Having been born and brought up in an agricultural family of a small village namely, Mangavati, in Belgaum district of Karnataka, I have had ample opportunities of observing at close quarters, the village social structure and the quality of life led by villagers. The life of the peasants being largely dependent upon agriculture has never been easy as his livelihood is determined by several social and environmental factors. Agriculture in India has never been smooth sailing as it is always confronted with one or the other problems. Exploitation of the peasants by merchants, middleman, money lenders etc., gamble with monsoon and lack of irrigation, crop diseases, costly agricultural inputs, fluctuating and unremunerative agricultural prices, small holdings, low yield from land, are some of the important problems of agriculture. Above all, a dualistic kind of development of the Indian economy due to defective development model, and ineffective implementation of the Government policies and programmes have deepened the miseries of the peasants and widened the gap between the Have's and Have not's. The Government plans and policies have not only failed to yield the expected results but also have created adverse conditions for the vast mass of rural population. However, this does not mean that, villages are not experiencing any change. However, a slow but steady change is taking place in villages. The isolated villages are brought into touch with cities and towns and the outside world through a network of transport and communication. The agriculture has been commercialised and markets are widened. The
socio-economic conditions of the lower and backward castes is improved. The education is slowly spreading and social values are changing. But these changes are too small to make a dent on agricultural and other rural problems. The overall picture of the villages has remained more or less same as it was in the past. Villages are caught in the vicious circle of poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, ill-health and so on. Agrarian economy is not an exception to this. It is these aspects of rural life that have always caught my attention and which have made an attempt to study and understand.

This seed sown in my mind germinated when a series of peasant agitations took place in many states under the precarious conditions mentioned above. The peasant movements that occurred in Karnataka from 1980 onwards under the leadership of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha made a deep impression on me as I had an opportunity to observe some of them at close quarters. These unprecedented peasant movements were well sustained and have enjoyed a wide base among the peasants. They have put an open challenge to the traditional understanding that the peasants' are apathetic, passive and docile. These movements have marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of peasant movements. Thus the State of Karnataka which was otherwise free from visible agrarian unrest, has witnessed unprecedented peasant movements led by Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha in recent years. The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha since its inception in 1980 has spearheaded all the peasant movements in Karnataka. In fact, the peasant movements in Karnataka took a new turn with the emergence of
This Raitha Sangha. It has led many agitations demanding just prices, parity in prices between agricultural and industrial produce, writing off loans, preservation and correct use of natural resources etc. In recent times it has been noticed that there has been a surprising amount of consciousness developed in the rural countryside due to the efforts made by the Raitha Sangha. Many villages have identified themselves with the Sangha by putting up green and white boards and small green flags. It is this situation which interested me. Hence, the reason for the present study.

Studies on agrarian unrest in India are of recent origin. Most of the studies have been published after the mid-seventies. Especially in Karnataka, the studies on agrarian unrest are very few in number. The literature on agrarian struggles led by the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha is very rare. Therefore, I had to necessarily rely heavily upon the news papers, magazines and other periodicals. I have taken necessary precautions to maintain the objectivity of the subject. The news paper articles are objectively studied and made use in the analyses.

The present study was taken up in the Dharwad taluk with an aim to evaluate the organisational structure, aims and objectives, ideology, mobilisational pattern, electoral politics and the achievements and failures of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha. An attempt is also made to evaluate the problems faced by the peasants. The study is exploratory in nature, and also makes an attempt to test the
significance of relationship between independent and dependent variables. However, the subject of agrarian unrest is too vast and complex and therefore, the attempt made by me may go a small way in understanding agrarian unrest and the role of organisations in these movements.