CHAPTER I

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We are generally introduced to the discipline of history writing with the understanding that our endeavour in doing so should encompass all events, institutions, ideas and relationships between them to define the human past. Since many of the past societies and their practices cannot be retrieved through simple devises of accumulating "given data", the interpretations of historians become seminal to our understanding of any aspect of the past. At the first level, as already delineated by us above in the Introduction and Sources, the historians analyze the relics and traces (is in the present case, inscriptions) left by past human action and therefore, must handle what scholars generally term as primary sources. In this chapter, however, we propose to focus on the second level of knowledge about the past, namely, in terms of what historians have interpreted and systematically analyzed in what Arthur Marwick in a recent article calls: "the human past as it is known from the work of historians" (emphasis added). This body of knowledge thus generated becomes the historiographical context without which no informed historical writing can proceed. We also need to emphasize at the outset that historians, like other social scientists, have been influenced by various intellectual theories of
explanation like positivism, marxism, structuralism and so on. The modes of all types of epistemological analysis—'positivist', 'humanist', 'idealist', or 'materialist'—are different but, they share a common aim, namely, identifying a rational scientific method as opposed to the earlier, pre-modern concerns with the metaphysical explanations. We need to stress this here because an ancient society like India hardly presents us with texts that can be termed in the strict sense as 'historical'. Therefore, almost all of the above modes of historical explanation have had to grapple, with the problem of 'historical fact' in the context of India. Notwithstanding this basic problem, there have been several historiographical avenues that Indian historians have tread on. We next turn to closely focus on some of these as are relevant to the present study.

History has been defined as "a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the past and the present". This can be aptly applied to the study of the early Indian past wherein our comprehensions of it have undergone significant transformations; these being concomitant to changes in the interpretations and methodology that the scholars writing on it have adopted. In giving a brief review of the historical works pertaining to the region and period under study, we have classified these into three broad categories of historical writing. They are largely indicative of the major shifts in the methods of analysis in the writing of history and are, therefore, not chronologically exclusive. Importantly, one has attempted here to comprehend these approaches in methodology in their specific relation to the
themes of analysis undertaken by scholars which correspond squarely to the
dominant issues tackled by us in our research such as the different aspects of
society, economy, rural set up and ideology of the early medieval period. We
focus in this survey on writings pertaining to South India as a whole and the
Deccan in particular.

In the conventional historical works on society, written within the
positivistic methodological framework, we have two main strands in the approach
to understanding various aspects of early social history. These are those works
that deal with political/dynastic history perse and only make incidental references
to the social set up of the period. Some of the the writings that fall in this
category are those of Nilakanta Sastri, A.S. Altekar and N. Venkataramanayya
In the second category the focus shifts from the study of
dynasties to a more focussed description of social and economic conditions. In
this category we have the works of A.V. Krishnamurthy, K. Sundaram,
S.Gururajachar, Jyotsna Kamat and others who deal with specific groups
in society that have direct and prolific mention in the inscriptive sources under
study. We have clubbed all these works together chiefly because, while the
latter’s attention shifts from one aspect of the historical study to the other, their
basic method of historical analysis remains ‘conventional’ in that positivism is still
the guiding spirit with the essential aim being to accumulate empirical data on
the subject rather than its analysis.
To begin with, one finds that in all these writings the caste/varna division was accepted a priori as the basic determinant for understanding the division of the social classes in the early south Indian context. This is best articulated by K.A.N. Sastri in the words: "the institution of caste with all its social and economic implications was accepted almost universally and the upholding of the order organized on its basis was held to be the primary duty of the ruler". This implies a view of history that perpetuates a static order of society based on textual delineations of the social structure which were considered by these historians as the social reality for all regions and period of history. On the other hand, A.S. Altekar, by taking into account the increase in the number of vamas and jātis during the medieval period in the western Deccan, delves into the problem of explaining the increase in untouchability. According to the author this resulted either due to the unclean profession followed by the untouchables or, due to their non-Aryan origin. None of his explanations however, deal with the question of regional variations. Having relied heavily on the literary sources of study, one can discern in the above interpretations attempts made to approximate the varna categories of the North and impose then rigidly on various social groups of South India and the Deccan. Some attempts in this direction for the early medieval period have been made for particular regions. N. Venkataramanayya opines that while the brāhmaṇa was held the highest position, the kṣatriya varna was placed second in the hierarchy in the Andhra country. He further goes on to write that the trading sections of the
Telugu country can be equated to the Vaisya varna. The telikis and other artisanal groups were included in the sudra category but a large number of sudras however were supposed to have indulged in agricultural activities in his opinion.\textsuperscript{13} Till fairly recent time scholars have taken the stand that during the medieval period society was indeed organized only on the basis of a text book description of castes in which the brāhmana stood at the top and the chaṇḍāla at the bottom of the social hierarchy with the kṣatriya, vaiśya, sudra being located in between, A.V. Krishnamurthy, however, is cautious of inform us that the above division of society into fourfold caste divisions remained largely theoretical in nature and its practical importance was not very great. In the discussion that follows in her book the author nonetheless describes the social structure as though it emanated only from caste differentiation and observes that the bulk of the population constituting agriculturists formed the sudra category.\textsuperscript{15}

It is pertinent to note that attempts were also made by some of the scholars to describe social groups in terms of their economic functioning such as those involved in the corporate activities of agricultural, artisanal and mercantile activity. In the works written with this emphasis one finds that historians have mostly written on those groups that have the most explicit mention in the inscriptional sources of the early medieval period. Thus prominent reference is made to the mahajanas\textsuperscript{16} who were the residents of agrahāras, the gavundas who were the village headmen, the okkalu\textsuperscript{18} who have been understood as the
agriculturist guild and the various types of mercantile guilds. According to K. Sundaram, the most conspicuous feature of the society of the early medieval period was the emergence of powerful self-regulating groups like the artisans \( (pāṇchāṇamvāru) \), the oil mongers \( (telikis) \) and traders \( (Vaisyas \text{ and } balaṅjas) \).

Further, those groups involved in offering various services to the temple institutions such as the dancers, singers, musicians and so on have also been taken into account in various historical works focussing on the early medieval period.\(^2\) In these descriptions there was greater emphasis laid on the economic functioning of the above groups and very little mention is made of their caste / vanpa to which they belonged. This is best exemplified in the way the secular functions of the \textit{mahajanās} who were supposed to be \textit{brāhmaṇas}, are described, as the land lords, administrators, bankers, tax collectors and so on in a detailed discussion by G.R. Kuppuswamy.  

