CHAPTER 11

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this study, we have attempted to place the village in relation to the state, both the colonial and the post-colonial. In doing so, we have delineated the continuities and the disjunctions among the contending images of the village as held by the 'utilitarians', the 'romantics' and the 'nationalists'. Underlining the centrality of rural development as the cornerstone of the legitimation efforts of the post-Independence Indian state, we have also attempted to place the village vis-à-vis the history of rural development through a study of two rural development knowledge institutions – the National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad (NIRD) and the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA). In this concluding chapter, we shall recapitulate the main arguments developed in the thesis, and indicate emergent research questions and themes.

Indian Village and the Nexus of Colonial Power and Knowledge

We have argued that the projection of the village as the hallmark of Indian society owes its origins to the seminal statements of some of the most influential scholar-administrators in the first decade of the nineteenth century. It was only during the nineteenth century that the village acquired its exclusive and specific meaning, to the point where it (along with caste) could also be considered by some as a shorthand expression for Indian society at large. In the eyes of the early colonial scholar-administrators, Indian society was but the sum total of its multitude of 'little republics'. Here, we encounter the romantic idealisation of the village as a 'petty commonwealth', almost self-sufficient, impervious to the outside influences, and lasting where 'nothing else lasts'.
However, the then prevalent focus on the village did not necessarily derive from the realities of Indian society. Instead, it was predicated upon the *modus operandi* of the colonial state which inevitably viewed Indian realities in terms of its own imperatives of consolidating an empire over an alien land. As Heesterman (1985: 181) notes, 'neither the vogue of the village, or the caste, seems to derive from any real Indian arrangement, but rather from the needs of the modern bureaucratic state as it was introduced at the beginning of the last [nineteenth] century'.

Arguably, the colonial rule created a distance between the state and the society. Personal proximity to the ruled was unthinkable under the British rule, as it was based on supposedly universal principles of governance. Naturally, the pragmatics of governance required the making of an official view for the purpose of dealing with society from a distance. This official view, as a rule, had to be an exhaustive grid of narrowly defined categories covering the whole of society and enabling the state to apply its impersonal rules and regulations rationally (see Heesterman 1985: 181-82).

This involved two things. In the first place, the whole of the territory had to be uniformly mapped out in discreet entities. These neatly separating official units obviously could not take cognisance of the multidimensional and widely stretched out networks and interests. The latter were part of the strongly personal and particularistic nature of the old regime, where the overlapping and shifting networks of various right holders and domains used to be the norm. Against the cacophony of the old regime, the British set out widely applicable system of impersonal rules and regulations. The public domain of the state had been taken out and set apart from society. Here, the concept of the village as an autonomous
unit came into its own; it marvellously filled and legitimised the colonial need for a well-defined basic unit. The village made Indian territory intelligible and manageable to the colonial rulers in terms of categories which the latter preferred to employ, and which had historically made sense to them in the light of their own experiences as members of the English society.

Although the colonial state increasingly widened and deepened its dealings with Indian society, it only did so by reducing total situations to abstract models, which were amenable to impersonal rules and regulations. Admittedly, the village heralded the colonial understanding of Indian territory in the same way as caste made Indian people amenable to British understanding. After all, not only had land to be mapped out in well-demarcated universal units but also the people had to be categorised and counted. Whereas village took care of the former, caste took care of the latter. Thus, ‘making village knowable was part of the enterprise of making it governable’ (Smith 1985: 156).

Colonial ‘Investigative Modalities’ and the Theoretical Ascendance of the Village

The relative salience of the categories employed – ‘village’ and ‘caste’ - changed over time. After the introduction of the decennial census and the change in orientation of the colonial ‘investigative modalities’, the caste-view of Indian society seems to have overtaken the village-view (see Smith 1985; Cohn 1987, 1997). As the labelling of social groups and recording of genealogies became absolutely central to an administration and knowledge of India, the village declined in significance. The village was no longer the ‘official morphology at its prime’ (Smith 1985: 155). With the British invention of caste ‘notional Indian individual was stripped of the universality of his social roles within a village community, and
clothed instead by a garment specific to India – caste' (Ibid.: 173). The ebb and flow in the respective careers of these conceptual categories amply demonstrate that there was nothing sacrosanct about the colonial assumptions regarding Indian society.

