Chapter 1

Introduction
It is believed that the solution to world's problems lies in the mind and heart of the man. Through the purification of mind and certain mutually acceptable standards or norms of behaviour, man can build a world of his choice, either prosperous and peaceful or materialistic and violent. Since man learnt to live together, he developed certain principles, ethical and social, to govern each other's behaviour. Hence, religion emerged as an instrument to regulate the society. The existence of religion is as old as society itself. Religion of one sort or the other appeared to be universal among human beings.

1.1 Religion and Social Transformation

'Religion' is the discipline which studies humanity's orientation towards, participation in, experience of and celebration of the divine (Pals, 1996), numinous (Merkur, 1998), or the transcendent as a 'socially constituted construct' emerging from complex social dynamics' and 'discursive conditions'. Religion constitutes the 'transcendent' objects of enquiry as body of socially cultivated discourses and practices alongside others in human society.

Religion had been a source of contemplation right from the beginning of the human society. The rational and critical evaluation started with renaissance period. Sociology of religion developed as an objective and rational evaluation of the religious phenomenon and religion became a source of varied interpretations. There are three main approaches generally associated with religion namely, the functionalist interpretation associated with Emile Durkheim, interpretative approach associated with Max Weber and the critical approach with Marxist interpretation of religion. Despite the variations the sociological perspectives on religion have ultimately been guided by the functionalist dictum that religion is what religion does. It goes without saying that all these approaches suffer from the reductionist framing. The case of religion in the context of Indian Society had been much more complex due to religious diversities of India and due to the blurred boundaries between religion and culture. Religion as Dharma in Indian civilization had been an all encompassing concept. Critical enquiries into the Indian
religious tradition started with earliest interpretations by the colonial census officers, which later on were given the social and sociological direction by the sociologists like Ghurye, Milton, Singer, Srinivas and others.

Relations between religion and society were fundamental to the nature of religion, and according to some, were basic to the nature of society. 'Indeed societies are characterized by the values they embody, the individual and collective motivation they encourage, the incentives they inspire and sanction, and the ideals by which beliefs, attitudes and behaviours are established and secured. Accordingly, religion can hardly be identified or defined except in terms of human social relations (Capps, 1987: 375).

Society, from a functionalist perspective, is a system made up of interrelated parts. The social system has certain basic needs, which must be met if it is to survive. These needs are known as functional pre-requisites. The function of any part of society is its contribution to the maintenance of society. Functionalist analysis is primarily concerned with the contribution religion makes to meet the functional pre-requisites or basic needs of society. From this perspective, society requires a certain degree of social solidarity, value consensus, harmony and integration between its parts. Religion promotes social solidarity by dealing with situations of emotional stress, which threaten the stability of society (Malinowski, 1954). Religion as an aspect of human society has been supported by both historians and anthropologists as being universal. Both primitive and civilized humans have sought to come to terms with inexplicable situations and experiences in everyday life. Religion has been associated with the human attempt to find purpose and meaning in life, both of self and the universe. Wilson (1988: 953) states that in the past, religion has occupied a central place in human society and human thought. But, in the age of enlightenment and scientific rationalism, it had been relegated to a secondary position. Secularization theorists had even predicted the demise of religion. But, in recent times, we see religion returning to the forefront of human concern.

At different times, depending upon the social interactions and social requirements, different types of religions evolved. They served needs of different societies. Whenever they lost their relevance, the society looked towards reformers who
brought out reforms or gave new religions. There are at present eleven religions. They are classified in three groups as (1) Aryan – Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism; (2) Semetic – Hebruism, Christianity and Islam; (3) Mangolian -Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism. The central truth of all the religion is that God is the perfect embodiment of love, grace and compassion. He is absolute perfection, father of all creations and all creations are his children.

The recent developments in Indian society such as the march of secularism, growth in science and technology and modernization of economic and political spheres have not marginalized the religion. There are several socio-cultural problems, which need to be tackled effectively by our religions and spirituality only. Hence, the religions in India such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism have provided not only an integral frame work for large groups of people but also offered solutions to the vexation of mind and spirit.