On the whole we see that in some of the above studies there were sincere attempts made to comprehend the various elements of the social structure of early medieval period, but this was done either by adopting the bibliocentric view of caste categorization only, or, by a rigid compartmentalization of the datas available from literary and the epigraphic sources on particular social classes. The studies therefore remain mere narratives of a description of social groups, their names and functions leaving an erroneous impression that there was hardly any change in their status. Further, the approximation of caste
to class in order to comprehend the existence of regional social groups as though it was separate from the larger politico-economic background was a serious limitation in these works in comprehending the totality of the social formation during the early medieval period. This often resulted in them taking contradictory positions in characterizing the social structure of the period in terms of the importance attached to the varna framework on the one hand and on the other, in setting it aside as only a theoretical basis with little bearing on the social reality. Further, these scholars have taken the textual and inscriptive sources at their face value and therefore, focussed on the dominant sections of the society only. This has unconsciously led to an overemphasis on describing the upper castes (brahmanas were greatly praised for their learning) and classes (the ruling and the professional guilds were given a lot of consideration) and their amusements, customs, education system, status of their women and so on. As a result the criteria by which social history was defined and studied was thus curtailed. The positivistic methodological framework adopted by these scholars handicapped them from looking beyond the available fact and also analyze the relationships of the dominant social groups with those that were subordinate even though they were not directly mentioned to the sources. These studies undoubtedly revealed information on aspects of social history but conditioned by a limited definition of it.
In contrast to the above, the Marxist scholars have introduced the class dimension to analyze the ancient Indian varna system and put forth the paradigm of studying the varna order in terms of abstractions of actual relations of production. On this basic premise several issues related to the complex social formation of early medieval times has been dealt with extensively by these scholars. These historians have shown that there were significant changes in the traditional varna set up and attributed these to the changing economic scenario of the period marked by an increase in land grants, decline in the urban economy and the emergence of a closed rural set up. The increase in the importance attached to the landed property in such an economic milieu, according to these scholars, had resulted in the emergence of unequal social relations studied under the label of feudal social formations. On the basis of their access to land and its resources, it is argued that groups in society came to be divided into two classes, that of landlords who came to have titles to lands and villages and the other of the peasant producers who were oppressed by the former. Several layers of hierarchy within the landowning social groups on the one hand, and various levels of stratification among the peasant producers on the other, have been highlighted in this context as characterizing the new class relations of the early medieval period which, in this view, cut across the ascriptive lines of the varna system as found embedded in the Dharmasastra texts. Thus, it has been argued by these scholars, that the depression of the older free peasantry to a dependant status, led to the lowering
in the status of the *vaisya varna* to be similar with that of the status given to members of that of *sudra* category. B.-N.S. Yadava has exemplified this while explaining the term *kināsa*. It was earlier used to describe a free peasant of the *vaisya varna* and once in the early medieval complex the *kināsa* attained the status of tenants and their degradation to the status of the *sudra varna* took place. It has further been argued by the Marxist historians that the early medieval period also marked a significant social turn in terms of the increase in the number of *sudra* and untouchable groups. This, it is argued, was as a result of the spread in the agrarian economy to the outer areas and the subsequent assimilation of local tribal populace. It is thus postulated that in the context of South India, the acculturated population were largely divided into two *varṇas*, namely, the *sudra* and the *brahmana*. The absence of the *vaisya* category in the period between the 6th - 9th centuries A.D. has been attributed by Suvira Jaiswal to the decline in the trade and commerce with which *vaisya* were traditionally associated during the early historical period. On the other hand, the absence of the *kṣatriya varna* has been chiefly related to an absence of a traditionally powerful ruling lineage which could not establish horizontal marriage kinship relations as did the Rajputs in North India. Thus, in this opinion, the creation of *sat kṣatriyas* and *sat sudras* as new categories for explaining the social reality of the status of the ruling elite in the early medieval
period in South India are largely attributable to the rise in the politico-economic status of the non-Brahmanical groups.

Apart from emphasizing on the variations in the application of Varna categories in the regional context of South India, these new interpretations also underline the role of economic factors in understanding social change. Importantly, the relationship established between the artisanal groups, dependant peasantry with the landowning elements has been studied against the background of the closed village economy of the early medieval period. This, it is argued, led to the increasing immobility of professional groups and resulted in the proliferation of the concept of untouchability at this time. In particular, these scholars have made significant contributions to our understanding of forced labour and the subjection of peasantry related to the wider politico-economic changes during this period. G.K. Rai has aptly highlighted the changing conception of the term visti (signifying forced labour) right from the Vedic period to its prevalence in the early medieval period, on the basis of both the epigraphic and the literary evidence. Accordingly, the author has suggested that the term visti which in the Vedic times connoted only skilled labour, by the early centuries of Christian era came to signify forced labour and its wide prevalence particularly between the 9th - 10th centuries A.D. has been widely attested to with regard to various regions of India, including Karnataka.
The significant contribution made by Marxist historiography in terms of providing a fresh perspective for our comprehension of the historical reality has raised several crucial issues regarding the understanding of rural societies and relationships within them. By over emphasizing the role played by the material conditions in determining social change in history, these scholars have tended to underplay the role of ideology in shaping these relationships. In Marxist historiography, we find an absence of perspective to comprehend the tensions existing within the dominant groups on the one hand, and within the subject groups on the other which must have also been present in defining the changing social scene. On the other hand, they have repeatedly given over emphasis to the Dharmaśāstra category of varna divisions as common reference point to comprehend the nature of social change during the early medieval period for various regions of India. It has been considered by their critics that this has been a major obstacle in the comprehension of the "problem of regional social stratification" which according to B.D. Chattopadhyaya need not necessarily correspond to the normative divisions of society that had in effect originated in the north Indian context during the Vedic period.

Despite considerable number of historical works using the Marxist method have been devoted to the study of different regions of India such as Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, northern Deccan and so on we find that their conscious attempt was to highlight upon uniform
explanations of historical change in all these regions, commensurating largely with the north Indian situation. For example, in the works of R. N. Nandi growth of feudal classes in early medieval Karnataka have been explained on similar lines as those done by R.S. Sharma for north and central India which include, among other things, the growth in the surplus appropriating class and a corresponding servile labour force. M. G. S. Narayanan, on the other hand has proposed to show how the historical developments in the early Tamilakam have eventually resulted in the formation of a "feudal society, state and culture" between the periods A.D. 1300 - A.D. 1800 in his attempts to provide a broad conceptional framework for the study of early medieval Tamil history.

The analysis of complex social formations of the early medieval period in Marxist historiography has generated considerable debate in historical circles regarding the viability of the applicability of the feudal concept to other regions of India, in particular, to the south Indian context. In recent years there has been a spurt of historical literature written with an approach using an interdisciplinary method but within a non-Marxist framework of analysis. Under this category of historical writings we have works of such scholars as Burton Stein, N. Karashima, R. Champakalakshmi and B.D. Chattopadhyaya. By adopting different methods of historical analysis, these authors have brought out interesting data to comprehend various dimensions of social relationships during the early medieval period from a regional perspective. We wish to briefly
summarise here the characterization of social formation in early medieval times formulated in these works which have a significant bearing on our understanding of the nature of regional specificity.

The works of Stein have brought forward the important role played by the ecological variables in shaping what he terms as the ‘peasant society’ of early medieval South India with specific emphasis on the Tamilakam region. The author has studied the peasant groups as having a symbiotic relationship with the land which they cultivated, the locality in which they resided, kin groups into which they were formed as located within specific spatial unit, namely, the nadu or the nuclear regions of early medieval Tamilakam, defined by the author as the peasant micro regions. Going a bit deeper into the micro level analysis of the social stratification under the Chola rule in Tamilakam, N. Karashima has effectively brought out the crucial role played by the nature of settlement patterns and the economic dimension in defining the stratified nature of the rural social structure with the help of a statistical analysis of the inscriptive data. As such, his study focuses on highlighting differences in social relationships as they existed between the brahmadeya and the non-brahmadeya settlements marked by a peculiarity in the land tenurial patterns in each of these. In the former category, where individual ownership of land existed, the author has identified two distinct levels of social strata present in the form of land owners and cultivators and in the latter category, which is marked by communal land holding pattern, the landowners themselves were cultivators. The social set up of the
latter villages however, underwent significant changes according to the author owing to the appearance of private land holdings, towards the end of the 10th century A.D. resulting in the stratification of the peasantry in the non- *brāhmadeya* villages as well. The latter were now characterized, according to *Karashima* by the presence of influential land lords who began to be integrated in the Chola polity through conferring titles on them. *Karishima*’s studies in essence constitute an analysis of the agrarian relationships established among the elite groups, at the local spatial level which, however, had a limited impact in the comprehension of various complex processes involved in defining the nature of regional state formation and its social basis during the early medieval period. This stands highlighted in the works of R. *Champakalakshmi* who has focussed on the same area and period of study as Stein and Karashima. According to her the Tamil society between the 7th - 13th centuries A.D. witnessed the crystallization of the social structure into different castes marked by a sharp division into two main categories, that of the *brāhmaṇa* and the non- *brāhmaṇa* (*sudra*). *55 These were basically considered to have resulted out of the various complex processes under operation over a long period of time (pre-7th century A.D.) marked chiefly by the acculturation of tribal groups consequent upon the expansion of the agrarian base of the *marutam* ecological tracts. In such a social set up, "a regional version of the theoretical *varna* system developed with important modifications depending upon the specificities of the politico-economic system that emerged," represented at the political level chiefly through the
claims made for brahma - kṣatriya status. At the economic level, the author has identified the presence of several professional groups such as the mercantile guilds (nagaram, telikis, nānēdeśi and so on), the artisanal and agricultural workers divided into two social categories of idangai (left hand) and valangai (right hand)\textsuperscript{57} and, finally, there were the paraiya groups. The last group has been understood as having been constituted of tribes that were being integrated slowly into the agrarian economy and owing to the growing economic disparity among the agricultural groups and the large scale dissemination of brahmanical ideas in the early medieval period they came to be characterized as untouchables.\textsuperscript{58}