True, the village supplied a comprehensive view of Indian society to the colonial state. But this view, which highly exaggerated the village's capacity of self-preservation, and its resilience 'to survive the ruins of empires', was ill-equipped to inspire the empire builders of the day. The relative superiority of caste as a concept dawned on them as they came to appropriate the village for pragmatic purposes. Even if caste could not be made the basis of the extraction of revenue as the village, it embraced the whole of India and all sections of the Indian society. Be that as it may, the scholar-administrators initially believed that Indian society could be represented as a series of facts, and that the administrative power stemmed from an accurate knowledge and an efficient use of these facts. What we have highlighted in the thesis is that the forms applied to these facts were far from self-evident (see also Smith 1985, 1996).

Moreover, through this dual pigeonholing of the Indian society, the British could conceptually separate land and people under these two distinctive grids of 'village' and 'caste'. Instead of rights in land being subsumed in the people, land and people could now be separately dealt with. The link between them was to be provided by a new notion of individual ownership of landed property. For the most part, this issue falls outside the purview of this thesis; we better leave it to the historians who have endlessly debated if the introduction of the British law and institutions had altered Indian society, or whether Indian society was very much
left to its own devices irrespective of the ideological and institutional changes introduced by the British.

What concerns us, in this thesis, is the ways in which the ideology of colonial rule brought about a fundamentally different view of society, or rather where no view of society as a separate objective entity had existed before, there emerged an official view of Indian society, as witnessed in the interpretation of massive archival, ethnographic and statistical data collected by the colonial authorities. The act of interpretation and analysis of such heterogeneous data called for universally applicable categories and principles of classification. For the latter, the colonial scholar-administrators had to draw upon those resources - theoretical and ideological - which they had historically inherited as members of a post-Enlightenment Western society. It comes as no surprise then that the British scholar-administrators’ observations of Indian society provided grist to the Western social theory and historiography. The Indian village no longer merely occupied a prime place in colonial social morphology, but also became enmeshed in the leading theoretical and historiographic debates of the day. Henry Sumner Maine, Karl Marx and B. H. Baden-Powell could look at the Indian village more as a unit of knowledge about Indian society than a mere unit of colonial administration. Not surprisingly, the Indian village became the theoretical site where conceptual knots of some of the grandest evolutionary schema of the nineteenth century were sought to be resolved.

Given the theoretical, ideological and pragmatic salience of the village for the colonial rule, and its subsequent implications for the understanding of Indian society, it is only appropriate that we have taken the colonial moment (what Breman (1997) has called *the village colonised*) as our point of departure in this
study. Even a preliminary understanding of the task of conceptual history implores us to do so for the concept of village in India has a specific ideological character in terms of its colonial origins. As in other parts of the colonised world, the colonial construction of the village in India was a response to the historically specific need to use easily definable spatial areas for administrative control. As mentioned earlier, in course of time, this seemingly innocuous administrative venture would construct the Asiatic village system as the corner-stone of the East (see Breman 1987). Subsequently, the village became a way of making sense of the cardinal institutions of the oriental society. Thus, what began as an exercise to design a pragmatic policy of rule of India ended up in a larger bipolar constellation, the state (modern) and the village (traditional). Also, by the nineteenth century, the village in India had become pregnant with many meanings - an archaic and primary nucleus of India society, an autonomous politico-administrative unit, an economically self-sufficient entity. Subsistence agriculture, low technology crafts and services, timelessness of lifestyles, and immobility of people accompanied by their ideological integration to land were added to an essentialised set of aforementioned attributes of the Indian village (Breman 1997: 16).

The Village and its Avatars: The Nationalist, the Sociological/Social Anthropological, and the Statist-Developmentalist

The attributes, whether eulogised or despised, bestowed on the village by the colonisers came to inform the nationalist thinking on the subject as well. The demands of a national identity necessitated the projection of the village as the repository of civilisational ideas of the Indian nation. In order to avoid the danger of historical amnesia, and to trace the salient historical continuities across the colonial and nationalist discourses on the village, an examination of the place of
the village in the nationalist ideology has seemed to us to be the next logical step. After all, the British penchant for seeing the Indian village as a separate world complete in itself had a great influence on the Indian nationalists themselves, both the leaders and the intelligentsia. It has been observed that very often the colonised appropriate and internalise the colonial vision even while resisting it (see Nandy 1983; Chatterjee 1986). Long after the British relegated the Indian village to the backseat in favour of caste as a category for understanding Indian society, the notion of the self-sufficient village republic continued to stir the nationalist imagination. In fact, this theme has been endlessly reiterated since the heyday of the nationalist movement.