Ideology or some system of beliefs explaining human origin, defining man’s place in the cosmos, providing a guide to relations with others and accompanied always by a system of observances, had been a universal aspect of culture. Although, most ideological systems were based on metaphysical premises and included belief in one or more sources of supernatural power, supernaturalism was not an essential component of ideology. Many non-religious, scientifically or philosophically derived beliefs had with equal efficiency provided the explanations required to guide and justify actions in society (Hammzond, 1975:269).

According to Madan (1991), the classical seminal sociological theorists of the late 19th century and early 20th century were greatly interested in religion and its effects on society. These theorists include Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. These sociologists have tried to define religion in context of various parameters. Religion, the social phenomenon more than a word, is difficult to define. Aware of this, Max Weber wrote in the first very paragraph of, ‘The Sociology of Religion’, that a definition of religion can be attempted, if at all, only at the conclusion of study (Weber, 1964).
The sociology of religion, as a branch of sociology, was an attempt to discover the general principles concerning the relationships of religion to society. It studied the process by which religion entered into human interaction and how the interaction of human influenced religion (Yinger, 1967: 26).

Religion affects society by appealing to individual need for meaning, but also utilises its power to influence society via the State. There has been a worldwide shift toward secularisation, described by Turner as having three components: decline in Church membership and attendance; marginalisation of the Church from public life; and the dominance of scientific explanations of the world (Turner 2006: 440). Although this shift may have appeared to separate State and religion in secularised nations such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and many in Europe, the influence of religion on policy choices is apparent. It has been contended that religion’s role in national and international politics is indeed growing (Warf and Vincent 2007: 597). However, whilst religion influences society it is simultaneously being influenced by other societal factors and norms. It adjusts with the changing conditions of society to reproduce security in the meanings of the period. In the classic theory of Althusser, the Church is described as a key institution that impresses the ideologies of the dominant groups of society to the remainder of the populous. In this way, religion exercises power to conform the ways in which people decipher meaning, and the way that they act, in accordance with dominant ideologies (O’Shaunessy & Stadler 2002: 216). It is suitable to recall that ‘religion is a way of crystallising cultural patterns and not a fully autonomous phenomenon’ (Parker Gumucio 2008: 319).

1.1.1 Religious Movements and Social Transformation

Religion continues to play a vital role in the modern society. However, many classical theorists claim the demise of religion due to modernization. The presupposed secularization or the decline of religiousity might seem to be a myth. The history of mankind shows that the religion is one of the deepest and most intimate urges of mankind which, in one way or another, is found everywhere. Sociologists have argued that steady church attendance and personal religious belief may co-exist with a decline in the influence of religious authorities on social or political issues. The role of religion in
life manifests itself in the individual by giving him an integral outlook on life, which is conducive even to keep his psychological balance. Religion is not only one of the most influential forces of society; it is also considered by many as the centre of origin of culture, ‘the impulse that makes civilization’ (Demant, 1939).

The immediate context of the pre-independence movements was the socio-economic, political and cultural changes that had taken place in India as a result of the colonial rule and the capitalist ideology that disrupted the traditional structure of Hindu Society (Ambroise, 1982: 335). Ever since 1947, the Hindu religious tradition had experienced a proliferation of new religious movements. This phenomenon was itself not new to the history of Hinduism. Many religious movements arose ever since the rise of classical Hinduism, most of which were not known in the present era, except for the larger movements like Jainism and Buddhism. Medieval Hinduism was also marked by the emergence of a wide variety of new religious movements, the development of some of them being attributed to the presence of Islam, like Kabirpanthism and Sufism. Modern Hinduism of the pre – 1947 period also saw the emergence of a large number of new religious movements, the development of which was usually attributed to the western and Christian influences on India, during the period of the British Raj. Thus, the phenomenon of new religious movements was found throughout the history of Hinduism (Beckford, 1986: 220; Ambroise, 1982: 335).