The regional dimension of social formation emerges most distinctly in the work of B. D. Chattopadhyaya which have delved deeply into the problem of comprehension of social change from a regional perspective. In his study of the emergence of the Rajput clans during the early medieval period, the author has effectively demonstrated how the crystallization of a dominant socio-political group exhibits a close nexus in the operation of various structural phenomena such as the political, ideological, social and economic in bringing about the crucial social change. In this case study this has been represented by the concept of Rajputization that is said to indicate “a process of social mobility which in the wake of its formation into a structure, drew in such disparate groups as the Medas and the Hunas”. The proliferation of the Rajput clans and
sub-clans during the early medieval period indicated, among other things, the complex processes of acculturation as a result of the agrarian expansion on the one hand, and on the other these demonstrated the phenomenon of “caste formation in the early medieval period in which the element of ‘localism’ was substantially involved”\(^6\) Further, it had all the attendant aspects requisite for the emergence of a lineage group such as defined by the Kinship/familial ties which were strengthened through the marital relations established with other prominent lineages. It is thus argued in this view that the social formation during the early medieval period was a natural corollary to the spread in the local state system into outer lying areas and the hierarchical social relations emerging out of this need not always fit into the normative view of varna theory embedded in the Dharmaśāstra texts.\(^6\) On the contrary Chattopadhyaya opines that one can get closer to historical reality if the social groups located in different regional contexts are studied against the background of the actual economic changes engulfing these regions which would be otherwise lost if studied under the framework of universal categories of their definition only in terms of the varna theory, particularly in terms of the fiction of varna sanākara. It has been put forth by some scholars that it was the breakdown of varna that led to the emergence of several new elements in the social structure of the early medieval period. However, new social groups described in the inscriptive sources of the various regions of India are known through such terms as the Vellala, idangai, valangai and paraiya in the context of Tamilakam, gavunda, prajagavunda, okkala,
ugura and so on in Karnataka rather than in terms of their vama affiliations. They in fact, refer to different categories of peasant and cultivating groups. In the light of the above Chattopadhyaya concludes that the use of the generic category of südra becomes "entirely insufficient when explaining the composition and status of the peasantry and the agricultural labour which constituted the base of an internally and hierarchized society". It is pertinent to note in the light of above alternative to understand regional social stratification that Nayanjot Lahiri, in the context of her study on early medieval Assam has arrived at certain relevant conclusions regarding the peculiar nature of the social set up of that region. The author has been able to actually divide the social groups of the period both professional (kaivartas) and administrative (karanikas) into various jātis or, occupational groups as against the broad varpa framework in which the former were located. It is interesting to note that the author concludes in her study that the scheme of jātis which can be reconstructed from the inscriptions of Assam is very different from the varpa divisions of the Dharmasastra texts. On the whole, her view suggests that the pattern of social divisions and stratification functioned on an economic basis made up of categories of people holding and enjoying land with well entrenched kin based relationships dominating the scene. This in effect formed the foundations for a comprehension of different dimensions of social relations during the early medieval period in Assam. Thus to state in a nutshell, the earlier notions of an unchanging social structure have been effectively replaced by the Marxist
historians who tried to comprehend social change in its relation to the wider politicio-economic changes during the early medieval period. But the generalizations that emerged in their conceptions of social stratification which were based on the traditional varna theory have however marred the comprehension of specific forms of social structure. For various regions of India during this period of transition. These limitations have however been sought to overcome in the alternative paradigm put forth by B.D. Chattopadyaya wherein local categories of hierarchical division based on occupational specialization studied in relation to their specific physical space have been shown to provide viable clues to comprehend the specific nature of social stratification. Relevance of such a heightened when adopted in relation to the context of the early medieval period, which witnessed a significant spurt in the growth of various regions in the Indian subcontinent. It is in this context of historical specificity that we wish to locate our regional study which has as its focus, the problem of social stratification.

Historical perceptions on economy of the early medieval period which is crucial for a comprehension of social change have undergone similar interpretative changes as they were dependent upon the method of approach adopted by the scholars over time. We wish to discuss some of the major issues raised about the interpellations of the economic structure under study. To begin with, among the conventional category of historical scholarship, we have works of G.R. Kuppuswamy, S.Gururajachar, K.Sundaram and D.R.
Das, written with specific reference to various parts of the Deccan Peninsula. All these works have detailed discussions on the economic conditions of the early medieval period which cover both the agrarian and the urban environment prevalent at this time. In the discussion on the agrarian structure, focus has generally been on the description of various types of crops and their cultivation and irrigation system, on various types of land tenurial patterns, on the types of soils and so on. The description on the urban economy has generally involved such issues as the articles for trade, banking, and artisanal industries such as mining, craft industry and so on which were clubbed with a detailed discussion on aspects of finance and state revenue extracted from both the agrarian and the non-agrarian sectors. Some of these scholars such as G.R.Kuppuswamy have even probed further into the legal aspects of the issues on land succession and ownership rights in land and so on. It is significant to underscore here that on the one hand, the vast factual information recorded in these works covering even the minutest details of the economic structure during this period can be considered to form a solid data base for further research. On the other, study of economy totally divorced from the larger political and social structure gives one an impression of its autonomous functioning. As a result of this even when there is an implicit recognition of change, as the description of the urban economy normally follows the agrarian one, in these works, the interconnectedness between these two elements is not well.
established and therefore, the elements of change do not get clearly
demarcated and revealed in these works, we have clubbed. This leaves the
reader with an impression of the projection of a static and changeless economic
structure in several of these histories which we have clubbed under the
frame-work of conventional historiography.

The Marxist method of historical analysis has on the other hand,
brought about a significant shift in terms of comprehending the changing nature
of the economic milieu under the rubric of feudal economy by closely linking up
the political initiative to the concept of economic change during this period of
transition. In this view economic change in the early medieval period has been
studied under two distinct phases. The early phase (300 A.D. - 1000 A.D.)
marked by the beginning and proliferation of land grants (following the decline in
an earlier urban economy) is said to have led to the growth in the ruralization of
the economic structure wherein a greater importance began to be attached to
landed property and agriculture became the major source of wealth and revenue.
In such an economic set up the generation of agrarian surplus through an
increase in the agrarian base with the help of improvement in the methods of
cultivation on the one hand, and on the other, through the usage of subject
labour, open with the use of extract economic coercion to extract revenue from
peasants are considered to have formed the hall marks of the Indian feudal
economy. It has further been suggested in this regard that the economic
surplus thus generated was concentrated in the hands of a few landlords which
enabled them to invest in non-agrarian activities leading to the revival of an urban phenomenon in the second stage (1000 - 1200 A.D.) . This hypothesis worked out for the north Indian situation by R.S. Sharma has been applied to various other regions of India too wherein the works of R.N. Nandi, figure prominently in the context of our area of study. The Marxist scholarship marked a significant break from the conventional approach on studying on the economic structure in that they correlated it to the larger political and social change under operation during the early medieval period for various parts of India. The overemphasis laid by these scholars on studying the economic change in terms of change to agrarian structure (from an earlier urban phenomenon) has, however, generated the impression that the early medieval economy needs to be looked at in terms of its rural character per se. Further, the importance that these scholars have attached to foreign trade in bringing about this ruralization has meant that the external stimulus was given undue credence by them.

