CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the larger part of known human history, the village has been the most ubiquitous and intelligible human settlement. Not only has the setting up of the village marked a definitive advancement in the onward march of human civilisation, but also it has also supposedly contained the basic societal design in its microcosm. As an institution, the village has been steeped deep in antiquity. In the Indian context, the references to the village are as antiquarian as the Dharmashastras. Since then, the village has intermittently caught the attention, fancy and imagination of a great number of itinerant travellers and rulers.

In pre-modern agrarian societies, the village was the axis around which much of the quotidian life of the majority of humankind took shape and derived its meanings. The village was a place of work and leisure for all those who inhabited it. It was the locale for the commemoration and celebration of the most important rites de passage for its inhabitants. In a great measure, it defined the outer limits within which much of the social intercourse had per force to take place. However, it was only in the nineteenth century that the idea of the village started igniting minds of both litterateurs and public personalities in an unprecedented way. The large corpuses of fiction and poetry came to be animated by the literary expressions of the village. Simultaneously, the political expression of the village took shape in the slogan 'back to the villages'. From the nineteenth century onwards, a certain kind of 'villageism' or 'villagisation' seems to have marked the spirit of the age. In fact, the perennial nostalgia for the Indian village has lent substance and charm to a great many films of our times. These films have very
often highlighted the pristine purity and the regenerative powers of the village amidst an ever-expanding urban space.

Even today, the village remains a significant social unit for a variety of purposes for both its inhabitants and observers. However, in course of time, the normative and ideological associations of the term (village) have undergone extraordinary metamorphosis. Now, the village is a prominent classificatory category in the census and other surveys conducted by the modern state. It is also the projected basis of the state-initiated political decentralisation. It provides the context for policy formulation and programme implementation vis-à-vis the national enterprise of rural development. It has been the 'sociological isolate' for a generation of field workers. More importantly, the village has been the subject matter of intense scholarly interest for sociologists/social anthropologists and economists.

Undoubtedly, the detailed and intensive social scientific investigations on the village have greatly enhanced our understanding of its structure and functioning. For some observers, the research on the Indian village is fuller and deeper than on the village anywhere else in the world. However, the wide currency of 'village studies' has not made us any wiser so far as the ambiguity associated with the concept (village) is concerned. As in everyday language, much of the social scientific literature has taken the concept of village to be axiomatic. The taken-for-granted meaning of the term village seems to have bridged the otherwise insurmountable gap between laypersons and academics/experts. Thus, the statement that more than two-thirds of the Indian population live in villages strikes a common chord amongst government officials, social scientists and laypersons alike.
Like any other concept, the village in India has a historical trajectory in terms of its origins and subsequent accretions of meanings and associations. These associations and meanings have varied depending on the historical conjunctures and the purposes with which they were imbued. Once the village was constructed in a certain mould, it led to a set of consequences in terms of symbolic outcomes. The identity of those who inhabited the village very often depended on what the village stood for. In the following section we will briefly look at the conceptual history of the village.

The Village: Trajectory of a Concept

Since the colonial times, the nature of the Indian village has been the subject of numerous investigations carried out by both scholars and administrators. The nineteenth century settlement reports of the British revenue officers, Sir Henry Maine's *Ancient Law* and *Village Communities in East and West*, and Baden-Powell's *The Indian Village Community*, have dwelt at length on the nature and functioning of the Indian village. Moreover, these works have also provided grist to the Western social theory. As a matter of fact, the Indian village remained at the centre of some of the most important debates regarding the nature of occidental society and culture.

Besides, the concept of the village has a specific history in terms of its colonial origins. The concept came to serve the colonial rulers in the context of the latter's need to use well-demarcated territorial units for administrative control. The colonial construction of the village was, however, not exclusive to India. Like in many other parts of the world that were colonised, the concept of the village was meant to construct a policy of rule of India, and ultimately to create, a bipolar constellation, the state and the village. Moreover, the then-reigning orientalism
contributed its own share to construct the Asiatic village system as the cornerstone of the East. Thenceforth, the village was taken to be a mode of understanding the Orient and its institutions. No wonder, the village-level collection of information and data came to be the staple component of the colonial archives and formed the basis of knowledge about Indian society.

As a consequence, by the nineteenth century, the village in India acquired a set of normative-ideological connotations for both the colonisers and the colonised. It was now an archaic and primary nucleus of India society. It had historically enjoyed a large degree of politico-administrative autonomy, despite paying taxes to various revenue collectors and sending its able-bodied men to the royal army. Also, the unique blend of subsistence agriculture and low technology crafts and services had made the village economically self-sufficient. Similarly, the village had become burdened with other meanings such as the timelessness of lifestyles and the immobility of people accompanied by their ideological integration to land (see Breman 1997: 16). Seen thus, it is only appropriate that the present work takes colonial construction of the village as its point of departure.