Larson (1997) referred to the post-independent set of movements in India as revisionist and internationalist, by which he meant that patterns of Hindu spirituality represented new direction and emphasis designed to meet South Asian as well as international environments. Some of the neo-Hindu movements of the revisionist and internationalist category listed by him included:

a) Paramhansa Yogananda (1893-1952), founder of self-realization Fellowship in USA, who taught various kinds of Yoga;

b) Mehar Baba (1894-1969) founder of Mehra Baba Mandali, especially on the West Coast of USA, which taught simple mediation techniques.

c) A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada (1896-1979), founder of ISKON in the 1960, whose focus was on exuberant Bhakti or devotion to Krishna.
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d) Swami Muktananda (1908-1982), founder of the Siddha Yoga movement that was a blend of classical and Tantric yoga practices, emphasizing the importance of 'Shakti' or power or divine energy. The movement was later led by a young woman, Gurumaiya Chidvilasananda.

e) Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1911), founder of the spiritual regeneration movement of transcendental meditation in the 1960s. The Maharishi taught a simple technique of sound meditation. The technique was designed to bring about a relaxed state of mind and to purify one's awareness.

f) Sathya Sai Baba (1926), a spiritual healer and teacher declared himself to be the reincarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba, a holy man from the state of Maharashtra, who had died in 1918. (Larson, 1997: 135).

Among all contemporary religious movements, Sai Movement has widely spread over a large number of countries. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, propounded by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is now spread in different states in India with over 5000 centres and in 180 countries in abroad with over 1500 centres (Shah, 1993:85). The organization functions for the spiritual upliftment of mankind. Its all activities are based on the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Baba's life and works represent his philosophy of selfless love for the whole mankind. He advocates that there is only one caste, the caste of humanity; there is only one religion, the religion of love; there is only one language, the language of heart; and there is only one God who is Omnipresent. ‘Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation is a non-political, non profit, spiritual organization. It recognizes the fundamental unity of all religions of the world. Therefore, its members and followers are drawn from all religions, races, colours and creeds’ (Reddy, 1995:54).

Society is a complex system, not a collection of unrelated parts. Thus, changes in one element of the system would lead to changes in other parts of the system. Religion, like other institutions of family, economy and polity, was regarded as an important and indispensable element of the social system and hence could not be studied apart from social and cultural systems. Thus, religion, needed to be studied both as a social system (the nature of its groups, pattern of interaction, and its relationship to the rest of society) and as a cultural fact (with its relationship to personality tendencies) (Yinger, 1957: 17-18). Religious traditions on the one hand have been averse to social dynamics and thus a major road block for social change but on the other hand almost all the religious
movements have been foremost source of social change. Mark, Jurgensmeyer (1988) observes that all the marginal or depressed communities are of the belief that social change is inseparably associated with religious change. He adds that in India demands for and responses to social change typically take religious forms.

Religious practices can be viewed as one social practice amongst others. Similar to other social formations or instances, religious interest (1) develops systems of signs, (2) patterns or maps of practice, and (3) institutions for purposes of communication, maintenance and reproduction and experience. Together with other social formations and complexes of human interests they articulate, religions in addition, produce socially significant effects and experiences for the structure of a society and its on-going operation. This perspective makes religions ‘semi-autonomous’. Simultaneously, however, it raises questions with regard to the interaction, force, development and contradiction within and among the various practices of a society (Mack 2000: 283). In distinction to older theories, religion as humanities discipline allows for new possibilities concerning the development of comprehensive and multi-perspective analytical, explanatory, reconstructive and emancipatory theories and practices of religion. Change is not adequate concept to explain the outcome of religious practices in the society. The social relationships undergo churning resulting into holistic change which may be better understood as social transformation. Social transformation is better described in both quantitative and qualitative changes and refers to a structural change at various levels.