At this juncture studies conducted by the third category of scholars become significant as they provided a critique on the marxist definitions of economy during this period. They have helped us in viewing the economic change during the early medieval period in terms of change brought about in the agrarian sector to an urban phenomenon through integration of various structural variables. Importantly, the urban growth has effectively been linked up to its agrarian nexus in defining the totality of economic change which is further seen as resulting out of the processes of local state formation for various regions.
of India by taking into consideration the ecological variable which is underlined as important for defining the economic structure. R. Champakalakshmi's works with particular focus on the Tamilakam region have made a significant dent in this direction. According to the author the urban like set up that evolved during the Chola rule (10th - 12th centuries A.D.) in the Tamilakam region was largely a result of the expansion in the agrarian base around the brahmadeya and the temple centres that came into being as a result of the political initiative taken and acted as major integrative forces for various types of agrarian activities centred around them between the 7th - 9th centuries A.D. In a similar study, but related to a slightly later period, i.e., of the Vijayanagara rule, Kathleen D. Morrison and Carla M. Sinopoli have identified chiefly three levels of integration which helped in bringing together agrarian zones of different ecological variations which thus facilitated a greater expansion in the agrarian base that was a prerequisite for the maintenance of the large scale urban activity during this period. Among these, the economic mode of integration was supposed to have been effected through the collection of agricultural revenue by the Vijayanagara rulers. Secondly, a more direct and physical form of integration was involved in the construction of large scale reservoirs in which, at times, entire valleys were joined into a single watershed. The third mode of integration in the agrarian sector was effected through the temple institutions which attracted donations in land and commodities on a large scale. Thus, economic change during the early medieval (and medieval) context when viewed
from a regional perspective is essentially related to the positive processes of local state formation. The latter could have only resulted if there was an expansion of productive spheres on a considerable scale by bringing into its vortex several new settlements located in fertile tracts through various elements of integration as has been seen in the above studies. Thus, the problematique of agrarian expansion and, the subsequent growth in the urban phenomenon, is closely related to the growth and spread in the rural settlement patterns of various types.

The rural set up of early India has also been subject to various definitions in terms of its characterizations and socio-economic and political set up in modern historical works. To comprehend the historical perceptions on the rural space one needs to go beyond the 20th century writings on it. This is so because the views expressed in the 19th century by the British administrator scholars on the rural settlements of India played a crucial role in essentialising certain notions about what they described as the Indian 'village community'. The utilization of the concept of 'village community' which was meant to encapsulate several characteristics of the nature of the Indian villages, has been traced back to the administrative report of Munroe written in 1806. In this he states that: "every village with its twelve ayangadees as they are called, is a kind of little republic with the potail (patel) at the head of it and India is a mass of such Republics. ……..while the village remains entire, they care not to what power it is transferred, wherever it goes, the internal management remains unaltered ….."
From the age of Manu until this day, the revenue settlements have been made either with or through the *potails*.\(^{83}\) This understanding expressed by Munro about the villages in India was commonly accepted by other scholars writing on India. Sir C.T. Metcalfe's famous minute written in 1830 comes out more clearly in his description of the village communities of India, that "the village communities are little Republics having nearly everything that they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution . . . . but the village communities remain the same". In the continuing part of this minute he praises the role played by the village communities in the preservation of the Indian culture in the past.\(^{84}\) Similar views on the villages can be seen in the writings of Mark Wilks, Mountstuart Elphinstone and so on. These were all written in the early part of the 19th century for different parts of India. In the latter part of the 19th century the works of Karl Marx and H.S. Maine give a negative assessment or the role of village communities since it was thought that they contributed to the formation of a stagnant early Indian society. Taken as a whole, we find certain stereotypical notions about the early Indian socio-economic and political structure embedded in the usage of the term 'village communities' to describe the rural set up of India which can be listed as follows:
(a) First of all, on the political front, these village communities were considered as autonomous bodies functioning independent of the rule of the so-called oriental despots.

(b) Secondly, the economic aspect of the village community was highlighted by emphasizing upon the communal ownership of the land in the villages along with the independent political status of the village communities which was said to have rendered them to be self-sufficient units in all respects.

(c) Further, the above aspects of the rural set up were either, praised as the hallmarks of the Indian tradition or, were denounced as leading to the stagnant nature of the Indian society. These unchanging characteristics of the 'village communities' it was concluded in the above views, was, put an end to only with the advent of the British rule.

Henceforth, the definition and the concept of the term 'village communities' became common and was carried over into the later works written by both the Indian and the British scholars in the early part of the 20th century except in one aspect. The beginning of the 20th century saw a significant change in the way scholars began to explain the land holding patterns in the Indian villages. Baden Powell's work, *Origin and the Growth of Village Communities in India* (1879), disproved of the earlier held notion of the existence of communal rights in land by providing evidence on the existence of individual ownership rights in the rural context. On the other hand, the discovery of the *Arthasastra*, a text ascribed to the Mauryan period, opened up new insights
into the understanding of local land holding patterns of early India. This text discussed not just one type of land holding pattern, but indicated the existence of a variety in this regard, such as the ownership of land by the king, by the community and by individuals. 90 This evidence therefore, indicated that by the early centuries A.D. there was a tremendous change in the land holding pattern of early India and this fact was clearly pointed out in the works written by Indian scholars from the beginning of the 20th century. A.S. Altekar's A History of Village Communities in Western India (1927) has been one of the first works that has directly focussed upon writing a history of village communities perse from ancient to modern times. Altekar wrote at a time when Nationalist writers were concerned about glorifying India's past. At the outset, Altekar sets out season to express in the preface of his above work that: "the real history of India consists of the history of its village communities. Dynasties have come and dynasties have gone, but it is the village communities that have preserved intact the culture and tradition of old Bharatavarsha through several revolutions" 91. This harks back to what Metcalfe had written earlier about the village communities being static, unchanging and politically autonomous units in ancient India.

The stereotypes of the changelessness of Indian villages and their self-sufficiency have been reflected in the historical works of other regions of India as well. These writings were a natural outcome of the expansion of regional histories written in the aftermath of the freedom movement. Prominent
among these works for the southern part of India were those written on the subject of village communities by Nilakanta Sastri and T.V. Mahalingam. In his monumental work on South India, Nilakanta Sastri makes references to the village communities, which he considers were the "most striking feature of the Chola period" due to the "unusual vigour and efficiency that characterized the functioning of the autonomous rural institutions." In his work on village communities, T.V. Mahalingam, focusses his attention on the description of the village organizations, namely, the sabha, ur and the nadu. He emphasizes that there was a sense of community feeling residing in each village, and he quotes Metcalfe approvingly in this regard. Mahalingam, however, sees a perceptible change in the local administration of the village bodies as a result of centralization under the Vijayanagara rulers.

One may discern that the issues tackled by the nationalist historians on defining the rural space revolved basically around three aspects. The first of these pertains to the emphasis in these writings on the local autonomy and the durability of the village administration which was supposed to have been based on democratic lines as understood in modern terms. In this regard the characterization of the 'village-communities' by the Western scholars as 'Little Republics' was widely accepted by the nationalists. Secondly, one sees an endeavour on the part of the nationalist scholars to prove the existence of private land holdings. Thirdly, the harmonious life of the people in these communities has been repeatedly stressed upon. In this context K.A.N. Sastri
goes to the extent of writing "it was a wonderful social harmony based not on equality of classes or individuals but on a readiness to give and take, a mutual good will that had its roots deep down at the foundations of communal life."