Once the village became an emblem of the nationalist movement, there was no stopping the ritual incantation of the great virtues of the village (see Dumont 1970). The true India now lived in its villages. The village became the epitome of India's 'golden past' with its suggestions of egalitarianism (overt or covert), primitive democracy and pristine harmony. In ideological terms, the village, with all its inflated virtues, provided a counterfoil to the much-criticised hierarchic and undemocratic notions of caste. Nationalists could now, at least, take pride in some of the indigenous institutions. They could also assert that all is not wrong with India and her past. The point is not whether or not they went overboard in offering paeans to the village. What matters more is that the village provided them with a sturdy confidence in their inherited legacy as a 'nation' and thus served a vital ideological function in the course of nationalist movement.

The nationalist interest in the village, in conjunction with certain theoretical and methodological changes in the discipline of anthropology, inaugurated an era of what subsequently came to be characterised as 'village studies' in Indian
sociology/social anthropology. Drawing inspiration from the spate of community studies in the United States of America (USA) in the 1930s and the 1940s, the Indian sociologists/social anthropologists entered the village in a big way. The study of the village gained immense popularity also because it was looked at as a 'natural junction' of both caste and the facts of peasant life. In the unique setting of an Indian village, the peculiarly Indian caste could be combined with the peasant society and economy. Indeed, the village became a superb methodological site where these two different orders of fact could be gainfully studied. Although most of the village studies 'seem in the main to reflect the dominant concern with caste rather than furthering our understanding of Indian peasant society' (Heesterman 1985: 181), the flood of village monographs continued unabated for some time, and turned out to be the defining feature of Indian sociology/social anthropology.

The post-Independence period witnessed the projection of the village as a template for nation building. The village was to be the laboratory of 'directed cultural change' (Dube 1964). A large number of policy decisions and the massive rural development programmes directed the post-colonial state's attention towards the village. The village gained in political salience even when it continued to be the ultimate destination of the sociologists/social anthropologists's quest for a suitable locale for the study of 'peasant society and culture' (see Redfield 1955). Those very virtues that had recommended the village to the nationalists now became the sure signs of its backwardness and stagnation. The supposedly unchanging stability of the village called for external impetus for change in the form of state-led rural development. The village had to be regulated now so as to be developed. A series of carefully designed programmes had to be put in place for this purpose. It had to be ensured that these carefully devised programmes did not run aground while
encountering the 'benighted traditionality of the village'. Thus, the discourse on rural development, that is, the 'village developmentnalised', encompasses the overlapping moments of 'the village colonised', 'the village nationalised', and 'the village anthropologised' (see Breman 1997: 15-75).

Such a massive enterprise called for gigantic investment in terms of human and physical resources. It called for trained manpower with a definite orientation to rural development. The steel-frame of Indian bureaucracy was thought to be too unbending to accomplish this task. Expectedly, the state looked towards the social scientists for the support and sustenance of rural development programmes. Sociologists/social anthropologists lost no opportunity to respond to this call and made available their expertise to the state so that 'human factors in community development' (see Dube 1958) were adequately addressed. An outline of a mutually beneficial relationship between the state and the social sciences was clearly discernible in this era of unbounded national optimism which took institutional shapes in the setting up of institutes such as the National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad (NIRD). Not only the social sciences found it imperative to draw on the state support for their expansion and consolidation, but also the state found a valuable source of a politically neutral legitimacy in the social sciences.

The dichotomy of the state and society, alluded to earlier, implied that the leadership for change and development devolved on the state. It was the modern state in which almost everybody - colonial administrators, social reformers, nationalist politicians, and the post-Independence modernisers - had reposed their faith as the apparatus of change and development. Once the state and society were conceptually distanced from each other, the prismatic official view, dissolving
realities into neatly defined entities, imposed itself. After all, the state project has
to operate on the basis of easily identifiable categories. In the context of rural
development, the village was the 'natural' choice. The village became the starting
point for the legislation formalising village autonomy, namely, the Panchayati Raj,
and the sum and substance of the scores of rural development programmes. No
understanding of the village today can afford to ignore the definitive overlay of the
modern official (statist) view of the village (see also Heesterman 1985: 183-87).

The Village as a Problem of Development

For long, the village, as the site of state-sponsored development vision, has
appeared as an identifiable object to development administrators and bureaucrats.
The latter have produced knowledge that is recognisable only to the extent that it
evokes official ideas about the village. However, these official ideas also have
undergone changes. Whether villages are projected as homogenous or united
communities or socially stratified ones, their representations have always been
vulnerable to the official categories of knowledge.