1.1.2 Sai Movement and Social Transformation

In one of his discourses, Sri Sathya Sai Baba said, ‘It is sad that instead of uniting mankind in a common endeavour, religion has become a system of walled enclosures, guarded by fate and fanaticism. So, each religion is an armed camp, sunk in self-aggrandizement, trying to wean others into itself and prevent defections from its ranks. Religion, therefore, is being condemned as the root cause of chaos and conflict. In spite of great progress in many other areas of life, religious animosity is aflame even today in many parts of the world. It has to be emphasized that religion is not the root cause of the state of affairs. The factious and fanatic hatred are due to the unruly ego that is given free play. Religion strives to destroy just this vicious tendency; so, it has to be
supported and not condemned. What has to be condemned is the narrow, perverted attitude of hating those who do not agree with 'us' or hold different opinions of the mysterious force that animates the Universe.” Baba further adds, “All faiths are inter-related and mutually indebted to each other for the principles they teach, and the disciplines they recommended. The Vedic Religion was the first in time; Buddhism which appeared about 2,500 years ago, was its son; Christianity, which was influenced much by the Orient was its grandson. And Islam, which has the Prophets of Christianity as its base was like the great-grandson. All have Love as the fundamental discipline of the mind, in order to chasten it and merge man with the Divine” (Sathya Sai Speaks, 1967: 113)

Religious traditions grow and evolve, but their strength depends on the foundations built in the distant past. The Vedic tradition has evolved since extremely ancient times in ways that we can not now understand or appreciate. Yet each step forward is based on the achievements of the past and depends on the efforts and grace earned by the ancient sages of eons gone by. The Vedic tradition is embraced by Sri Sathya Sai Baba and continues to exert a strong influence on the future course of man’s understanding (Roof, 2002:303)

According to Shah (2002:143), “Transformation is essentially the process whereby we begin to perceive and interact with the external world through ‘Constant Integrated Awareness’. We suffuse the power of love into our thoughts arising in the mind so that what we see, hear or do is ‘good’. The most current literature surrounding the Sathya Sai movement in India and abroad reflects a message promoting "universal ideals" (such as ecumenism and religious tolerance (Kent, 2005). In a climate of ethnic and religious diversity, this "universal" message makes the movement an interesting and unusual case of a 'communal' (South Asian) based religious group, and especially worth further consideration. Although the growth of the movement coincides with an increasing societal trend of secularization and modernization in the country, the Sathya Sai movement does not necessarily reflect a reaction to the latter processes.

The transformation of man and society has been the central and quite dominant concern of sociology right from the time when it emerged as an independent branch of
learning. One of the chief aims of sociology has been to study the conditions under which the disruption of the old traditional order of the society occurred and the conditions which led to the explosive emergence of a new individualism. During the 19th century the main aim of sociology was to understand this rapid revolutionary transformation of the society. The sociologists like Comte, Mill, Spencer, Marx, etc. in their own ways have provided an analysis of this transformation of society. There have been great upheavals in the society which induced the sociologists to be engaged in the study of social change. This rapid social change in the society is recognized as social transformation (Kuppuswamy, 1993).

Sri Sathya Sai Baba in His teachings and works amply present the message of transforming the society into an era of “Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man”. He initiated the process of transformation not by giving a new religion. He asks people to be what they can be and strive to evolve. He asked the world to have devotional aspect as the base for all activities. Devotion is nothing but love for God, seeing God in everything and everywhere. He advocated that service to man is service to God. He stressed that every act is service to God if it is performed with selflessness, Nishkama Bhava.

On 25th May 1947, at the age of 20, Sri Sathya Sai Baba wrote a letter to his brother (Annexure -1A). This letter disclosed his mission. He mentioned that “I have a ‘Task’: To foster all mankind and ensure for all of them lives full of bliss (ananda). I have a ‘Vow’: To lead all who stray away from the straight path again into goodness and save them. I am attached to a ‘work’ that I love: To remove the sufferings of the poor and grant them what they lack. I have a ‘reason to be proud’, for I rescue all who worship and adore me, aright. I have my definition of the "devotion" I expect: Those devoted to me have to treat joy and grief, gain and loss, with equal fortitude. This means that I will never give up those who attach themselves to me…”

V. Srinivasan (2011:11) All India President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, in his article ‘The Legacy of Sri Sathya Sai Baba’ highlights certain important aspects of Sai Movement as presented below:
1.1.2.1 God-Made Institutions for Man’s Inspiration

First are the Institutions that He has set up, such as the University, the Hospitals, the Schools, the Ashram, etc. These are mainly administered by the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and the University Trust. With His vision and foresight, Baba has set up adequate corpus funds for these Institutions to enable them to continue to function well on the income from these funds, which are all deposited in the fixed deposits with nationalised banks. Hence, all of them will continue to offer free education and medical treatment to all, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or income. Baba established these Institutions to be models to prove that it is possible to offer free high quality education and the most modern medical treatment totally free of cost without seeking assistance from the government for anything. The proof has been there for more than twenty years in the successful working of these Institutions.

