by upper-caste Hindus.

In Andhra Pradesh, there are about 59 Dalit castes and among them Mala and Madiga are the dominant ones in respect of numerical strength and political economy. Each of these castes has dependent castes providing services to them. A pioneering work about the Dalit castes of Andhra Pradesh was undertaken by Reddy (1952). There are two studies focusing on Malas (Rathanaiah, 1991) and Madigas (Singh, 1969). They deal primarily with the social structural relations, and though the latter discusses social change, the author does not specify the factors of change.

Venkateswarlu (1986) studied the socio-economic difference among Harijans, middle castes and upper castes, in six villages of Andhra Pradesh. For this study, he selected two villages from each region: Telangana, Circars and Rayalaseema. He found literacy very low among