Irrespective of whether rural development programmes fall short of
accomplishing their goals or succeed in meeting the desired targets, they lead to a
certain transformation of the terms in which villages are talked about, or the potent
symbols which mark off certain villages from the others. That is to say, success or
failure of a rural development programme is immaterial so far as this outcome in
terms of categories is concerned. Village becomes a marker of social difference in
the overall context of development and modernisation. It is employed as a term of
social classification with connotations of the degrees of development. The theories
and practices of rural development have changed concepts of the village for the
people (villagers) as well, and not only for planners and policymakers. As the
development vision of society spreads, more and more people lay claims to it. At times, the ideologies of development come handy while segregating village from the non-village. They also serve political interests. The ways of imagining social difference get associated with political uses of identity as underdeveloped or undeveloped.

At the same time, the ideology of development makes political agency possible on both sides. Rural development becomes the medium in which the villages also start expressing their location vis-à-vis the historical trajectory of the national development enterprise. Likewise, for the scholar-practitioners of rural development, it is their ability to conjure the expert image of the village that imparts power of representation to institutions like the NIRD and the IRMA.

However, in examining the practice of rural development in terms of its assumptions of the village, we have not collected data at the level of the village. Likewise, even when we treat rural development as part of the problem, and assert that the interventions of the state, through the medium of rural development, profoundly affect the village, we have not approached the state managers (politicians, policy makers, and bureaucrats) to add to our investigation. In this sense, our study embodies neither 'bottom-up' nor 'top-down' approaches. Although investigations at these two levels – the state and the village – are worthwhile projects in themselves, we, instead, have concentrated on mediatory knowledge institutions like the NIRD and the IRMA in order to find out the latter’s role in constructing and communicating particular image/s of the village. Since NIRD and IRMA have been exclusively devoted to the issues of rural development and rural management respectively, we found them to be ideal empirical settings to unpack the idea of the village in the context of rural development.
We realise that the impact on the village is not always in ways which conform to the stated objectives of rural development interventions. While being alive to the fact that the village also impacts on the state, in this study, we have focused on only one particular aspect of the state-village dynamics, that is, the village. For the purpose of this study, we have taken the state to be a constant. This becomes obvious when seen in the light of empirical context of the current research. As stated earlier, we have been primarily concerned with understanding and evaluating interventions of the mediatory institutions, namely, the NIRD and the IRMA, and scholar-practitioners working therein, with the stated intention of observing how abstracted models of the village are fed into rural development policies, programmes and projects.

Admittedly, the approach employed here is partial, as it privileges some sort of institutional history, a study of the views and ideas of the officials and scholar-practitioners at the institutional level (see Chapters 7-10). How villagers perceive and react to these policies, the various problems that emerge in the process of implementation of specific rural development measures, and the way they are sought to be resolved by the state to ensure its long-term interests are some of the issues that we have not addressed in this study.

Rather, in this thesis, we have tried to delineate the statist view of the village in the context of rural development through an examination of the structure and functioning of two 'premier' rural development institutes – the NIRD and the IRMA. The NIRD has been looked at as a mediatory institution through which not only relevant inputs are provided for rural development planning and policymaking but also the ruling concepts and institutions of the state are tailored within its working. Moving beyond the institutional history, we have focused on the
professional reinforcement of the statist ideology of rural development in terms of academic and field practices of scholar-practitioners working at the NIRD. Parenthetically, we have tried to figure out how applied social sciences endow legitimacy and authority to some agendas of rural development (but not others) within the overall matrix of state-society relations.

However, the rural development enterprise in post-Independence India has also transcended the parameters laid down by the state. The rural producers cooperatives in Gujarat, and their institutional manifestation of a vibrant co-operative ideology in the form of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), have been celebrated instances of a viable trajectory of rural development outside the direct purview of the state (though not without the state support). These co-operative institutions are distinguished by their singular attention on the professionalisation of the rural development enterprise. As an institution, the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) embodies the NDDB's urge to impart sound professional training in rural management so that a large reservoir of trained rural management personnel could be created for the purpose of rural development. Through an ethnographic study of the IRMA, we have attempted to contextualise the shifting contours of relationship between the imperatives of rural development and the demands of academic research. On another plane, through a comparative study of the NIRD and the IRMA, we have also examined the issue of institutional autonomy of such institutes, and the location of scholar-practitioners therein, vis-à-vis the state.

The State and the Village: Mutual Embeddedness or Hegemonic Control?