Given the salience of the colonial encounter it seems imperative to begin with a consideration of how the British conceptualised the village as they came to rule over India. Much of the scholarly debate on the nature of Indian society and culture highlights the extraordinary significance of the colonial categories and their durability. Even when there was a full-throated controversy about the impact of colonial rule over Indian society in the historiographic literature, scholars did not fail to notice the decisive discontinuities and disturbances, particularly of a conceptual kind. For example, Gupta (1999: 8-9) argues, ‘Colonial discourse bequeathed a set of dichotomies that were unusually “productive” in a Foucauldian
sense in that they enabled the construction of sociology that informed colonial institutions and practices.' This work attends to one such instance of the colonial categories – the Indian village (see particularly Chapters 2 and 3).

The trope of the village remained part of the nationalised ideology. The demands of a national identity necessitated the reconfirmation of the village as the repository of civilisational ideas of the Indian nation. Thus, even in the case of nationalist discourse, the valences of the Indian village were far from fixed and given. In fact, at stake in debate over the village were questions concerning the legitimacy of postcolonial intervention and the enterprise of nation building in relation to popular presumptions of the Indian National Movement's promises. As a consequence, the village acquired a renewed visibility.

The entry of the village in the great narratives of nationalism and development that plotted the country's past and future could not but have a decisive impact on the then emerging disciplines of sociology/social anthropology. As against the earlier studies that were narrowly focused on landownership, sometimes even more narrowly on land revenue, the sociological/social anthropological studies of the village (village studies hereafter) were much wider in scope. These village studies had a sense of novelty by virtue of their having employed new methodological tools of data collection and analysis.

Admittedly, the trajectory of the conceptualisation of the Indian village has been a chequered one. But, this is true for any other concept for that matter. Concepts do acquire different connotations in the process of their evolution and, in turn, they condition the possibility of thought and action (see Williams 1973). In a way, socio-political concepts are like sponges: they are able to soak up and contain a variety of meanings as a result of being used in different contexts for different
purposes. It is this sponginess that makes concepts increasingly ambiguous, and it is the resulting ambiguity that sometimes makes concepts constitutive of discourse. Rather than starting from a fixed definition of a given concept, conceptual history attends to what the practices of definition and usage do to a concept, and what the concept in turn does to the world in which it is inscribed. Phrased differently, conceptual history attends both to what a concept means within a given context and to what a concept does to a given context. Even otherwise, practices of definition and usage are never innocent. They invariably reflect underlying presuppositions about the socio-political world and the conditions of its intelligibility.

The Problem

For long, village has been the basic unit of agrarian organisation. In course of time, its position as the nucleus of agrarian production and taxation metamorphosed into the Anglo-Indian notion of the village as an autonomous political, economic, and moral universe. The instant thesis attempts to place the idea of the village in the context of a wider discourse between knowledge and administrative/political control. It traces the fluctuating content of the village in relation to the colonial and the post-colonial state. The central problematic centres around an examination of how official categories and forms have set the mould for a ‘village view of Indian society’ (Cohn 1987).

The village occupied a pride of place in the official social morphology of the colonial state. To a great extent, as we will be arguing in this thesis, the salience of the village as a cardinal institution of Indian society is intimately linked with the colonial categories which provided the filter through which society was officially observed. Not surprisingly, as a unit of administration, the village had
been idealised as a 'petty commonwealth' or a 'little republic' at a time when new territories were being brought under the British rule. It is noteworthy that it was only in the nineteenth century that the village acquired its exclusive and specific meaning to the point where it could also be considered by some as a shorthand expression for Indian society at large.

However, the colonial construction of the village outlived the colonial state. Even the nationalist discourse could not remain untouched from the colonial influence. Naturally, the village was projected as a template for nation building in the post-Independence period as manifested in the massive rural development programmes undertaken by the nascent post-colonial state. The post-colonial state's interest in the village coincided with the flurry of 'village studies' in sociology/social anthropology. Although our systematic knowledge and understanding of the Indian village have made significant advances since the early nineteenth century down to the village monographs of the twentieth century, the village itself has hardly been problematised, notwithstanding the availability of voluminous data and secondary literature about the village.

In sociological and social anthropological literature village has been approached from a variety of points of view. For many studies, village has been a convenient site, 'a strategic point of entry' to look at wider processes operating in society (see Chauhan 1974; Breman et al. 1997). For many more, it has been a self-contained microcosm embedded in a larger macrocosm, a handy methodological tool for generalising about the totality of Indian social structure (see Srinivas 1955, 1996a, 1996b). Of late, 'village as space' has also been problematised and the discursive nature of the reality of the village has been sought to be projected (see Niranjana 1991: 371-85).
Thanks to the postmodern turn in social sciences and the anthropology's growing concern with the problematics of space, it has been argued that the village does not gain in sociological reality by virtue of merely being a territorial and demographic entity (Ibid.). Indeed, in this view, the reality of the village acquires sociological significance in the mode of its representation, the specific ways in which it is approached and written about. The act of representation itself becomes constitutive of what is represented. In this sense, village as a universe of shared meaning having its own holistic logic no longer remains an empirically given fact. Rather, the apparent boundedness and coherence of the village can be seen as something made rather than found. Nonetheless, these shifts are yet to have a fundamental impact on the general sociological orientation towards the village. Inden (1990: 152) brings out this point when he writes, ‘...it [the new corpus of village studies] does not mean that we have totally transformed the predominant episteme for viewing the village. The idea that there is a village community, transmuted into “peasant society” still persists’.

