Some years ago while reading the Dharwar District Gazetteer (1834) edited by Alan Campbell, I happened to note that the town of Dharwar had played a significant role in historical times. Subsequently while reading the biographies and memoirs written by many dedicated men of north Karnataka, I noticed that many of these eminent men were residents of Dharwar at some time or the other. I therefore reasoned that the town must have attracted many talented men from the entire north Karnataka region because of the opportunities which were available in the town. However, in my conversation with the present generation of residents of the town to gather more information on the town’s past social history, I noticed that most of them were unable to say much about it. Many among them were quite surprised that there could have been important social and cultural activities associated with the town a hundred years ago. Many residents in their well meaning advice even dissuaded me from studying the urban growth of Dharwar in the nineteenth century, for they observed that to-day Dharwar
is a "small town" and a hundred years ago it might have been even smaller to have any social activity worth studying. In contrast to this, my conversation with the older generation of residents, who are in their 70s and 80s, I gathered interesting data on Dharwar town as it existed in the nineteenth century. It was their suggestion which spurred me on to gather more data on Dharwar which proved to be a rewarding experience despite the frustration at times in unearthing the relevant data scattered far and wide. These data when put together reveal the fact that Dharwar was a centre of social and cultural activity and played a much more important role in this region of north Karnataka than one seems to think of it to-day.

There are very few studies which have taken into account the growth and development of town life in India in the nineteenth century. Consequently the role of the British in terms of what they did in introducing a form of urbanism for which traditional India constituted the base is largely unassessed. It is my earnest hope that the present study will be a contribution in this direction.
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(A.G. MUDHIDRI)