Thanks to the painstaking work of a generation of sociologists/social anthropologists, there has been a progressive deconstruction of the idea of a village
as a self-contained totality (see Dumont and Pocock 1957, 1970; Dumont 1970; Srinivas 1996a). The state-sponsored enterprise of rural development has also emphasised the outward-looking character of the village. More than ever, 'the village appears embedded in a complicated and wide-stretched network of personal rights, holdings and prestations that passes far beyond the village boundaries and makes the notion of village autarchy untenable' (Heesterman 1985: 183). Undeniably, modern times have witnessed an increasing embeddedness of the village in the state.

Quite frequently, various social groups aspiring for mobility invoke the protection of the state and use their rights as citizens to overcome the disabilities which the rest of the village may put upon them. As early as 1957, in his ethnographic study of a village (Bisipara) in Orissa, Bailey (1957: 13) noticed that such social groups 'are passing beyond the political frontier of the village and seeking to establish themselves as citizens of the state'. Corroborating Bailey's observations, Srinivas (Foreword in Bailey 1957: vii) wrote:

> It seems as though they [such social groups] are being gradually ejected from the village community of Bisipara into the political society of India. This situation is a familiar one in modern rural India, and if it proceeds unchecked, it is likely to alter the nature of Indian village community.

In pre-colonial times villages were not directly administered by the state. Even, in colonial times, as we have shown in Chapter 6, the developmental efforts had been sporadic, short-lived and often more ceremonial than substantive. By contrast, the post-colonial state has been taking an active interest in the welfare and development of villages. This has also led to a change in the conception of the role of the state. The state has come to be seen as a positive agency of welfare and social change rather than an evil necessity. The state, through a plethora of welfare
policies and developmental programmes, aims to change the social structure of the village in its entirety. In Bailey’s words (1957: 3), ‘Until recent times the state was not concerned with the social and political organisation of the rural communities, nor did it interfere with methods of exploiting the material world. The state was interested in revenue...The function of the government were fiscal and pacificatory and seldom reforming’. Thus, one sees the unfolding of a process which seems to have facilitated an ever-growing traffic (of ‘ideas and interests’) between the state and the village. To a great extent, the pace of this traffic has been an outcome of the conscious policies of development and change embarked upon by the state. It is not surprising that the villagers now see themselves more as citizens of the state than as members of the village.

The pre-eminence of the state has, however, resulted in the gradual loss of the defining characteristics of the village as a social universe. In an interesting study of a village in Tamil Nadu, Daniel (1984: 61-104) demonstrates how the statist definition of the village has marginalised the villager’s notion of the village. Contrasting Ur and Kiramam, he shows how Tamil villagers conceptualise the former as distinct from the latter. A Kiramam refers to the revenue village, and thus, to a political unit created for the purpose of taxation and the organisation of local government. Administratively, it is under the jurisdiction of the taluk, which is governed by the district, then by the state, and ultimately by the national government. There is no ambiguity about its boundaries, as Kiramam refers to the bounded, standard, and universally accepted spatial unit. The government determines what a Kiramam is, and it is the same for everyone. There is no contextual variation in the use of the term Kiramam even though it is abstract and distant.
While *Kiramam* is a term whose meaning is really context free, universal, and fixed, *Ur* is a person-centric term that derives its meaning from the contextually shifting spatial orientation of the person. In the words of Daniel (*Ibid.*: 104), ‘*Ur* is not so much a discreet entity with fixed co-ordinates as a fluid sign with fluid thresholds’. *Ur* is always in relation to a given person or jati that is known to have established a special relationship of substantial compatibilities with that particular *Ur*. In the reckoning of the villagers, *Ur* is culturally more significant as soil substance of an *Ur* mixes with the bodily substance of the human inhabitants of that *Ur*. In essence, *Ur* is an indigenous concept of territory. Villagers invariably draw the boundaries of the *Ur* with reference to ‘ritually vulnerable spots, flow and transit of substance, shrines of the sentinel deities, the points at which roads or the village streams enter the village, the haunted tamarind tree at the edge’. In fact, ‘the villager’s concern is not only with what substances enter the *Ur* and affect its inhabitants but with the effect of these alien substances on the substance of the *Ur* itself’ (*Ibid.*: 79).

Despite the fact that *Ur* and *Kiramam* are neither semantically isomorphic nor mutually substitutable, villagers misleadingly represent *Ur* as *Kiramam* in their routine practices. Irrespective of whether this isomorphism between *Ur* and *Kiramam* is apparent or real, it becomes evident that, in terms of scope and political significance, *Kiramam* has been overshadowing *Ur*. This reinforces our argument that, in our times, the state has also become dispenser of socio-political identities. This means that the process of labelling (be it of territorial units or social groups) by the state contains the potential of unleashing new solidarities that the labelling might itself engender (see Wood 1985). In this sense, to label a given human settlement as a village is rarely just a taxonomic or classificatory exercise.
The village becomes much more than a semantic slot or a lexicographic gloss. It gets firmly entrenched in the dynamics of power/knowledge. Unfortunately, the locality (place, territory) as a component of social identity has been a largely neglected field of study in Indian sociology/social anthropology (see Lambert 2002: 144).