1.1.2.2 Love - The Royal Path to Salvation

The second part is a manifestation of the purpose for which the Sai Avatar descended. He was Love personified, a Love which transcended all barriers and limits, a Love which encompassed the entire creation. He has lit the lamp of love in millions of hearts, the brilliance of which inspires them to transform their lives and project that love in their daily lives. This love makes those individuals caring and sharing persons, who collectively engage in the society and by their actions, motivate others to also be caring and sharing, leading to a general improvement of society. Even though this process may be slow, its impact is long lasting. Baba’s inspiration of Love to millions of individuals is translated verily into Love in Action all over the world.

This Love transforms lives every second. Life acquires a new meaning. For Sai devotees there is a new path - Prema Yoga which embodies all the other yogas of Karma, Bhakti and Gyana within itself. Baba has said “Live in Love” and that is the way for our continuous communion with Him. LOVE is therefore Baba’s greatest legacy, which may not be touched but is real and universal and experienced by all. It belongs to all mankind, not just to a few. It cannot be appropriated by anybody but can only be shared and experienced, for the redemption of one and all.
1.1.2.3 Educare - The True Way Education is to be Imparted

The third part of his Legacy is Education. While many others talked about it, Baba postulated and introduced in his educational institutions value based educational curricula. The system of Integral Education implemented in the Sai University is unique and unlike any other institution. Education in Human Values has many concepts introduced by Baba, including 3-HV, and Educare. The education given in his institutions is for life and not merely for earning a living. Right from the stage of childhood, such value-based education is available in the *Bal Vikas* classes which are conducted throughout the length and breadth of India and in many other countries through the full-time Sai schools and Sai University. This legacy of value-based Sai Education is his priceless gift to humanity for posterity.

1.1.2.4 Sri Sathya Sai Organisation – A Spiritual Nursery for Mankind

The fourth part of his legacy is the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, which is active in all the states of India and in 125 countries of the world. The Organisation is an instrument created by Baba to enable all to perform their *sadhana* and achieve their spiritual goals through it. The Organisation has three wings - the spiritual, educational and service. One can choose any to perform their *seva* and *sadhana*. Today in India alone, there are 600,000 members who voluntarily serve with love and devotion. They include government officers, bureaucrats, doctors, engineers, judges, lawyers, professors, teachers, legislators, farmers and students. They work in over 2700 villages, slums, hospitals, old age homes, jails, orphanages and in disaster areas, inspired by Baba’s message that service to man is service to God. Many of them have never even had a chance to talk to Swami, yet they have been supercharged by His divinity and have dedicated their lives to selfless service.

We see *Seva Dal* volunteers from every state of India regularly in the ashram, in the hospitals, and in all places at Prasanthi Nilayam. They come here at their own expense, lovingly giving their time and effort. For these volunteers, offering such *seva* is their communion with Baba Baba, since they know that Baba is pleased when we serve the poor and needy with love, and their faith is that Baba is there where His work is done. This seva has transformed their lives and they will continue to engage in it till the
end of their lives. No one needs force to do anything, since they serve with love and devotion. For those who are served, this seva brings Baba into their lives and transforms them also in turn to love and serve others....” In the socio-economic field also Baba offers a spiritual solution whereby the wealthy and the poor will be joined in cooperative working partnership. Here again, both the classes will be unmade and remade by Baba’s love and grace that the rich will sacrifice their wants to enable the poor to secure their needs (Karanjia, 2008:16). According to Baba, no transformation is brought about by information. Transformation occurs only through implementation, putting into practice. Information untested through practice is useless. Information is to be acted upon. That is true transformation (Kamaraju, 2005:18).

According to Baba’s teachings and works, man today has to go through transformation at three levels: First and foremost is spiritual transformation. Second comes transformation in the attitude towards society. The third change is at the individual level. When spiritual transformation takes place, there is an automatic change in the attitude towards society. When society becomes harmonious and prosperous, the individual also changes.