The views about the early south Indian villages as part of a harmonious social past expressed by these scholars have gained wide currency in the Indian historical scholarship on South India in general. It has resulted in the spurt of numerous works written within this conventional approach. Prominent among these writings are those of G.S. Dikshit, A.V. Venkataratnam for the Karnataka region and T.Venkateshwara Rao for Andhra which best exemplify the historiographical thrust on defining the rural space for the area under study. One can clearly gauge a replication of the earlier held notions and concepts of the 'village communities' in these works as for example in G.S. Dikshit's own words: "in ancient and medieval India, the dynastic wars and wars of succession, the rebellions and usurpations, the rise and fall of empires had little bearing on the life of village communities". A similar opinion is held by T.Venkateshwara Rao when he states that the "village communities were each an organization borne out of the consciousness of kinship among the people. An interesting feature in these views is that the village communities remained unaffected by the political changes that swept over the country from time to time and have preserved to us intact the democratic traditions of the past." These anachronistic understandings of the
rural space only in terms of a projection of a **pre-determined** notion of the modern concept of a ‘**village community**’ which had no historical basis whatsoever. Even when the sources of the ancient, and in particular the early medieval period, refer to the existence of more than one category of rural settlements (such as the *grama, ur, palli, vāḍa* and so on), notwithstanding the *agrahara* and *non-agrahara* types of villages which have been recognized in these writings in the sense of characterizing a *brāhmaṇa* or a non-*brāhmaṇa* settlements, they again have been subsumed under the concept of the village communities. In fact, the variability in the spatial terminology did not bring about any change in the way these conventional historians characterized rural space as they were totally preoccupied with the essentialized notion of an independent, unchanging and a totally self-sustained image of a village community which they sought to project in their works. There was no correlation at all in the concept of space as a physical entity and the life of the people residing in it which were studied as two different insular entities. It has aptly been stated in this regard that, "creation of the ostensibly pure original Indian village of the past is thus a relatively new idea, but it has, with amazing ease, been incorporated into historical texts of both pre and post independent India to define village communities of the past as some kind of isolates unconnected to the larger fabric of society."
By totally rejecting the idea of the postulations of unchanging and self-sufficient nature of village communities for the entire historical period in India, the Marxist scholars have brought out significant arguments to show that there were stages indicative of the major changes, in the development of villages in early India. They, however, studied the rural space as part of the larger political and economic developments under the framework of the concept of Indian feudalism. The prime postulates of studies made in this direction have been largely related to the spread in the village units during the early medieval period. This, it was argued, had resulted out of the decline in the urban centres (as a natural corollary of the decline in foreign trade and commerce) of the early historical phase on the one hand, and on the other, due to the increase in the grant of lands and villages to various political functionaries and the brāhmana idealogues. Importantly, consequent upon the above developments, it is further argued that there was the evolution of a stage in which socio-economic structure of the villages which tended to become virtually self-contained wherein the local needs were satisfied locally and in which, the scope for the functioning of the market system was extremely limited. In this formulation thus, the village is essentially a closed entity, generating resources to the donee and although, prior to its transfer to the donee, it may have been inhabited by different social groups, its image is that of an undifferentiated community with no movement from within towards social mobility or, formation of inter-village networks. Such a formulation was initially based on the data from north
Indian inscriptions and was applied to other regions of India too. Thus, in the study of K.M. Shrimali on the Vakataka economy of the northern Deccan, an interconnection between the absence in the mention of coins, the granting of lands and the growth in references to the small scale rural settlements, has been well established. According to the author this generated a milieu in which the beginnings of feudalism must have found their roots. Similarly, R.N. Nandi's postulates for the Karnataka region have hinged upon the problem of the decay of towns and the dispersal of a section of urban population to the rural hinterland characterized by an agriculture based subsistence economy during the early medieval period. The overemphasis on explaining the growth in ruralization during the early medieval complex and its adverse impact on the villages which were thus defined as self-sufficient led these scholars to unconsciously fall into the trap of the conventional historiography which they had denounced as unhistorical. This was so because firstly, they gave undue emphasis to the external stimuli of decline in foreign trade bringing about the above change of ruralization and secondly, unconsciously, emphasizing on political initiative as being the most important factor of generating the new land grant economy. Such a handicap can be understood to have resulted out of the undue importance attached by these scholars to the decline in early historical urbanism and also of looking at this breakdown in terms of a pan-Indian phenomena. This was confined mostly to the northern, and a few pockets of the south Indian context, including parts of the Deccan region (north western Deccan).
comprehension of the spread in rural settlements to a large majority of hitherto unsettled areas of the Indian subcontinent required the problem to be studied from regional perspective. This was lacking in this strand historical writing which, by and large, tried to explain a uniform pattern of developments for various regions during the early medieval period under the methodological umbrella of the concept of Indian Feudalism.

The regional dimension to the study of rural space during the early medieval period in India has been understood to a considerable degree in a recent spurt of historical works written with a non-Marxist approach. Works of Burton Stein, N.Karashima, Y.Subbarayulu, R.Champakalakshmi and B.D. Chattopadhyaya figure prominently in this category. In Stein's work the elements of self-sufficiency and autonomy which were earlier applied to the single village unit can now be seen replicated at a supra-local level, namely, the _nadu_. Comprising of numerous distinctive localities, _nadu_ is taken as the enduring and basic unit of south Indian peasant society by Burton Stein to comprehend the socio-political structure of the Chola state in early medieval Tamilakam. The _nadu_ segments in this context are viewed by him as ethnic-ecological units and considered totally independent of the control of the state which, according to the author, had only ritual control over the _nadus_. Further, the hallmark of the social relations at the _nadu_ level was said to be based on a harmonious _brahmana_ and dominiant peasant alliances thus
leaving no room for conflicts. Stein’s formulations on the *nadu* segments have, however, been questioned by various scholars who have brought out evidence to indicate the exercise of administrative hold by the Chola state on the *nadu* units on the one hand, and on the other, the existence of a variety of settlements such as the *brahmadeya*, *devadāna*, *nagaram* and so on within a single *nadu* unit have helped in refuting the concept of syncretism among social groups put forth by Stein.

On the basis of a statistical analysis of various place names pertaining to different residential quarters, and the names of various social groups located within a single village, coupled with the evidence on the water facilities operating on an inter-village pattern, N. Karashima was able to conclude upon the fact that “the villages of the Cholamandalam in the middle of the Chola rule did not have so much of an independent nature as has been presumed”. The *brahmadeya* villages which stood in a minority, when compared to the non-*brahmadeya* ones, according to the author, played the crucial role of integrating and controlling the surrounding non-*brahmadeya* villages at the time of the Chola rule. Further, Karashima’s formulations of the differences between the *brahmadeya* and non *brahmadeya* villages on the basis of their tenurial patterns, *i.e.* the former as having individual ownership rights and the latter representing communal ownership rights have been refuted by other scholars on the basic premise that non-mention of individual owners in the records (located in the
Karashima's failure of taking into account the complex nature of the social set up of the non-brahmadeya villages have further been refuted by furnishing adequate data in this regard.

Focussing his attention on the non-brahmadeya (ūr) villages of the Tamilakam region under the Cholas, Y. Subbarayulu, with the help of his analysis on the names of social groups, concludes upon the possibility of the existence of social relations beyond a single village. Importantly, the author surmises that all these ur villages which were basically agricultural settlements, clustered together to form the nāḍu unit which was thus, not a mere administrative sub-division imposed from above. Further, according to the author the State interacted with the ur villages only through the nadu assembly which represented the interests of the rural settlements clustered in it.