Seen thus, the knowledge of the 'village' has been a construct in the sense that it is the result of a great number of decisions and selective incorporations of previous ideas, beliefs and images. At the same time, one particular construct of the 'village' has been destructive of other possible frames of conceptualisation and understanding. Thus, an idea of the village cannot be gleaned from an accumulation of empirical facts. Instead, it involves ways of construing the world and is predicated on the categories employed for this construing.

In the particular context of rural development, villages as the units of development administration are sought to be incorporated in the state for the advancement of national priorities of desired change and development. Rural development remains a top-down project for expanding the scope of the state administration, notwithstanding the rhetoric of people's participation. It brings villages in line with the national standards. The stereotyping involved in rural development programmes transforms 'people into objects – as recipients, applicants, claimants, clients, or even participants' (Wood 1985: 13). The rhetoric of rural development, thus, has a peculiar effect of marking the village as backward and underdeveloped. More importantly, particular images of the village are produced as representations by the state's standards of representation. In these development-directed representations of the village it becomes difficult to discern
whether villagers are enacting their native conceptualisation of the village or someone else's understanding of the village.

We argue that, in the wake of massive rural development enterprise, the village prefers being seen as the village in the eyes of the state so as to get its share of development funds and other attendant benefits. Once a particular settlement is labelled as a village by the state, certain important consequences follow. Although, this labelling is an inevitable attribute of any bureaucratic, professional, formal, institutionalised management of public resources, it also, in the process, determines rules of access to particular resources and privileges. It sets eligibility criteria and qualifying attributes for inclusion and exclusion vis-à-vis public resources, utilities and services. Expectedly, people respond to the statist labelling by adjusting their behaviour and redefining their ways of presentation in order to successfully handle their access to the scarce public resources. People's insistence to be designated as villagers vis-à-vis development programmes and public utility services is a case in point.

However, these seemingly apparent changes in the wake of statist labelling are pregnant with fundamental political consequences. Very often, the statist organisation of the village leads to the severing of contemporary and historical connections to a place. The idea of the village gets re-interpreted. Pre-existing identities are rendered week and fragile, and at times, are broken to be re-established on the basis of people's relationship to an actual or potential state activity. The designation [of the village] thereby acquires a logic in which specified kinds of behaviour and interaction are demanded or expected. People cease to be what they were. Even when they remain the same people, they come to establish their identity in strikingly new ways. For example, during the United
Front government at the centre (1989-1991), the then Deputy Prime Minister Devilal had announced some discounts at the government-run five star hotels in Delhi for people hailing from the villages. Nonetheless, the latter (beneficiaries of these discounts) had to convince the hotel manager that they really belonged to the village through 'appropriate' village ways and rustic behaviour, such as wearing a dhoti, or smoking a hookah, or walking inside the hotel with an angochha. Similarly, the participants and beneficiaries of the state-sponsored rural handicrafts exhibitions, rural haats and bazaars, and the village fairs like Surajkund, have to conform to the statist representation of the village. Thus, there are situations where people (even the real living villagers) have to be authenticated as 'villagers' according to someone else's (most importantly, the state's) understanding of the village.

In this thesis, however, we have focused on the symbolic outcomes of this primarily material articulation of interests. There are innumerable cases where particular settlements have used all possible means to retain their labels of the village even when all the census-based indicators would qualify them to be designated as towns. Such cases are widely distributed across the country. For the State of Rajasthan, Atal (2003) notes this process as far back as the late 1960s. Very often, people manipulate their way through officialese and political establishment to technically remain as 'villagers' (than 'town-dwellers' or 'urbanites') so as to attract more development funds from the state, and partake of other gains such as income tax rebate, the highly subsided supply of public utilities, which are meant for them by virtue of their being villagers. Based on D. N. Dhanagare’s personal communication, Pandey (2003, fn. 8) underlines this process for the State of Maharashtra. Similarly, in the State of Goa, the locality of
Taleigao, which was formerly part of the Panjim Municipal Corporation, has been re-designated as a village Panchayat. In fact, the preliminary analysis of the 2001 census data reveals this widespread tendency (except in the State of Tamil Nadu) where former municipal towns have been officially re-christened as villages for the official purposes. Observers have described these tendencies as constituting a peculiar syndrome of ‘turning urban, staying rural’ (see Sivaramakrishnan 2002). Thus, the village becomes part of a double-sided agency: the state and itself. A village is so much its own and so much not its own. It will be interesting to probe as to how varying conceptualisations of rural development generate and get tied up with the contending images of the village.

