The present thesis is an attempt to trace out the modest origin and growth of Feudalism in early India (From Mauryas to 650 A.D). Chandragupta Maurya, the founding father of the Mauryan empire had to confront with Greek power before establishing himself firmly on the Magadhan throne. His contact with Greek power and coming of Megasthenes a Greek ambassoder to his court created sufficient condition to import some of the social and economic characteristics into India and they were integrated with indigenous socio-economic system. Thus the contact with Greek system had profound influence in the socio-economic and political life of erst while India.

There is no dearth of work on Indian feudalism. Many Marxist scholars like, D.D Kosambi, R.S.Sharma, Romila Thaper, D.N. Jha, B.N.S. Yadava, L. Gopal, R.K. Choudhary etc., have contributed their mite to understand the Indian Feudalism. Here we are reminded of Prof. R.S.Sharma’s monograph on ‘Indian Feudalism,’ where he had made an elobrate and lengthy discussion on the topic, which is first work of its kind. But his monograph covers a period of about nine
centuries, which invites further research on the subject. Here we have taken use of various sources both primary as well as secondary in order to provide authentic information and correct interpretation. While writing about Ancient Indian history, we find only literary sources in pre-Mauryan period, which leave incidental references to our theme of discussion. The evidences from Archaeological excavations were too minimal to take them independently. The evidences from archaeological excavations were taken as corroborative capacity.

The account of foreign pilgrims and travellers have been fully and critically utilized. The foreign travellers who visited India during our period of study were either Greeks or Chinese. Among the Chinese pilgrims the most notable were. Fa-hsien, Yuan Chawang and It-Singis. A close observation provided by their account help to know the contemporary life of India. The accounts of Greek historians are also valuable for the purpose of our study.

I have tried to follow a uniform procedure about foot-notes. Some of the chapters have detailed
foot-notes citing authorities for the views and statements contained in them. But a select bibliography has been added at the end of the thesis which covers all chapters. The method of transliteration and spelling of proper names remains unchanged. The रामायण, the महाभारत, अशोक and हर्षा have been used in place of the hitherto common Ramayana, Mahabharata and Ashoka and Harsha.

The thesis is divided into six chapters among which the first is the Introduction. It defines and describes the scope of the enquiry and also contains review of literature dealing with our topic of discussion.

The second chapter refers to the "Origin of Feudalism." The attempt is made to capitulate the divergent opinions of the scholars and the logic they put forth to prove the origin of feudalism in their respective ways. The views of scholars are followed by my own observation, which makes me to take contradictory stand many a times.

The third chapter contains the "Growth of
Feudalism, preceded by political fragmentation, political hierarchy; issued of feudal titles like sāmanta, mahāsāmanta etc., and grant of lands; coming of the institution of slavery resulted with the slave mode of production; stabilized economy motivated the upper class of society the landed aristocracy, to extert labour from the lower class known by the name of "forced labour." To increase the productivity of land the irrigation system was introduced and was declared as private. The Government officials were also selected on hereditary basis. The boom in urban centre of the earlier centuries faced a serious jolt; not only that the trade and commerce too faced sharp decline. The education system which plays major role in the development of any society was too also feudalised. In the last we have made an attempt to compare and contrast the kind of European feudalism with that of India. All these above mentioned factors played their own role for the growth of feudalism in India and we have carefully observed in the chapter that how did these factors accelerated its growth.

The fourth chapter we have devoted to land grants. We shall see in the main body of the chapter
that the nature and purpose of the land growth varied from period to period. While discussing about land grants we have separately discussed the sources — viz., Literature and Epigraphic.

The fifth chapter deals with suzerain vassals relations. It encompasses within it the obligation of vassals to their overlords in return of certain privileges. Here we have too dealt with the Ashvamedha sacrifice and its natural corollaries which made the feudal system strengthened; inter-state relation existing during the feudalistic pattern of society and matrimonial alliances have also attracted our full attention in order to depict the real state of affairs during the period of our study. The conclusion emerging from this long labour constitute the sixth and the last chapter. An appendix is also given which tells us some thing about feudalism. With the aforesaid contents, the thesis is submitted for examination and assessment if its worth.