INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES
INTRODUCTION

Food security is a state of existence in which people have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO)[1-2]. India is likely to be the most populous country on this planet with the population projection of 1.6 billion by 2030. Ensuring food and nutrition security is thus a challenge for India[3]. FAO (2012) estimates nearly 2 billion people to be food insecure. Six million children die of hunger every year – 17,000 every day according to 2007 report. Food riots have recently taken place in many countries across the world[4-5]. India’s high growth has had little impact on food security and the nutrition levels of its population[6-7].

Household food security is the ability of the household to secure enough food to meet nutrient requirements of all family members. It is rather critical to link national food security and household food security, because both point towards availability of food supplies in adequate quantities to meet food needs of the population for a healthy and active life. This infers that food in terms of quality, quantity, safety, cultural acceptance, and future expectations are secured, where in national food security is important to provide a foundation. In the ultimate analysis what is more important is food security for each and every household and within it to every member of the family [1, 8-10]. The ability of an individual to fully reach his/her personal and economical potential depends to a large degree on his/her level of nutrition security[11]. However, various household characteristics, such as, household income, consumption patterns, living condition, social etiquettes, tastes and preferences are the determining factors of individuals’ food security in the family [12]. Within a household, each member participates in producing commonly consumed goods and therefore contributes in achieving the desired food security.

Historically four measures have been used to measure food security, including national levels of dietary energy supply, individual food intake reports, anthropometry, and questionnaires measuring experiences of food insecurity. Monitoring food security can help to identify and understand the basic aspect of well-being of the population and to identify population subgroups or regions with unusually severe conditions [13-14].
Attempts are being made to develop tools to measure food security or insecurity in different nations. Nevertheless, research is under way to explore the feasibility of adapting these methods for use in other countries[15]. The food security measure provides independent, and specific information on the various dimension of well-being than can be inferred from income data alone[16]. Further, food security measures involve collecting data related to different aspects affecting food consumption in the food chain. The measurement of food security is crucial for governmental and development agencies to monitor and evaluate the impact of their programs at the household level [17-18]. However, validation of the tool is a necessary step to develop a household food security survey tools that can be applied ubiquitously to diverse populations and is critical for food assistance programs [9, 19]. The food security scale has been designed, not only for use in national surveys, but also for local groups wanting to determine the extent and severity of food insecurity / hunger within their own communities, using a technically well-grounded and tested method to produce local prevalence estimates of food security comparable with national and state-level standard benchmark figures [20-23].

Future health projections for 2020, reveals a low likelihood for any major increases in socioeconomic status; in fact, there has been deterioration in some countries with food shortages affecting nutrition status and food security. However, with some measures of prosperity, it is likely that there will be a decrease in family size and in the number of children in a family. Simultaneously, though, there will be variable rises, especially in urban dwellers, in the occurrence of hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and certain cancers[24].

The physical availability of food for everyone at national level, however, failed to translate much into household level food security[25]. Food choices are influenced by a complex combination of factors, including social influences, food availability and cost, nutritional value and dietary knowledge and awareness, and sensory considerations. The relative importance of these factors in promoting proper food choices also remains unclear[26-27].

In developing countries, rural women and men play different roles in guaranteeing food security for their households and communities[28]. When women are empowered economically, income flow increases. When women’s participation in
household decision-making is strengthened, not only does the overall household-asset base increase, but also its composition changes, with women typically spending a higher proportion on food and other items to meet immediate household needs. Similarly, when men along with women engage in household planning for food and nutrition security, households become more food secure.

The major factors that affect an individual’s food security are household food availability, household behaviours (including decisions and choices regarding food acquisition and intra household allocation), and the individual’s health and nutritional status. In urban areas, the main determinants of food availability at the household level are food prices and family income, access to home production (urban agriculture), and access to formal and informal transfers.

Comparing gender differences in the food habits within various cultural contexts may increase understanding of their role in public health. Gender differences in food habits and other dimensions of health behaviour are not specific characteristics of just country, they have also been reported in studies [29].

The present study focuses on assessing household security in two taluks from South Canara district, and gender issues in food distribution and food and nutrition security. Social studies of health and food security suggest a complex relationship between socio-economic status, nutrition and well being. This study bridges these fields of research, focusing attention on the intersection of education, income, access to food, and perceptions of nutrition and health.
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To study the food and nutrition security at Household level in selected families in two taluks of South Canara.
- To study the factors influencing food procurement and food distribution in the selected families.
- To study the food behaviours among family members and factors influencing the Food Security.
- To study the gender differences in food and nutrition security of selected men and women (husband and wife couples).