Tsing (1999: 171) perceptively notes, ‘A village has to present itself as needy, that is, backward and primitive enough to require a special development attention. At the same time, it must present itself as open to change, such that development attention will not be lost on it’. Even as the village longs for change it must know that no development programme would come to it if it were not backward. Backwardness is its basis for negotiation with the state in the context of rural development. In this sense, the village always remains a transitional community caught between tradition and modernity. It has to present itself as needing help, and also as ready to change. Even when it is entangled in primordial cultural values, it has to project itself as a village already on the move. In fact, the village becomes the locus of development innovations precisely because it is supposedly tied to a traditional culture that does not support innovative efforts. This situation represents, at the very least, a potential for efforts at expert guidance and development.
This is where rural development knowledge institutions like the NIRD and the IRMA assume significant roles. As institutional embodiments of particular rural development vision, it becomes their primary task to open up the village for development in the midst of 'tradition' that has historically characterised the village. While offering a long string of advice and guidance by way of numerous programmes, policies and projects, scholar-practitioners have to contribute to the creation of an encouraging ideological climate so that the longing for change and development is instilled in the village. To be the worthy recipient of the state support, a village must continually produce an insatiable development longing. It matters less whether or not the earlier rural development efforts have succeeded so far as the village is concerned. In fact, a trail of broken promises can be seen as generating even more intense form of longing.

In this thesis, we have explored the ways in which the village continues to be caught up in a discourse on tradition and pristine innocence as it creates and is created by the discourse on rural development. The latter remains the framing architecture through which the village gets constituted as the ultimate end of the modern state's reach and depth. The appropriation of the village by the modern national state through rural development is nothing unusual. There are myriad practices through which the state intervention by way of rural development encompasses the village materially and symbolically. That has been the general direction of change all over the world.

**State and the Essentialisation of Identity**

The foregoing discussion, thus, throws up some interesting theoretical questions regarding the implications of administrative categories in relation to social identities, that is, how villagers conceptualise their social-cultural boundaries in the
wake of administrative categorisation. Also, it offers certain clues pertaining to the essentialisation of identities which would have remained vacuous had the state not lent its all-pervasive legitimacy to the process. It would be interesting to explore the interface between the state and the community as regards processes of identity formation and boundary demarcation. After all, communities are contentious social groupings forged in the course of day-to-day struggles over resources and meanings (symbols). The extent to which the village reaffirms itself as a community with independent initiatives and resources to manage (a la Gandhi) and, thus, refuses the demands and expectations of state-led development can give us an insight into the ways in which the village processes the state. However, in this thesis, we have been more concerned with delineating the statist construction of the village than the other way round. Moreover, we have not tried to assess the impact of the statist construction of the village on the processes of political mobilisation in rural areas— a theme which can be gainfully pursued in any future research.

For example, the essentialisation of people’s identity as the villagers has been articulated in various farmers’ movements in the country. These movements have attempted to articulate their interests in terms of an opposition between the country and the city. Twisting the populist contention about the failure of development to reach the poor, they would highlight the failure of development to reach the village (countryside). They would posit a sharp and irrevocable divide between the country and the city — the rural Bharat and the urban India, which in turn, is built on a critique of the strategy and implementation of development (see Gupta 1999: 74-101). For our purposes, the political-ideological construction of a unitary rural Bharat emanates from a certain essentialisation of the identity of the village in the
context of post-independent development. Furthermore, this essentialisation of the
village gets ideologically charged where ‘one pole [the village/Bharat] is authentic,
good, moral, just, true, responsible, the other [the town/India] is inauthentic,
foreign, evil, unjust, immoral, false and irresponsible’ (Ibid.: 66). Thus, we see
how the village forms part of a certain Manichean discourse, and facilitates the
representation of farmers as a unitary category irrespective of social divisions and
hierarchy characterising the latter.

