INTRODUCTION

This study, entitled "An Investigation into the Differential Behaviour of Economic Classes in Relation to the Family Planning Programme in Mandya District, Karnataka", has a rather complex heritage. Starting from the personal, I come from a family of avid family planners. Yet over the years, I have come to conclude that my grandparents and parents were not so much entirely wrong, as only very partially correct. This is brought out by the history of the family planning programme in India, which is one of repeated failure in spite of political commitment, and a profusion of funds, expertise and technology. In this study, the history of the family planning programme in India is dealt with in the first chapter.

The central problem appears to be the neo-Malthusian understanding of the entirely complex relationship between population and resources which determines official discourse and policy. In the second chapter of this study, I have explored Malthusianism and her off-spring Neo-Malthusianism, however briefly, delving into their conceptual, methodological and empirical problems over a period of time.

These investigations convinced me that Neo-Malthusianism has been a theoretical red-herring. My review of literature in the area reinforced this conviction. I therefore sought literature presenting, as it were, an alternative approach. This body of literature is not as extensive as one may wish, perhaps because of lack of patronage and funds. But thin though it was, it pointed to exciting possibilities. Chapter Three of this study reviews this literature and spells out the design adopted in this study.
In Chapter Four, I present the findings of the study with reference to landholding, class and caste. In addition to the quantitative data, I present qualitative data which brings out the nature of the study area, and illustrates how these institutions have altered over time.

What is the household size among the various classes in the primarily agricultural study population? What is the family size? Do the poor have a larger family size as received wisdom would have us believe? Are there differences among the peasant classes in the type of family? Or fertility? What is the fertility among them? What has been the differential experience of infant and child mortality? These issues are presented and discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Six again presents both quantitative and qualitative data on the role of children in the household economy among these classes. Is there parental perception of children as a source of income among the various classes? What is the contribution of the children among the various classes to household chores?

Based on the above, what are the differential needs for family planning services that arise among these peasant classes? How does the programme respond to these needs? Chapter Seven of this study examines both quantitative and qualitative data relating to the family planning programme.

Chapter Eight offers a brief summary of the salient features of this study. My attempt in the study is to understand, however tentatively, social differentials in fertility and some of their determinants; an important issue which needs greater and more in-depth study.