The present work is an attempt to depict a comprehensive and systematic picture of various productive activities of art and craft in Northern India during early medieval period in respect of their technical evolutions or devolutions on the one hand and aesthetic standard on the other.

The 1st and 2nd centuries are marked by the bumping trade and urbanism. In this age art and industries flourished as never before. The climax of old order reached in about 300 A.D. But soon this old social formation was effected with deep crisis. The crisis is clearly reflected in the description of Kali age in those portions of Purāṇas which belong to 3rd and 4th century A.D. The steps taken for solving these problems prepared the ground in about the 5th - 6th century for a new type of socio Economic and Political formation which is generally known as Indian Feudalism and this period is significant in History of India for the transition from Antiquity to Medieval or Feudalism or early medieval. The period (c 600-1200 A.D.) heralds the advent of new period in the history of land system, arts, crafts, commerce, polity, society, language and religion etc.

The gradual process of feudalisation was at work in the Socio-Economic life of the society. During the period, the peasants, artisans and merchants remain attached to their respective habitations and this fostered a close economy and
generated a sense of localism. The flourishing Indian foreign trade, based on exports of spices and silk etc to Roman Empire, lasted about hundred years or so in the 1st and 2nd centuries, faced a decline in the period under study. Urbanism, an important characteristic of the preceding period, marked by use of coins, artisanal product, trade and commerce also suffered a setback.

In spite of dampening effects of feudalism on Socio-Economic life, it will not be correct to term it as a period of absolute stagnation. Even in the declining state of urbanism—arts, crafts, trade and commerce—the associations of urban merchants intended, to some extent, to cut across the ascription lines of localism. The re-emergence of third urbanism during this period, is in itself an indication of the productive activities of numerous artisans as the terms could not have been maintained without these productive activities of these artisans. This also suggests that a gradual & continuous process of change in Socio-Economic life of Society was still on the way.

The present research is also undertaken to examine how far the new economy effected the state of contemporary arts and crafts. In this area no systematic study has so far been done. Whatever work has been done is limited in scope
and requires more thorough study in the light of the material brought to light by archaeological explorations and excavations from several sites in Northern India.

Any serious study on this problem is confronted with numerous questions such as what were the techniques and methods adopted by the artisans of early medieval period in manufacturing their artifacts, how far did these artistic and industrial products help in the reconstruction of socio-economic life of the people and what was the position of artisans and craftsmen in the contemporary society?

An attempt is made in the present work to find suitable answers to all these questions on the basis of evidence provided by archaeological excavations and contemporary literature.

Although archeology has provided much valuable data in this regard but it has not been sufficed in view of the fact that archeology can throw light only on such objects which have remained buried safely under the crust of earth. It is helpless in respect of those products which could not withstand the vagaries of time and have perished.

Even in case of the artifacts that have been unearthed undamaged it provides incomplete information. The archaeo-
logical objects are mute without tongue; they cannot explain the methods and techniques employed to give them shape and form.

In contemporary literature we can find this type of information, it is extremely useful to complete the picture. Furthermore, information about state of arts and crafts embodied in such artifacts and objects that were made of perishable material such as textile and leather objects can also be gleaned from contemporary literature. The description about the shapes and designs and manufacturing material and uses etc. of various artisanal products of that period given in literature can be utilised to validate the inferences drawn on the basis of archaeological evidence. Keeping these imperatives in view an extensive survey of the related literature, written during early medieval period was also made.

A third and none-the-less important source of information, specially about the changes that might have taken place over this long period in tools and implements, methods and techniques employed by the artisans of the period under study consisted of verbal enquiries from rural and tribal artisans who are despite many odds, still keeping the traditional arts and crafts alive in our country. They consti-
tuted a variable mine of information for this study. The insufficient evidence derived from the examination of the mute objects, from epigraphic records, numismatics and literature was substantiated and evaluated by the study of indigenous methods employed today by rural artisans in manufacturing similar objects. This enquiry was most rewarding, in that, it enlightened the researcher about the developmental process in various industries as reflected in the nature and degree of changes in tools and techniques and qualitative and quantitative variations effected in the products over the ages.

The artisanal products analysed in this work pertained to various contemporary industries such as metal, textile, wooden, leather and pot making industries. Sculptural art and painting are other areas of artists' endeavour, which were also examined to complete the picture.

The state of art and craft in any age in a society and the economic condition of the people are correlative factors. They reinforce each other. Therefore to study the development of art and craft and to understand the contemporary socio-economic structure, it is necessary to study trade and commerce and formation of cities and towns in the country. Growth of towns and cities and trade and
commerce are closely linked with progress in the field of art and craft of the period. A brief description of the town and cities and trade and commerce based on archeology and evidence gleaned from contemporary literature was also incorporated in this work in its concluding part.

In the present work all related and available sources have been utilised. Literary sources consisted of indigenous and foreign works. Archaeological sources consisted of inscriptions; and excavated material viz sculptures, pottery and stone objects.

The chief concern of this research is to depict the state of art and craft during early medieval period. But it is also intended to investigate the role of the artisanal products on the reconstruction of socio economic life of the people. Together data in this regard coins and inscriptions were found very useful. Archaeological excavations have yielded a significant number of coins of different metals. The coinage of that period made a useful source to understand the state of economy of the period.