Similarly, in the State of Karnataka, one’s identity as a villager was, till
recently (when the Supreme Court struck it down), a basis of positive
discrimination in the state government jobs (Rural Weightage Scheme). Leaving
aside the legal-constitutional validity of the ‘Rural Weightage Scheme’, we can
clearly see that the *raison-d’etre* of the Scheme is the facile equation between the
village and the backwardness (or underdevelopment). It is to be noted that since
the provision for quota is constitutionally meant only for the ‘backward’ (socially-
educationally, classes-castes), the village automatically and effortlessly gets
designated and identified as a backward place needing the benign favour from an
external agency like the state. This corroborates our point that no development
programme or external intervention (mostly state) would come to the village if it
were not considered to be ‘backward’. In fact, as said earlier, it is the essentialised
backwardness of the village which invites and legitimates the state intervention in
the context of rural development.

The statist vision of rural development requires the village to give up its sense
of autonomy and community. It exhorts the village to ally its destiny to that of the
nation-state. True, the village does not always conform to the wishes of the state. It
has its own ways of bypassing, appropriating and transforming the development
impulses emanating from the state. In many ways, it keeps alive the locally autonomous concerns. But then, the modernising zeal of the modern state is too strong to leave the village to its own devices. No wonder, the community represented by the village slips away in the developmental fantasies of the state and the village becomes the playground for the pompous ideologues of varying shades and colours.

Apparently, the village is an administrative unit that operates around a well demarcated given human settlement. *Pace* Daniel (1985), we have seen how the meanings of the village keep fluctuating over, within, and around shifting clusters of human settlement. However, once the village becomes the diorama of national development, the villagers are persuaded, cajoled and coerced into becoming citizens of a modern state. The village also becomes the site for the manufacturing of disciplined citizens. No wonder, since Independence the post-colonial Indian state has enormously multiplied its development efforts in the village. At times, rather than developing and disciplining the existing settlements, the state endeavours to create its own ideal villages, for example, the social justice villages in Tamil Nadu, or the Ambedkar villages in Uttar Pradesh. Viewed thus, the village also offers us an entry point to conceptualise the relationship among the conceptual keywords of development and politics.

We have also noticed how official-statist-administrative categories, once they gain currency, develop a dynamics of their own. They get essentialised in course of time and acquire the potential to undermine the pre-existing bases of people's identity. However, the undermining of people's earlier bases of identity does not necessarily lead to situations of conflict. In the particular context of the village, people have responded to the statist construction/s in innovative ways to
further their instrumental interests while continuing with their old ways of identification with the village in magico-religious and kinship terms. This collective splitting of the self in relation to the village is likely to be quite widespread. The phenomenon of 'turning urban, staying rural' could be seen as another such instance of the split collective self. Nonetheless, this need not be the norm. Ethnographers have also reported instances where the long-existing ritual universe of the village appropriates the statist construction of the same in strikingly new ways. For example, in Mel Ceval village of the Tirunelvelli district of Tamil Nadu, the president of the (village) Panchayat offers the first goat (in the name of the village) to be sacrificed to the village goddess Muppidariyamman at her festival (Fuller 2002: 171). Such situations might not be very uncommon in the country.

However, one should not be misled in believing that the ritual-social universe of the village has successfully weathered the statist interventions. On the contrary, there have been enough ruptures in that universe, and the grip of the village over its ritually low members has sufficiently loosened. More than ever, the social position of the low caste members is predicated less on their ritual integration in the cosmic universe of the village and more on the protection afforded to them by the state. Rather than negotiating their ambiguous ritual position within the village (see Srinivas 1955b, 1955c), they would prefer warming up to the promises of citizenship of a modern state (see Bailey 1957). Processes like this would not have been set in motion had the state not intervened in the village. And, one of the most powerful interventions has definitely been the enterprise of rural development (see Ferguson 1990).
Thus, as far as the idea of the village is concerned, it should be fruitful to examine the implications of the changes in its conceptualisations. In our times, the decentralised governance and the rural development programmes seem to have produced the village as a ‘governmentalised locality’. By this we intend to signify not only the presence of the state in the village as an institution, but also that of the village in the state (see Das 2001: 349). Their relative strength and value remain a matter of empirical investigation. However, one can probe as to how the hegemonic influence of the statist construction of the village has led to the loosening (and, may be, possible disappearance) of the ritual-symbolic construction of the village. One can also pursue whether the statist construction has done (in)justice to the earlier ways of boundary demarcation of the village. Has not the violation of the ritual being of the village in the wake of statist construction opened spaces for upward mobility of the ritually lower strata? Employing this framework of power/knowledge should reveal as to why a census-defined village, though administratively convenient, has little sociological significance. Also, we will start seeing the ‘distortions’ and ‘confusions’ of the colonial era in a different light. We will be better placed to appreciate the durability of the official-statist categories down to the present day.