Thus, a survey of village studies tells us that the term ‘village’ has come to connote two meanings (1) as an empirical reality, i.e., a given territorial (spatial) and demographic (census) unit, a fact or a thing in the Durkheimian sense of the term, and (2) as a representation of that fact or thing, i.e., as a discourse. The current research overlaps with the vast area of village studies to the extent that it seeks to examine the dynamic interplay between the rural developmental discourse and the sociological constructions of the village. It is premised on the assumption that sociology (both as a discipline and a profession), along with other social sciences, had a definitive role to play in the emergence of development policies and programmes. At least, conscious attempts were made to make such policies
sociologically informed. In the instant research it is intended to study rural development institutions in order to examine the linkages between the policy-making bodies and the professional social science disciplines.

Methodologically, the study is based on the premise that conceptual categories are not merely expressive of reality, but also constitutive of it. In this case, it opens up a theoretical possibility where the practices of rural development constitute an image of the *village* which might or might not converge with its varying representations in sociological and social anthropological literature. Another related possibility could be that rural development discourse privileges one particular construction of the village while marginalising other possible constructions. In this research, we intend to problematise the *village* of the rural development and to engage with the shifting constructions of the *village*.

It is true that there are various ways of approaching the village, and, these approaches yield a multiplicity of representations. Very often, such representations come to be informed by larger representations of state and society. The present study intends to view the developmental discourse of Indian state as one such dominant representation which has been acting upon the representation of the village. It endeavours to locate the representations of the village in relation to the developmental discourse of the state. It addresses the ways in which particular representation/s of the village has been promoted by the state to suit its developmental aspirations. It is probable that some of these representations suit the 'developmentalist' state.

After having critically looked at the conceptualisations of the village in the colonial, nationalist and sociological/social anthropological and rural development discourses, the present study further attempts to describe and analyse what rural
development has meant to the idea of the village in conceptual and historical terms. To this end, we explore the structure and functioning of two knowledge institutions concerned with rural development – the National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad (NIRD) and the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA). We look at these institutes as mediatory institutions between the state and the social scientific/academic universe which have a bearing not only on the substantive content of rural development programmes but also on the semantic outcomes concerning the village. In other words, the trajectory of the concept of village as gleaned from an exhaustive survey and review of the secondary literature (data) has been complemented with primary data obtained through empirical investigation into the above mentioned rural development knowledge institutions. The purpose is to understand the ideologies and practices of these two institutions so far as the contested constructions of the village are concerned. One of the central arguments of the study is that the apparatus and discourse of the state-led rural development is decisive to any conceptualisation of the village in post-Independence India. In this sense, this study differs from much of the literature on rural development or village studies in that it focuses primarily on how the practices of rural development (as mediated by rural development knowledge institutions) shapes a particular idea of the village, or in turn, get shaped by them.

One of the important ways of understanding the conceptualisation of the village could be an analysis of the content of rural development policies, programmes and projects. Rural development has not merely been a medium in which the discourses and practices of development are conveyed to the villagers, but has also significantly influenced the way in which inhabitants of a particular settlement conceive of themselves as belonging to a village. If the post-
Independence Indian state is defined by the centrality of development in the task of nation-building, then rural development is its most important feature given its scale and continuity. Rural development, in this sense, is a social fact in relation to the village and not merely an analytic choice available to the scholar-researcher.

Nonetheless, in this thesis, we are not concerned with evaluating and assessing rural development as a form of state intervention. Nor do we offer an inventory of rural development policies, programmes and projects. Undertaking these tasks would have been another instance of endless duplication of similar studies conducted elsewhere. True, we will be touching upon the practices of 'rural development' but with the limited purpose of examining some of their assumptions about the village (and the state). Our aim is to treat rural development as part of the problem, particularly in relation to the village. We are interested in knowing the degree and extent to which the interventions of the state, through the medium of rural development, impact on the village. Furthermore, we want to know if the impact on the village conforms to the stated objectives of the rural development interventions. While being alive to the fact that the village also impacts on the state, this study focuses on only one particular aspect of the state-village dynamics. For our purposes, the state has largely been taken to be a constant. This becomes obvious when we look at the empirical context of the current research, where the intention is to understand and evaluate interventions of the institutions and scholars-practitioners of rural development.

Thus, in this study, we have not attempted to cull out the meanings of the village in the context of rural development programme at the level of the state. It is true that rural development programmes provide us the scope for examining not only the nature and character of the state, but also the relations between the state
and the village. Even when the state is influenced by the processes at the village level, it might not be simply an ‘aspect’ or reflection of the latter. Given the ‘autonomy’ of the state, one could have focussed on the state functionaries – legislators, policy makers and bureaucrats - to gain an understanding of the state as a crucial player in imparting fixity to the concept of the village. We have refrained from doing this, as there is plenty of literature on the theme (see Pigg 1992; Springer 2000; Zook 2000), and also because of the anticipated problems of accessibility to data and potential respondents. Also, it would have expanded the scope of the instant research beyond manageable limits.