The period under study has been remarkable for sculptural activities. In order together information about the progress of sculptural art during the period, works on sculptural
Regarding the sources belonging to the field of literature, the original works written in the form of smritis and the DharamSāstras have been taken into account. Commentaries of secular and religious texts were particularly helpful in studying socio economic condition of the people during the period. On the laws of Manu commentaries have been written by Medhātithi, Nandana, Kulluka and Rāmchandra etc. These authors belonged to different parts of the country. Medhātithi’s commentary throws valuable light on the changes that were gradually taking place in contemporary society. The Mitākasāra written by Vijñānesvāra is also an important digest of smriti. Still more useful digests consulted for the present work were Smriticandrikā of Devānabhaṭṭa and Kṛtyakalpatru of Lakṣmīdhara. The Yājñavalkya smṛti also provided much useful information about the social and economic state of contemporary society. The Śukranītīsāra has been utilised to the fullest for the present work.
The purāṇas which were generally written during 900 to 1200 A.D. have also been consulted as they provide information about the changes (specially in religious rituals) in the society of the time.

Agni Purāṇa, Viṣṇu Purāṇa and Garuḍa purāṇa are among the Puranic literature extensively utilised for this work, specially in studying the socio religious condition of the people of that age.

Rājatarāṅgini of Kalhaṇa and Naiṣadhacharita of Śrīharsa which are mainly historical records of secular nature have been extensively used as important sources for the present research.

Other literary sources consulted for the study of socio economic conditions of the people of Northern India during early medieval period included: Kāvyamimāṃsā and Karpūra- mañjarī of Rājashekhara, Tilakmañjarī of Dhanapāla, the court poet of Bhoja etc.

These and many other literary works produced during the period under study including books written by Jaina ascetics such as Brahatkathākosa of Hariśena, Kathakośaprakarṇa of Jinesvara sūri, Akhyānakamanikosa of Nemichandra etc. have been consulted.
The literary works have mostly been found to embody description of various artifacts which match and corroborate to their real physical shape and design and material used. This confirmation was present in most of the cases referred to in this study. Corroborative evidence was fully availed to reach the truth about the objectives sought to be achieved in the present work.

The first chapter of the study deals with the development of metal industry. The metal industry turned out amazingly varied types of objects for both utilitarian as well as decorative and ornamental purposes. The artisans produced a large variety of things ranging from agricultural implements and war weapons to household articles and ornaments. They used both pure metals and alloys which shows that they were not only highly skilled but also knew metal chemistry. The industry is found to have reached its acme during the period under study.

Description of textile industry is embodied in chapter second. This industry chiefly involving spinning and weaving is found quite thriving in Northern India. Literary and other sources testify to its being in a progressive stage. In the sculptures collected from Bengal, Bihar and other places women are shown wearing embroidered saris. Tools and
techniques in use in textile industry as found in excavations are similar to the ones used by weavers of rural India even in modern times implying thereby that the tradition is continuing and this cottage craft had attained great heights during early medieval period.

Chapter third is devoted to a discussion of the development of pottery. The rich harvest of pottery excavated from different sites and described in this chapter proves beyond dispute that the potter of early medieval India was in no way professionally less skilled or artistically less mature than the potter who makes a variety of pots in rural areas in modern India. Not only the variety of articles manufactured by him is amazing but the beauty and aesthetic appeal of the products is bewitching. The craft of pot making had indeed much advanced. It had also won popularity and acclaim in society for its practitioners.

The wood and leather workers of early medieval period were also excellent artists and skilful craftsmen. They made a large variety of artifacts from these materials. Description of their products embodying types of articles, their shapes designs and uses along with the technique and tools employed by the craftsmen occupies chapter fourth of this work.
The fifth chapter contains an account of ivory, glass, beads and stone and coin industries. In order to make the description fully informative and useful specimens of varied shapes and designs made from these materials and unearthed from different sites have been described with supporting evidence from the contemporary literature. To throw further light on the progress of these industries during the period under study tools and techniques used in them are also indicated.

The sixth chapter deals with the arts of terra-cotta stone sculpture and painting. From a close study of the folks and court art, painting the researcher has tried to construct a picture of the development of terra-cotta and sculptural art. Likewise by the study of the contemporary paintings or their description in the related literature, it could be possible to understand the development of this art.

The degree of perfection in the skills and ability to portray the artistic imaginations in the form of terra-cottas, sculptural or painting has been described in this chapter with the help of necessary illustrations.

The seventh chapter embodies concluding observations of the study with special emphasis on socio economic reconstruction as reflected in the state of export and import,
and formation of guilds, towns and cities as consequences (reciprocals) of development in the technological knowledge, fabrication, skills and refinement in aesthetic sense of the artisans of early medieval period. The amazingly varied types of industries and still more numerous types of artifacts in each industry with diverse shapes, patterns, colour schemes, pictures and uses, quite elaborately, described in the preceding chapters have served as a basis for building this chapter. Without detailed discussion of them and the suggestive data extracted from referenced material the contents of this chapter would have lacked credibility. The social and economic conditions of the society improve as the trade and commerce flourish. Cities and towns also come into being and industrial workers begin to unite as there is increase in productive activities in the society. Therefore, in assessing the impact of art and craft on people's economic condition and social relations, it becomes imperative to take into account these factors also. The researcher kept in view these factors while writing this last chapter of the thesis.