The concerns of the above scholars with only individual centres in settlements (such as the brahmadeya and the non-brahmadeya as separate entities) has, however, impeded a proper understanding of the interconnection between them and the agrarian expansion or, urban growth in a comprehensive manner. In this regard R. Champakalakshmi's formulations with a focus on the settlements under the Chola rule set the right trend in our comprehension of the way various rural settlements, belonging to different ecological zones, were integrated through such institutional means as the brahmadeya and the temple
networks, buttressed through the irrigation structures fostered under the royal initiative. The author argues in this context that it is in these clusters of *brahmadeya* and the temple centres that became as the foci of urban expansion by the close of the 9th century A.D. where an initial search for the growth in the urban process in the Tamilakam region would be fruitful.¹³⁰

Set in a similar vein, the works of B.D. Chattopadhyaya cover a broad spectrum of issues related to the problematique of the formation and proliferation of settlement patterns viewed from a regional perspective during the early medieval period. The complex processes involved in the growth and the spread of settlement structures into viable productive zones and their eventual crystallization into the *brahmadeya* and major temple settlements of urban growth have been considered by the author essentially a result of the socio-political processes of legitimation and integration operating in the context of the processes that led to local state formation.¹³¹ Importantly, by relating all the above factors in relation to the physical location of the rural settlement, Chattopadhyaya has marked a considerable shift from earlier historical writings in characterizing the hitherto labelled early (medieval) Indian village in terms of its plurality of existence. According to the author, the variety of ways in which the suffixus (*vada, palli, grama* and so on) attached to the rural settlements figure in the epigraphic as well as literary sources of early India, when viewed against their geographical location significantly point to the underlying heterogeneity of that characterizes the rural space at any given point of historical
time. It is against this background of ecological variability that marks the rural structures during the early medieval period that the growth in the agrahara and the temple settlements have been comprehended.

This brings us to the question of how ideological parameters have been considered and defined by historians to comprehend various aspects of social structure and physical space of their location during the early medieval period. This period clearly saw the crystallization of several temple centred settlements and the massive popularity of the bhakti ideology that added complexity to various issues of studying social change. Historical analysis on the role of ideology in this context has, however, varied in approach to the elaboration of this problem. We find that in the conventional category of historical writings, particularly those of K.A.N. Sastri and A.V.Krishnamurthy, considerable number of pages in their books are devoted to the description of religion and the temple building activity of the period. The emphasis is more on eulogizing the various forms of Hinduism and to discuss the spread of the Puranic Bhakti cults such as Saivism and Vaisnavism. These were supposed to have received large scale patronage from the ruling chiefs during the early medieval context. On account of the simultaneous growth in literary works devoted to the Bhakti ideology and philosophy, coupled with a great spurt in the temple building activity, and the royal patronage extended to these, K.A.N. Sastri considers the Chola period (850-1200) as the golden age of
Tamil culture. The author further goes on to view these developments in terms of a revival of the Hindu religion which was said to be achieved in the main, through the spread of the "Purānic Bhakti" idiom in South India during the early medieval period. In particular the crystallization of Puranism in the form of local sectarian movement of the Kālāmukhas, with their specific location in the northern Karnataka region have also been focussed upon by some other scholars, on the basis of both epigraphic and literary sources available for the early medieval period. Emphasis has, however, been laid on the philosophical underpinning of Kālāmukha Saivism, wherein the differences it had with the Vedic school have been highlighted. P.B. Desai’s monumental work on Jainism, based entirely on the epigraphical sources, of which those of the Karnataka region form a crucial part has detailed descriptions on the Jaina Philosophy, the wide patronage it received from the rulers, the causes for its decline and so on. In the light of these studies, we have been able to pertinently note in this regard that such conventional historical works have invariably viewed the ideological moorings of the period purely in terms of religious beliefs and preachings which had an underlying moral purpose. This was totally unrelated to the social, economic and political contexts of the period when these religious beliefs spread and became popular. This is particularly interesting in the light of the fact that the temple institutions, in the same writings, have been praised a great deal for their secular functioning such as their role as bankers,
as collectors of revenue, as landlords and so on as suggested in the work of K. Ismail. These anomalies projected in the works of conventional scholars were largely a result of the compartmentalized approach they adopted in viewing various aspects of the historical phenomena as independent entities.

On the other hand, the Marxist historical works with their approach of equating ideology as essentially a product of the given material base, have tended to view various aspects of the ideological dimensions of the early medieval India in terms of depicting a feudal ethos keeping in tune with feudal socio-economic set up that they formulated for various parts of India. Thus R.N. Nandi’s conceptualizations on the role played by the Bhakti ideology during the early medieval period were rooted in defining the elements of subordination and domination which constituted the hallmark of the social relationships in interaction with the religion of the times. Nandi thus articulates:

"the effort to appropriate more of the increasing surplus during the feudal phase, is represented by a new ideology of social subordination, new rituals of gift exchange and new centres of surplus appropriation". Marxist comprehensions of Bhakti ideology for the South India have, however, been articulated in the writings of M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, wherein, the Tamil Bhakti cult has been studied as representing the agrarian feudal moorings and the Jaina and Buddhist establishments as products of trading class bias during the early medieval period. Various other dimensions of the
ideological manifestations present during the early medieval complex have been interpreted by R.S. Sharma also in relationship with social change such as those representing peasant discontent which was considered widespread during this period due to oppression unleashed by the landlords. The crisis of the Kali age depicted in the religious texts of early centuries A.D. was supposed to have registered in reality the widespread protests of the productive groups through their refusal to pay taxes to the state, which according to R.S. Sharma ultimately led to the grant of lands along with various immunities and thus led to the creation of a new landed gentry. At the same time, it is also argued that the Bhakti movement with its origins in the early medieval period, was a means to mainly to contain and channel the widespread peasant discontentment, and therefore, several types of sanśkāras, vratas and the concept of tīrtha yatra and so on were introduced into the belief system during the early medieval times. These were all meant to have created only an illusion of equality between the peasant and the landlord by enabling them to partake in the rituals on an equal footing. In reality, however, the feudal relations of production dominated and maintained the stubborn walls of inequality. By relating the element of change witnessed at the socio-economic base to the emergent ideological parameters during the early medieval period, the Marxist scholars marked a major shift in the interpretative context of how religion should be understood. This was a major departure from the hitherto common place
understanding that it was something super-natural and ordained. However, by giving primacy to the material factors of change, these scholars tended to underplay the autonomous role played by ideology in bringing about the change at the social level. Importantly, it becomes crucial to underscore at this juncture that the paradigm of social protests and their projection in the Kali age crisis, viewed from a regional perspective would hold wholly untenable for several other parts of India which had hitherto not witnessed a dissemination of the Brahmanical ideas on a considerable scale. It is in the light of these limitations that one needs to look to alternate paradigms of ideological change in the context of the study of regional history.

In the writings of Hermann Kulke, R. Champakalakshmi and B.D. Chattopadhyaya one sees that the ideology is mainly looked upon as an integrative factor playing a positive role in bringing about change. Therefore, they try to establish an interconnection between religion and the socio-economic base in the wider context of the political exigencies of local state formation during the early medieval period. In particular, the writings of Hermann Kulke have initiated a major stride in this direction by comprehending the effective use of ideological parameters made by the local polities in the context of state formation in early Orissa. In this regard the role of religious ideology, through the Bhakti medium and its institutional base in the temple, got totally transformed into a tool of acculturation, integration and legitimation in the hands of the local rajas who had infact, originated from one of the tribes
surrounding the nuclear areas located within Orissa. In his analysis, it is pertinent to note that Kulke has made the tribes and their deities central to our comprehension of socio-economic and political changes initiated in his area of study. In such a context the cultural integration that operated through the appropriation and integration of several local and supra local deities and their crystallization in the form of the cult of Jagannatha as the regional deity, went hand in hand with the territorial integration of the local chiefs in the context of early medieval Orissa. This provides one of the best examples of the role played by the regional idiom of integration operating at the local parameters of state formation which was achieved, in a large measure, through the crucial role played by ideology.

By situating ideological processes in the early medieval Tamilakam region, R. Champakalakshmi has projected in her analysis the crucial role played by temples and the monastic establishments for providing an institutional base to the several Puranic sects of Hinduism. This is seen as a mechanism of acculturation in integrating the extreme and non-conformist elements into the Tamil social organisation. It is in these processes of social change, from tribal to peasant fostered through the increasing construction of the temples undertaken by the Chola rulers and the simultaneous process of broadening the productive base, that the complex role of ideology in transforming the material base can be seen operating in her arguments. Importantly, the Bhakti ideology of the early medieval period is seen as representing the culmination of
the process of acculturation through the assimilation of local folk cults into the pantheon of *Vaisnavism* and *Saivism*\textsuperscript{153} This is then interpreted as making a strong case of the crystallization of a regional culture through such a fusion.