Nor have we focussed on the recipients and beneficiaries (or victims?) of rural development, that is, the villagers, as there is an ever-growing corpus of work, especially in the area of anthropology of development (see Ferguson 1990; Pigg 1996; Moore 2000). Rather than eliciting villagers’ views about what rural development means to them, or what is a village, we, in empirical terms, engage with the scholar-practitioners at the NIRD and IRMA. Through our conversation with these scholar-practitioners, we want to figure out how the village became the subject of many developmental representations. We are interested in knowing their unstated (dis)agreements over what is a village community, or what does rural development mean to them.

Central to our investigation are much disputed issues of representation: on one end of a continuum, village communities are represented as closed and static repositories of custom and tradition; on the other end, they are portrayed as hyper-rational, individualistic entrepreneurs. On the one hand, they are looked at as undisciplined mobs, while on the other, they are referred to as model citizens. Both ends of this continuum of representation draw upon hoary historical roots as well
as contemporary legitimacy. From being the backward remnants of archaic humanity, the village, in the mainstream of developmental thinking, becomes an aggregate of independent innovators and entrepreneurs.

Much of the literature on rural development has not focused on this profound ideological shift in producing ways of looking at the village. Very often, the concern with the actual outcomes in terms of policy objectives and other empirical targets make the ideological effects of such programmes go unexamined and unrecognised. In this vein, the current work chooses to look at the institutions like the IRMA and NIRD rather than focusing on the complete trajectory of a particular rural development programme. More importantly, through an in-depth study of NIRD and IRMA, we are enabled to find out how an earlier opposition between the state and the village yields to the new one between the village and the development while the state becomes the referee of rural development.

Given the variety of ways in which the village has been represented, it is difficult to decide once-and-for-all what really constitutes a village. In this context, it seems an important task to analyse the dynamics of representation itself, and particularly to look at how representational categories come to mean something to rural development scholar-practitioners (and bureaucrats) in a particular political moment. In this spirit, this study is also concerned with representational strategies and how these strategies inflate or deflate the content of social categories on which they rely.

In another sense, by way of a close look at the self-fashioning of rural development institutions, we are interested in revealing certain important characteristics of the scholar-practitioners of rural development. We want to ascertain if the omnipresence of rural development has made possible a new role
for the rural development professionals/experts. Given our interest in knowing the ways in which these experts convincingly 'represent' the kind of community that the funding agencies (international) and the (state) might choose to support, we found rural development institutions to be ideal settings to probe the co-operation and alliance between the experts and the state and other funding agencies. In this view, our focus has also been on those collaborations that sustain and give life to concepts such as the village in the context of rural development.

The Objectives

This study is an attempt to understand the changing content and contours of the idea of the village. Its primary focus is on the historically evolving relationship between the state and the village. A delineation of the historical and the contemporary context of the dynamics of the state/village relationship is the central problematic of the instant research. To this end, it delves into the meanings of the village in colonial, nationalist, sociological/social anthropological and developmentalist discourses.

In providing such a retrospective look at the concept of the village, the objective is to open the concept itself to investigation by asking how and why the concept of the village has managed to accumulate different, and sometimes incommensurable meanings, over time. In this sense, the current study is also aimed at attempting a brief conceptual history of the Indian village.

In empirical terms, this thesis is anchored in a study of rural development institutions. Rather than being concerned with the success, failure or impact of a particular rural development programme, it seeks an understanding of the discourse of rural development in terms of changing state-society relationship, and its
implications for particular type/s of construction of the village. Simultaneously, it attempts a critique of the dominant constructions of the village in sociological/social anthropological literature. In brief, the main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To trace the historical genealogies and inflections of the idea of the village in relation to colonial, sociological/social anthropological and rural development discourses.

2. To interrogate prominent conceptualisations of rural development by way of examining contending images of the village in the policies and programmes of rural development, i.e., to unravel the meanings of rural in the context of development and planned social change. This entails an understanding of the major shifts and reorientations in the policies of rural development and an exploration of their possible correspondence to the changes and shifts in the sociological/social anthropological representation of the village.

3. To assess the impact of the state on the village through a study of the two rural development knowledge institutions by focussing on the latter’s role as mediatory institutions. Parenthetically, this involves an examination of the relationship between the state and the rural development professionals, that is, rural development bureaucracy and the scholar-practitioners (academics) of rural development

The Data

Given the objectives of the research, it is clear that a survey of the historical representations of the village in the enormous corpus of existing literature was the
first task to be accomplished. This involved a considerable amount of library (desk) research, as the secondary literature itself constitutes the required data for analysis for this work. The outcome of library/desk research is not presented as a survey and review of literature in the conventional sense. The 'survey' itself is informed with the objective of tracing fluctuations and inflections in the meanings of the village. This is borne out by the discussions in Chapters (2-6) that exclusively rely on the textual analysis. In this sense, the first half of the study is exegetical in nature, anchored itself in the secondary literature concerning the village and rural development.

The second half of the study (Chapters 7-10) presents case studies of two rural development institutions: the NIRD and the IRMA. These institutions have been looked at as mediators between the state and the village. This mediation takes place mainly through the media of training, research and consultancy. They provide the state with scientific/academic legitimacy for its developmental efforts. Thus, they not only conceive, design, implement, monitor and evaluate development programmes, but also secure relative insulation of these programmes from the pressures of everyday politics. Moreover, they provide us ideal settings to investigate the uses of social scientific/academic knowledge for the purposes of rural development.