1.2 Review of Literature

In the following pages, an attempt has been made to present review of literature pertaining to the problem under study.

According to Emile Durkheim’s (1957) conception, sociology might be described as a ‘natural science of morals’ and the problem of moral regulation in a modern, highly differentiated society, should be the main focus of sociology. For Durkheim, society is always a contingent reality as well as an inherently moral phenomenon. Durkheim’s sociology of morals is based on two assumptions. The first feature is the idea of society fostering individual morality by negatively sanctioning deviants. Thus, society is the source for the morality of the social scheming the bodily passions of individuals due to the constitutional duality of human nature.

Scharf (1970: 2) in his study observed that religion was a central point of reference and the key to understanding society rather than being seen as human’s
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relationship to the supernatural realm. According to White (1972: 863-78), the teachings and practices of Sathya Sai Baba can be traced to the traditions of the Hindu mystical Nath Panthi order. He is renowned for his materialization of Vibhuti which is distributed to his devotees for healing purposes.

Luke (1973: 237) explored the role of religion in social life. He quoted Durkheim, in support of his argument that the religion is important in shaping the social relationships. Nabi (1977) in his study observed that Kabir was a prominent figure in the second phase of the Bhakti movement in India. During this phase rituals were rejected and personal devotion to God was emphasised. These characteristics were also observed in the present-day Sai Baba movement. Sathya Sai Baba has stressed that the easiest path to salvation is through devotion (Bhakti) while giving minimal importance to image worship and ritualism.

Lee (1982) has described the structure of Sai Baba movement in Malaysia. According to him, in 1980, there were seven registered and a dozen or more unregistered Sai Baba organizations throughout the country. Most of the Sai Baba centres were located in the Kuala-Lumpur-Petaling Jaya area, the original growth point of the Sai Baba movement in Malaysia. He further says that Chinese devotees have also organized themselves in several unregistered groups located throughout Malaysia. Many Chinese devotees have had darshan of Sai Baba in India, have adopted a vegetarian diet and are actively involved in Sai Baba activities.

Bassett, Perry Eugene (1985) in their study “Faith development and mid life Translation: Fowler’s paradigm as it relates to personality profile”, used Fowler’s Interview format. 42 interviews were conducted. “Faith” in Fowler’s view is a universal human journey which has an outer relational dimensions as well as an internal knowing dimension by which person makes meaning out of their lives. In essence the study found certain personality traits associated with upward development mobility. Greater intelligence, trust, self-sufficiency, tranquillity/composure and self-assurance correlated positively with faith development.
Gibbs, Robert Bernard (1987) in their thesis “Responsibility in Community: A Portrait in philosophy of religion” portrays responsibility by exploring the role of communities in both moral and religious responsibility. A community may act as a medium between individuals and God, who is always beyond our communities as what we are accountable to. Individuals bear responsibility for their own will and for their communal institutions. Responsibility is the ability to respond to God’s call to be righteous in an ongoing historical relationship.

Friend, Eugene (1994) indicated that nothing inspires greater confidence than knowing God’s rules in all the affairs of humanity. Even the devil, with his ugly ways, only operates within the divine tolerance and that too for a limited time. They further mentioned that God establishes the rules of the universe. He is the one who is sustaining all things by His powerful word. Stavros, George S. (1998) conducted an empirical study of the impact of contemplative prayer on psychological, relational and spiritual well being. The purpose of this study was to investigate how the practice of a particular contemplative prayer, rooted in a particular religious tradition may affect a person’s well-being and relationships including person’s perceived relationship with God. The study demonstrated that the practice of prayer enhances a person’s perceived relationship with God and also contributes to a person’s health. In addition it contributes to psychological and medical literature on these issues by bringing psychological interpretations of these findings into conversation with theological reflection on the context and traditions of a particular community of faith.