A recognition in the integrative potential of the ideological forces in bringing about the socio-economic changes mark a significant shift from the earlier held historical perceptions. B.D. Chattopadhyaya has aptly highlighted in this context that when viewed from a regional perspective all the above discussed issues, social, economic, spatial and ideological cluster around the crucial element of local state formation which according to him, "mediated in the absorption of ideas and practices which had been taking shape as a wider temporal and ideological process. The taking root of these ideas and practices was not a simple fact of diffusion from some elusive centre. It was an indication essentially of where and in what forms state society was taking shape".\textsuperscript{154}

Thus our comprehensions have indeed undergone significant transformations depending upon the changes in the methodology adopted by various scholars writing on it. We have seen in the above survey that the concerns of the conventional approach have been mainly with linear descriptions of the historical facts studied in a compartmentalized form. While the data recorded in their studies can be taken up for further research, their positivistic framework, of writing history has however failed to identify elements of change and complexity embedded in the historical formations characterizing the early
medieval period. The Marxist method of historical writings have on the other hand marked a major shift from the above works by identifying various elements of change and transition for the early medieval complex by relating economic changes to the larger political and social set up. But their "pre-determined aim to adopt the feudalism theory",¹⁵⁵ to explain the historical developments for the entire Indian sub continent during the early medieval period, have however resulted in a tendency wherein the specific aspects of structural formations at the regional level got totally subsumed under the 'feudal' labels. This left an impression of uniform developments despite the fact that "serious problems are posed by the complexity of inscriptive evidence"¹⁵⁶ for the early medieval period which require new methods of analysis to arrive at the historical reality. The recent spurt of non-Marxist works, by not sticking to any particular framework of historical analysis have contributed significantly in terms of understanding the regional dimension of various aspects of historical change for the early medieval period. As such these studies have a significant bearing on our understanding of the specificities of the complex social relationships in early India which defy any rigid universalization at an all India level and further go to remind us of the need to bring to light specific structural formations at a regional level. At the outset we wish to posit our regional study in the context of these recent formulations on early medieval history, which have duly emphasized upon the necessity to first of all situate the resultant social formations of this period against their physiographic setting so as to arrive at the specific nature of
historical change for any given region in India. We have therefore attempted to initiate our analysis of various issues of our study (social, economic, spatial and ideological) by locating these against their geographic setting which forms our main endeavour in following chapter. In the latter half of chapter II we highlight in detail various recent views on state formation in the early medieval period.
REFERENCES


8. S. Gururajachar, *Some Aspects of Economic and Social Life in Karnataka* (A.D. 1000 - A.D.1300), Mysore, 1974. pp.181 - 255. In this work, apart from the detailed description of the economic aspects, the author mainly focusses upon the educational system prevalent during his period of study and on the status of women and their role in the cultural, religious and administrative activities. These have been detailed as a part of his study on society.

9. Jyotsna Kamat, *Social Life in Medieval Karnataka*, New Delhi, 1980. This work stands apart from the above works as the entire book is dedicated to the description of such aspects of social life as the types of food and drinks prevalent during the period of study (pp. 1-21) coupled with such other aspects as vanity fair (pp. 22 - 67), leisure and pleasure (pp. 68 - 104) and the status of woman (pp. 105 - 130). In fact, studies of this nature belong to a category which believe in the oldest view of social history, that it was the history of manners, of leisure of a whole range
of social activities which were conducted outside the arena of the political, economic, military and other institutions and which were all the concerns of specific kinds of history (Keith Hopkins, ‘What is Social History’ *History Today*, March, 1985, p.39.)

10. In this category of historical work we have included the writings of such eminent scholars as G.S. Dikshit, G.R. Kuppuswamy and so on which have been published in various journals of the Karnataka University such as the *JKU* (Social Science) and *JHLU* (Humanities) from the 1950’s to the 1970’s and have concentrated chiefly on the description of various professional social groups such as the guild of agriculturists, mercantile groups and so on.


15. Ibid. pp. 31 - 49.


23. For example, works of S. Gururajachar, *Op.Cit*, 1974, pp. 181 - 255 and Jyotsna Kamat, *Op.Cit*, 1980, (the entire text) best exemplify the type of writing history. In fact the latter claims to have initiated the study of
various aspects of social history like amusements, vanity, fair, dressing and ornaments and so on, for medieval Karnataka, with the prime intention of setting aside the importance given to political events as interview in a democratic set up it is the people who matter more than those who govern or rule (p. xvii)

24. The Marxist method of analysis has brought about a significant change in our understanding of the early social formation in a historical perspective. Works of D.D. Kosambi (An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, Bombay, 1985 pp.140-141) R.S. Sharma, (Social Change in Early Medieval India (A.D. 500 - A.D. 1200), the First Devraj Chanana Memorial Lecture, New Delhi, 1969, pp. 11 - 27), B.N.S. Yadava (Problem of the Interaction between Socio - Economic Classes in the Early Medieval Complex', IHR, 3, 1, 1976, pp. 43 - 58), Vivekanand Jha ('Stages in the History of Untouchables' IHR 2, 1, 1975, pp. 14-31) and Suvira Jaiswal, ('Studies in Early Indian Social History; Trends and Possibilities, IHR, 6, 1-2, 1979-80, pp. 1 - 63) have attempted to analyse the dynamic nature of the varna-jati system in the context of chiefly the northern part of India. The theoretical assumptions held by these scholars could, however, be applied to other regions of India as well.


33. Summarised from Suvira Jaiswal, Op.Cit, 1979 - 80, pp. 40 - 41. In this context it is pertinent to highlight that R.Champakalakshmi, on the basis of her researches has shown the reemergence of the vaisya varna after the 10th century A.D. in Tamil Nadu. See her Presidential address,


39. Ibid, p. 32.

40. In the Marxist methodology we have seen above that despite the fact that stratified relationships have been worked out at both levels, one can clearly discern an emphasis being laid on the comprehension of tensions between the land lords as a dominant class on the one hand and the peasant groups as a dominated class on the other.

41. B.Chattopadhyaya, the Making of Early Medieval India, OUP, Delhi, 1994, p. 27.

42. R.N.Nandi, 'Growth of Rural Economy in Early Feudal India', Presidential Address, Section I, PHIC, 45th session, Annamalai Nagar, 1984, pp. 5 - 7.

43. K.Satyanarayana, Study of the History and Culture of the Andhras, I, New Delhi, 1975. In this work the author literally borrows the concepts of 'feudalism from above' and 'feudalism from below' coined by D.D, Kosambi.


47. R.N.Nandi, Op.Cit, p. 4. The author in effect initiates the study to view the feudal problem in a regional perspective with the use of the incipritional
data which according to him form the most reliable material for the study of feudal social formation in India, (p.3).


49. Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, Delhi, 1980. The author has basically divided his study of peasant society into two parts. The first one characterized under the generic term of peasant society is clubbed with the study on the *nudu*, (peasant micro region) of the Tamilakam in the early medieval period (pp. 96 - 140) the second part takes into account the dual social divisions (*idangai*, *velangai*) rooted in the peasant localities for the same region and period of study (pp. 173-215).

50. N.Karashima, *South Indian History and Society*, Delhi, 1984, pp. 37 - 64.


53 Stein, *Op.Cit*, 1980, pp. 17 -19. Repeated emphasis laid by the author on the alliance between the *brahmanas* and dominant peasantry (*vellalas* termed as *sat sudras*) as the basis for the perpetuation of the dominance exercised by these groups located within the self sufficient nuclear areas of study have, however been held totally untenable for comprehending the historical reality. (D.N. Jha, Relevance of 'Peasant State and Society to Pallava - Cola Times', *IHR*, 8, 1 - 2, 1981 - 82, p. 79.