In order to discern their role vis-à-vis the official rural development programmes, the data have been collected at two levels: (1) the level of the institutions and (2) the level of the scholar-practitioners of rural development. The former includes such items as memoranda of associations, annual reports, review committee reports, souvenirs, and a survey of the work and activities undertaken by them, e.g., projects, consultancy, research, training and extension and similar
other in-house booklets and brochures. Chapters 7 and 8 make use of this type of data while respectively presenting the institutional profiles of NIRD and IRMA. Here, the focus is on the life history of the institutions - in terms of its shifts and reorientations.

The primary data used in this study have been the outcome of a series of field visits of varying duration to the respective institutes over a period of one year (October 2002 - September 2003). For the purpose of collecting data at the level of institutions, the researcher made his first field visit to the respective institutes in the month of October 2002. These visits were of two-weeks duration each. During these visits, the primary objective was to collect material on the institutional history of NIRD and IRMA through an intensive study of in-house literature such as annual reports, review committee reports, souvenirs, and occasional booklets and brochures. The intention was to get adequate familiarity with the structure and functioning of the institutes before embarking upon interviews with the scholar-practitioners. This familiarity was indispensable for the purpose of identifying issues and themes for further probing at the time of interviews with scholar-practitioners.

In the case of NIRD, the researcher soon realised that an understanding of the Institute would be incomplete without participating in some of its training programmes. The organisation of regular training programmes for the rural development functionaries is the mainstay of the Institute. Fortunately, these programmes also have some seats for university/college faculty, particularly those having an academic/research interest in rural development issues. Having come from a discipline whose relationship with rural development did not require any advocacy, the researcher had no difficulty in convincing the programme co-
ordinators about his genuine interest in attending the training programmes. However, it should be noted that the researcher attended these programmes as a university lecturer in sociology and not as a researcher working on the instant theme. The idea was not to generate an undue attention while participating in the programmes. Also, by privileging his identity as a teacher, the researcher was better placed to be an unobtrusive participant observer so far these programmes were concerned. Thus, to gain first-hand experience of these flagship components of the NIRD’s activities, the researcher attended two training programmes, namely, ‘Human Resource Development in Primary Education’ (7-12 July 2003), and ‘Course on Participatory Rural Development’ (28 July-2 August 2003).

In the case of IRMA, participation in these programmes was not considered necessary, as the essential identity of the Institute is around its flagship postgraduate programme in rural management (PRM), and not around training programmes. Although the IRMA does conduct training programmes for middle-level executives in co-operative and allied rural sectors and the functionaries of the Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), its self-image is that of an institute of teaching and research than that of a training centre. Obviously, in terms of their self-image, these ‘management development programmes’ (MDP) conducted by the IRMA are not of the same importance as those of the NIRD. Moreover, while there are no participation fees for programmes conducted at the NIRD, one has to pay for participation in the MDP. The relatively higher participation fees also discouraged the researcher to attend the MDP.

At the second level, primary data was collected through focussed interviews with the scholar-practitioners working at these two institutions. This was meant to get the ‘insider’s view’. This has not only made data interactive, but
has also yielded methods and insights to evaluate the institutions themselves. To the extent that these scholar-practitioners of rural development construct various meanings of rural in their daily intellectual practices, their views might not have found a place in the official documents.

The researcher, with the help of an interview guide, conducted these interviews over a period of eight months (February-September 2003) at the respective institutions. In addition to the initial field visit and the two visits meant for participation in the training programmes, six more field visits (of two-week duration each) were made to the NIRD. These visits were made at frequent intervals so as to establish contacts with a cross-section of scholar-practitioners. At the NIRD at any point of time approximately one third of the faculty members are out of station on different assignments, such as field visits, conducting off-campus training programmes, visits to various state institutes of rural development (SIRDs) and the Ministry of Rural Development. In all, we covered forty-two scholar-practitioners at the NIRD out of an approximate total strength of hundred. In the IRMA, we covered sixteen scholar-practitioners out of the effective faculty strength of twenty-two. Given the small institutional size of the IRMA, interviews were spread over only three field visits of a week’s duration. However, in both the cases, we relied on purposive sampling, as our aim was to reach out to those scholar-practitioners who would be forthcoming on the issues raised and the themes probed. Even otherwise, the small universe of respondents at both the institutes did not warrant random sampling.

Thus, so far as the NIRD and the IRMA are concerned, there are two main components of the data for the present research: (1) secondary data in the form of published output by the institutions and the members working therein - researches
done, projects undertaken and papers published, and (2) primary data collected from interviewing the rural development personnel (scholar-practitioners). In this sense, the thesis follows an eclectic approach in the use of methods. After all, what role a particular method plays in a research project ultimately depends on the questions that the researcher seeks to answer. Admittedly, in this thesis, some chapters draw heavily on observation and interview data while others on textual analysis.

On the whole, as the current study is concerned with the historical and contemporary contours of the idea of the village, it deals with a wide range of data. In empirical terms, however, the work is anchored in a study of rural development institutions. Rather than being concerned with the success, failure or impact of a particular rural development programme, it seeks an understanding of the discourse of rural development in terms of changing state-society relationship, and its implications for particular type/s of construction of the village. Simultaneously, it attempts a critique of the dominant constructions of the village in sociological/social anthropological literature. The endeavour is to combine the insights of the anthropology of development with those of political sociology while being sensitive to the overall politico-economic framework.

**Limitations of Data and Analysis**

We realise that observing, understanding and explaining the idea of the village at the level of mediatory institutions, namely, the NIRD and the IRMA, exclude two valuable levels of analysis – the state and the village. The state managers – politicians, policy makers and bureaucrats are outside the scope of the present study. Similarly, the study does not present any analysis of how the villagers themselves respond to the conflicting ideas of the village. The villager’s idea of the
village might not be in consonance with that of the rural development professional.
We have not directly touched upon the issue of how the rural people perceive
themselves as villagers. To the extent that the study excludes the data from state
managers as well as the villagers, it has obvious limitations.

The study, in its present form, is very likely to give a top-down picture of
rural development and the associated question of the representation of the village,
as the institutions dealt with here mainly concern themselves with macro-level
(pan-Indian) policy frameworks and designs. Secondly, the present research does
not factor in how villagers (actors) themselves constitute their own sense of
belongingness to the village in their everyday life practices. Lastly, the state has
been assumed to be the most potent force and, hence, also productive of the
powerful symbols and discourses having currency in the society.

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 scholars-
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 ways they are
sought to be resolved by the state to ensure its long-term interests are some of the
issues that do not fall within the purview of the current work. This does not mean
that these issues are not important. Our purpose behind identifying the limitations
of the data on hand, or the partiality of methodological and theoretical perspectives
used for analysing these data, is simply to facilitate future attempts at a more
rigorous and comprehensive analysis of the issues involved either by the present
researcher or by others. In this sense, any attempt to come to terms with the
inadequacy one's own data is intricately tied up with the promises of future
research endeavours.

There is no gainsaying that no single piece of research can claim to address
all the possible questions in a given field. Moreover, a doctoral research has its
own constraints of time and resources. These limitations notwithstanding, it is
hoped that the work raises certain important questions in the course of discussions
that follow.

**Organisation of the Thesis**

In the preceding sections of this Chapter we have attempted to provide an overview
of the main issues discussed in the thesis in a logically sequential way. We have
presented our research problem by identifying central issues and arguments and
indicating subsidiary research questions. We have also tried to delineate the scope
of the study while discussing types of data and the methods of data collection and
analysis. Besides, we have briefly pointed out the significance and limitations of
the current study. In what follows we will put forth the organisation of the thesis in
terms of chapters with a view to offer the highlights of the study. The remainder of
the thesis is divided into ten chapters. A comprehensive bibliography on the
subject, including all the references cited in the text, completes the thesis.

We have seen how a preliminary understanding of the task of conceptual
history implores us to begin this study from the colonial moment (what Breman
1997) has called *the village colonised*), for the concept of village in India, as in
many other parts of the colonised world, has had decisive colonial imprint. To
place the specific history of the concept of the village in terms of its colonial
origins seemed to us a worthwhile inaugural exercise. Thus, in Chapter 2, we have
looked at the village as an entry point to retrospectively assess the history and character of colonial forms of knowledge. The treatment of the village in this Chapter is based on two premises: (1) The colonial state has had extraordinary effects on the basic structures of contemporary Indian life, and hence, the colonial construction of the village affords us a peep into our own past and present (2) Following Cohn (1987; 1997), Dirks (1987; 2002) and Inden (1990), it has been asserted that exercise of power and accumulation of knowledge were both parts of the same colonial project.

The British attempt to understand the nature of Indian society was inseparable from their effort to design an ideology that would sustain their rule over it. In other words, this Chapter places administrative practices in relation to the larger enterprise of colonial construction of Indian society. In reality, the two were historically intertwined. Colonialism has been as much about policies as about theories and strategies of representation (see Nandy 1983; Pant 1987; Metcalf 1998). On the basis of an exhaustive survey of secondary literature, the Chapter demonstrates how the village presents an interesting pretext to look into the British understanding of the Indian society and use within the colonial administration of what were considered to be the key units of that society (see Smith 1996: 61, 74-77; see also Cohn 1997: 57-75).

Arguably, we have examined the specific career of the term 'village' in relation to the history of colonial knowledge about India and the use of this knowledge in official projects. Our purpose has been to foreground the capacity of the colonial state to reconstruct fundamental aspects of Indian society – the village, in the instant case. As a consequence, we have devoted our singular attention to the colonial construction of the village to underline the historically specific need of the
British to use easily definable and conveniently identifiable territorial units for politico-administrative control. In course of time, this seemingly innocuous administrative venture would construct the Asiatic village system as the cornerstone 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). Not surprisingly, by the nineteenth century, the village in India had become burdened 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 projected as some of the essential attributes of an Indian village (Breman 1997: 16).