57. Ibid, pp.21 -30.
58. Ibid, p. 17.
60. Ibid, p. 81.
62. Ibid, p. 27.
64. Ibid, p. 117.
67. S.Gurajachar, Op.Cit, 1974. His study purports to describe both the economic and social aspects of the early medieval period. Out of these he has devoted 4 chapters (3,4,5,6) on the description of the economy.
69. Deepak Ranjan Das, Economic History of the Deccan, Delhi, 1969. His study actually deals with an earlier period (1st - 6th century A.D.) of history but because the author's focuses on the Deccan region, has elicited our interest in it.
73. Ibid, pp. 113- 119.
75. G.R.Kuppuswamy, 'Land Succession in Medieval Karnataka', *JKU* (Social Sciences), IX, 1973, pp. 8 - 118. 'Dayavibhaga or System of Distribution of Heritage and Land Subdivision and Fragmentation in Medieval Karnataka', *JKU* (Social Sciences), XI, 1975, best explicity our condention.

76. Spurt in the historical works with focus on the social and economic aspects of history during the 1960's and 70's came into being mainly to provide a shift from an earlier emphasis laid on the political and dynastic history written under the nationalist/imperialist framework. This is clearly stated in the preface to the work of D.R. Das, *Op.Cit*, 1969, p. vii.

77. Such a recognition is clearly depicted in the following words of G.R. Kuppuswamy, wherein he states that "One cannot but admit the extremely conventional nature of this economy, in which custom, tradition and implicit faith in scriptures or *Sastras* played a significant part, and this has led people to underestimate, if not totally deny, the progressive and dynamic nature of the medieval economy in Karnataka". (G.R. Kuppuswamy, *Op.Cit*, 1975, p. 1).

78. R.S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, Delhi, 1980, pp. 213 - 226. The concluding part highlights for us the discussion centred around various dimensions of feudal developments detailed throughout the text.

79. Nandi, *Op.Cit*, 1984, p. 3. According to the author, in the peninsular region as in other parts of India, the relapse of a market economy of towns into a subsistence economy of agriculture, which followed a widespread decay and desertion of towns from the 3rd century A.D., seems to be the key factor in our understanding of the origins of feudalism.


82. Ibid, pp. 338 - 339.


86. M. Elphinstone, *Report on the Territories conquered from the Peshwa*, Delhi, 1973 (first published in 1821) p. 21. It is significant to note here what the author has to say on the villages of the Deccan, "these communities contain in miniature all the materials of a State within themselves, and are almost sufficient to protect their members, if all other governments were withdrawn."


89. However, the other aspects of the village community described by the earlier scholars were maintained by him. According to the author, "apart from the fact that the village is a geographical unit, the feeling of being a 'community' is maintained by the common interests and customs of the local group, by obedience to one hereditary headman, and its self contained life having its own staff of artisans and servants, the village does not need to look outside its own limits for the supply of its ordinary wants". B.H. Baden Powell, 'A Study of the Dakkan Villages, their Origin and Development', *JRAS*, Gr. Britian and Ireland, 1897. p. 239.


93. T.V. Mahalingam, 'Village Communities in South India', in T.V. Mahalingam (ed.), *Readings in South Indian History*, Delhi, 1977, pp. 94 - 105 (This article was first published in *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, I, Madras, 1955).


96. G.S. Dikshit, *Local Self Government in Medieval Karnataka*, Dharwar, 1964. The entire work deals with various types of village activities, such as village administration, about the residents of the village, physical descriptions of it and so on.


99. In this context we have numerous works written during the 1960’s and 70’s not directly focussing on the rural history, but making definite references to various aspects of rural life in the same methodological framework as the works discussed above. Among such writings we have works of Sundaram, *Op.Cit*, 1968, Kuppuswamy, *Op.Cit*, 1975, S. Gururajachar, *Op.Cit*, 1974 and so on.


103. K.A.N. Sastri, 'Grama' - An Examination of a New Interpretation', *JOR*, IV, iii, July - Sept., 1930, pp. 211 - 225. In this article the author takes note of differences that existed in the terminology of the *grama* itself as a rural space when he furnished a list of such terms as *ekabhoga - grama, kutika grama* and so on (pp. 221 - 222), but its relationship with the socio-economic and political issues located within it is totally eluded in the discussion. In an earlier work written by V.A. Gadgil, there is a clear recognition of the differences between the terms *palli* and *grama* as depicted in the literary texts of ancient India *Palli* has been considered to represent half of a *grama* and the term *kumbha* has been equated to characterize half of a *palli*. But all these have been considered to indicate the differences in the physical sizes and it is ultimately concluded that "at the most what we can say is that *grama* must have been the smallest unit consisting of cultivating owners, menials, BrShmanas, Kṣatriyas, Rathkaras and Smiths, all alike politically subject to the kings". See the above author's 'The Village in Sanskrit Literature', *JBBRAS*, (New Series), II, London , 1926, p. 151.

105. Prior to studies based on the Marxist method, social anthropological studies on India, initiated in the first half of the 20th century helped a great deal in exploding the myth of self sufficiency of rural India in the pre-British period. William H. Wiser’s study in the 1930’s (The Hindu Jajmani System, 1936) pertaining to the social relationships of the rural milieu in terms of jajmani relations provided the main clue in this direction. According to Wiser, all the castes essential to form jajmani relations cannot be found within a single community. This would then mean that inter-village networks were exigent to cater to the needs of the jajmani relations at some point or the other. Thus, the notion of the self sufficiency of the village communities stands questioned. M.N. Srinivas has brought out various other factors such as the non-manufacturing of salt in all the villages, non availability of iron in every village, weekly markets and so on which might have, according to the author, fostered economic ties between various villages. See his, Dominant Caste and Other Essays, OUP, Delhi, 1987, p. 44. Social and anthropological insights need, however, to be tested in the light of historical aspects of change based on sources about village communities in the past.

106. Almost all historical works written under this methodology have similar discussions on the growth in the rural settlements during the early medieval context. Specialized in its context is the recent work of R.S. Sharma, Urban Decay in India, New Delhi, 1987.


116. B.D. Chattopadhyaya, Op.Cit, 1990. This work deals with various aspects of rural settlements belonging to three different regions of India, such as Bengal, Rajasthan and South Karnataka.


118. Ibid, p. 23.

119. Ibid, pp. 72-73.


125. Ibid, p. 69.


127. Ibid, p. 175.


129. Ibid, p. 92.

This has been summarized on the basis of various works written by B.D. Chattopadhyaya which throw significant light on understanding several crucial issues of state formation from a regional perspective in the context of early medieval period. In particular the author's 'Urban Centres in Early Medieval India: An Overview' in S. Bhattacharyya and Romila Thapar (ed.). *Situating Indian History*, OUP, Delhi, 1986, pp. 8 - 33 is a significant case in point.

In this work the authors has picked up three types of rural structures belonging to different ecological zones of early medieval India, which have enabled him to differentiate between the nature of each settlement unit on the basis of their physical/geographical location.


K. Ismail, *Op. Cit*, 1984. As is suggested by its title, the entire work is devoted to the social and economic role played by the temple institutions during the early medieval period. These aspects are, however, studied totally divorced from the ideological dimension of the temple institution which has been totally delineated in this text. In fact, almost all the historical works in the conventional category (such as S. Gururajachar, G.R. Kuppuswamy, G.S. Dikshit and so on) can be seen taking cognizance of the secular functioning of the temple institution when they describe the temple as a major recipient of the grants of land, commodities, revenue made by various social groups. But their inability to go beyond the given historical source which normally describes seeking religious merit among the purposes of the grants, have led them to study various acts of the temple on separate planes.

discourse in early India emerges for the first time in D.D. Kosambi’s treatment of Bhagavad Gita.


143. R.S. Sharma, 'Problems of Peasant Protest in Early Medieval India', *Social Scientist*, 16, 9, September, 1988, pp. 3-16.

144. Ibid, pp. 4-5.


146. Ibid, p. 15.


151. Ibid, pp.35-38.


153. Ibid, p.163.


156. Ibid, p. 4.