In Chapter 3, we explore the ways in which the idea of the Indian village came to inform the intellectual currents of the British society itself. Stokes (1959), Guha (1963), and more recently Metcalf (1998) and Mehta (1999) have convincingly shown that British rule in India was not a disconnected, separate and isolated fragment of English history. Colonial rule over India has, in fact, held a mirror up to Great Britain reflecting the English character and mind. Ideas regarding India have been enmeshed with political and social doctrines of the day and many of the ideational battles in England were waged on the Indian question and rested upon Indian experience. Thus, it was no one-way traffic where current of ideas prevalent in England unilaterally found practical expression in Indian policy. India’s influence on British outlook has also been substantial and it has
played a formative role in English history throughout the greater part of the
nineteenth century: 'indeed, considering the general public indifference to Indian
affairs, it is remarkable how many of the movements of English life tested their
strength and fought their early battles upon the Indian question' (Stokes 1959: xii).
To underline the British connection with India, in the particular case of the Indian
village, is to reiterate that colonialism was not just about the colonisers any more
(Nandy 1983). Viewed thus, this Chapter articulates a theoretical framework where
the ideas of the colonisers and the colonised can be seen as belonging to a unitary
field of analysis.

The attributes whether eulogised or despised bestowed on the village by the
colonial scholar-administrators came to inform the nationalist thinking on the
subject as well. As the demands of a national identity gained ground, the village
was idealised as the repository of civilisational ideas of the Indian nation. For
assertion of the suppressed glory and value of the nation, the institution of the
village came handy to the nationalists. The idea of village acquired ideological zeal
and nationalist fervour. 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
seems to be the next logical step. Chapter 4 presents competing connotations of the
village amongst the nationalist intelligentsia, as witnessed in the heated disputes in
the Constituent Assembly on the issue. It shows how the nationalist construction of
the village got tied up with fierce struggles over the meanings and practises of state
administration, traditional authority (social structure) and understandings of
popular political entitlements in the aftermath of Independence.
Chapter 5 takes a critical look at the village studies while trying to bring out their salient features. The objective here is not to reiterate what the earlier surveys of literature have already presented. Rather, we have made an attempt to glean from the enormous corpus of literature the particular idea/s of the village that have shaped the research orientations of the practitioners of sociology/social anthropology. In this vein, this Chapter does not purport to add one more survey and review of literature to the already existing repertoire. It only seeks to probe the strengths (and limitations) of analytical approaches and methodological renderings that have dominated conventional village studies. Even otherwise, given the enormity of literature generated by village studies, it is well-nigh impossible to chart out a comprehensive review within the space of a chapter.

However, the village has been taken to be so obvious and basic a unit of the enterprise of rural development, that the inflections of the idea of the village have easily been overlooked in literature on rural development. In Chapter 6, we delve into the ways in which the discourse on rural development constitutes a hegemonic version of the village in India. This Chapter explores the argument that the developmental focus on the village helps the state in getting a renewed legitimacy as a crucial modernising agency. Only by maintaining and sustaining a rural developmental discourse the state can justify its popular sovereignty as a modernising instrument in an underdeveloped society. As a consequence, this discourse also recreates Indian village in a particular fashion by making it the principal site where tradition-modernity problematic unfolds itself.

This Chapter also tries to find out whether the image of the village current in the discourse on rural development converges with that of the dominant sociological/social anthropological writings. Or, can one find a marked dissonance
between the two? In fact, the Chapter problematises the ‘village’ of the rural development programmes. However, the focus is not on how the village processes rural development programmes, but on how the village gets processed by these programmes.

All the aforementioned chapters are, however, the outcome of library (desk) research and, consequently, based on an intensive scrutiny of secondary literature. With Chapter 7, we move on to the empirical part of the instant investigation. This Chapter sketches the genesis, history and the current activities of the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad. Based primarily on the published literature, such as annual reports, research highlights, review committee reports, and other in-house brochures and booklets, it attempts to understand the structure and functioning of NIRD in the context of rural development. However, it does not merely chronicle the host of activities that the NIRD has historically undertaken or is presently engaged in. Rather, the focus is on the role of NIRD as a mediatory agency between the state and the plethora of rural development policies, programmes, and projects that have been introduced in the post-Independence India.

Likewise, Chapter 8 traces the institutional history of IRMA in the context of rural development. Based primarily on the published literature (mainly annual reports, but also other sources such as souvenirs brought out on various occasions, and related brochures and booklets), it delineates the general orientation and outlook of IRMA as an instance of an institute in the broader field of rural development. Though the Institute is relatively young, it has already carved out a niche in the area of rural management and development. Moreover, as an Institute, which is almost financially independent of the government grants, it holds
additional attraction. In financial terms, the Institute is not only self-dependent, but also has, over the years, generated sufficient surplus in its corpus fund. The Chapter particularly addresses the question as to how an institute, which has flourished under the active patronage and sponsorship of a particular kind of co-operative organisation, relates to the state-led rural development policies and programmes.

In Chapter 9, our focus is on the scholar-practitioners of rural development working at the NIRD. The Chapter is essentially based on the data generated through focussed interviews with a sample of scholar-practitioners. Through this attempted shift in attention from institutions of rural development to the scholar-practitioners working there, the Chapter seeks to find out the degree and extent of scholar-practitioners' internalisation of the institutional motto. In fact, their orientations towards institutional consensus on rural development have implications for the type of work they do. The Chapter, thus, provides an entry into the professional world of scholar-practitioners by narrating their experiences. It documents the scholar-practitioners' ways of justifying their existence as social scientists/academics in such institutions, and what they do and do not do. The scholar-practitioners' perceptions and experiences of their own location in the institutional setting and their role performance definitely add value and richness to the secondary data used in the preceding chapters.

Chapter 10 discusses the professional world of scholar-practitioners in the specific context of IRMA. It addresses the same set of issues as outlined in Chapter 9. It probes how social scientific/academic discourses influence the discourses employed by the policymakers and planners, and how such discourses are used to shape the practices of development and social change. It also presents a
comparative study of the NIRD and the IRMA in terms of their mediatory role in the context of state intervention through rural development. The main concern is to find out the extent to which social scientific/academic discourses have shaped, or indeed, have been constitutive of rural development interventions and attendant state practices.

Based on the analyses presented in the substantive chapters (2 to 10), and drawing insights therefrom, Chapter 11 presents the conclusions of the study in terms of the changing state-society relationship. It argues that 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 mere empirical facts. Instead, it involves ways of construing the world and is predicated on the categories employed for this construing.

In the Chapter we anticipate a possible criticism of our discussion presented in the thesis and briefly respond to it. This chapter also raises some important research questions about 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 examines the essentialisation of identities which would have remained vacuous had the state not lent its all-pervasive legitimacy to the process.
Notes

1 This observation is generally attributed to the Aligarh historian the late Prof. Niharranjan Ray (see Béteille 1980: 107).
2 For our purposes, 'discourse' refers to an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena. Discourse helps frame issues/problems by highlighting some aspects of a situation rather than others. We have used 'discourse' in the vein of an intellectual framework referring to theory and practice, an interwoven set of languages and practices. For the different uses of the term in the field of development studies see Apthorpe 1986; Apthorpe and Gasper 1996; for a general discussion see also Dant 1991.
3 Knowledge institutions refer to organisations 'usefully engaged in acquiring, creating, imparting and applying knowledge to address pressing needs of the society; and its value is determined by the quality and scale of its contribution in addressing social needs' (Shah 2000: 31). Many organisations, however, create, acquire, impart, or use knowledge, but not all of them can be called institutions. The literature on organisations/institutions draws a sharp and useful distinction between the two. Institutions are those organisations which incorporate, foster and protect normative relationships and action patterns and perform functions that are valued in the environment. Whereas an organisation is an expendable instrument for mobilising and directing human energies and resources, an institution is more nearly a product of social needs and pressures and emerges as a responsive adaptive organism. In this sense, every organisation is an institution provided it meets the following three characterising attributes of an institution:
   I. Its functions and services are linked to society's commonly agreed requirements as tested by its adaptability over time to human needs and values;
   II. Its internal structures embody and protect commonly held norms and values of the society to which it is related; and
   III. Its achievements, over time, have positive influence/impact on the environment, as, for example, through the values it creates and makes available to other institutions which are linked to it (Ibid.: 32).
4 For our purpose, the state refers to the entire set of institutions (the legislative, the judiciary and the executive besides territorial branches of the state). In this thesis, for the sake of clarity, the term 'state' is used when discussing the theoretical phenomenon and its empirical counterpart of the totality of public authorities, which, in the Indian case, would include central, State and local governments. In contrast, the term 'State' is used to refer to the provincial level apparatus of the state, the constituent units of the Union of India.
5 For the classic debate on the issue of autonomy of the state, see Miliband 1970, 1973; Poulantzas 1973.
6 For example, in the training calendar for the year 2003-2004, NIRD lists 176 training programmes while IRMA has merely 36 scheduled 'management development programmes' (MDPs) for the year under reference. Even when one factors in the relative strength of the two institutes, the difference is noteworthy. In the case of NIRD, very rarely a training programme gets cancelled or postponed, while IRMA, of late, has been witnessing frequent cancellation of these programmes taking their effective number further down. Though, Prof. Tushaar Shah, a former director of IRMA, claims that IRMA has successfully marketed six-
week MDPs to the NGOs for Rs. 35,000 per participant for over a decade (Shah 2000: 32).

7 In general, short duration MDPs are of five-day duration and are charged at the rate of Rs. 2000 per day per participant. This is in addition to the non-refundable registration fee of Rs. 500. According to the insiders, the fee structure is a great deterrence so far as the participation of the staff of the NGOs working in rural areas are concerned. Most of such NGOs are financially too fragile to afford this type of fees for their staff.

8 There are some centres at the NIRD that are not directly manned by rural development professionals such as Centre for Information, Education and Communication (CIEC), Centre for Rural Documentation (CORD) and Centre for Information Technology (CIT) even when they are organised like other academic centres. The staff at these centres are invariably trained in communicational techniques, information technology and library sciences respectively. Given this, it was difficult to arrive at the precise number of rural development professionals (scholar-practitioners) working there.