Trout, Polly (1998) in their research on “Hindu Gurus, American disciples and the search for modern religion” discovered a universal religion that combined ancient truths of the East and West with the new truths uncovered by science and democracy. They found that people participated in a broader cultural movement in American religion, joining forces with other diverse groups to promote an individualistic, creative and voluntary approach to the spiritual life: while becoming decreasingly institutional, dogmatic and prescribed. Chow, Leon Tzi-leung (2000) conducted a study to provide a biblical framework of spiritual gifts and personality tests to Chinese Church leaders so that they can help Chinese Christians in North America to focus their thoughts on their
uniqueness in God instead of on their differences. The end result was to enhance individual’s self-esteem and sense of belonging and personal satisfaction by glorifying God and edifying others and then people in the Church will experience unity, service and joy.

James, Russell Noel (2002) in his study “The impact of sects, rationality and human capital in religious charitable giving” found that many factors that typically reduce the likelihood of charitable giving, such as lower-income, fewer assets, less-education and minority status did not have such an impact on the likelihood of being an exclusively religious charitable giver. At the fundamental level, religion, with its cultural derivatives and symbolic forms, shapes people’s perception of their society and contributes to the creation of the sense of solidarity by nurturing cultural values within family and community. A recently reinvented notion of “civil religion” reveals inclusive and non-dogmatic sides of religion aimed at societal integration. In this sense, religion and civil society are not “unworkable extremes”. Rather, as Van Der Zweerde (1991) observed: “Civil society does hold place for religion and Church, but not a specific one. Religion, as one of the forms through which human beings make sense of their existence and experience, belongs to the intellectual and spiritual sphere of world view, conviction or ideology. As such, religious convictions are among the sources of motivation of citizens, and in the contemporary world they are certainly among the more important sources of motivation of the free associational activity that constitutes civil society”. Therefore, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, religion and the Church have often been associated with the rebirth of nations in Eastern Europe. In addition, growing insecurity and the loss of traditional orientations that accompanied dramatic transformations in Eastern European countries after the Soviet collapse turned a considerable part of the population towards the Church. The public place and the role of religion dramatically expanded as the old restrictions on religious practices were abandoned, and people searched for new spiritual foundations.

In the early and mid-1990s, Poland’s Catholic Church claimed the spiritual loyalty of 95.6 percent of the citizens; Romania’s Orthodox Church embraced of 87 percent of the citizens. Hungary’s Census put Catholics at 66 percent and Lutherans and
Calvinists at 22 percent; in Slovakia and Slovenia, Christianity became a mass phenomenon with roughly 70 percent of the population being regarded by the Church as Catholics; and 80 percent of Bulgarian parents declared their acceptance of religious education at schools. The dynamics of religious practices is well illustrated in Ukraine, where in the ten years between 1988 and 1998, the number of religious communities increased threefold from 6,179 to 19,780. Even though the late 1990s witnessed an average 15 percent decline in religious practices, no other form of free associational activity could compete with the Church.

Initiated in 2002, the Durban Site of School of Religion and Theology has worked towards the establishing of a Research Niche Area, called Religion and Social Transformation. In this research programme Johannes A. Smith has highlighted that this is a multi-religious research programme concerning the role of religion as a discipline and religious formations could play in social transformation, and the cultivation of an open, democratic and equal opportunity society in the interests of the establishing and maintaining of a peaceful and just South African polity. Apart from its distinctive conceptual focus on 'Religion' and the social', the research project focused on the 'transformation' of the South African community. Dating from the time of Giambattista Vico (1725), humanities study and contribute towards the formation and transformation of social systems in society. With regard to the fact that religious formations are social system contracts which have been and are developed for the benefit and ordering of society and human community, religions, in Humanities perspective, are humanly constructed social systems. Similar to other social constructs, they comprise of articulations of systems of ideas and faith, traditions, institutional organization and moral codes developed in the interests of ethical self and group fashioning and formation. This implies that all religions can be studied and can also be transformed to new, alternative or more equitable configurations. Therefore, in the interests of transformation, Religion as discipline and religion as social formations could play a critical-analytical but also constructive role in the development of a just, tolerant and human society. This research programme was based on the assumption that religions are constitute of semi-autonomous formations and practices in the interests of social construction and production, maintenance, reproduction and especially social emancipation and
transformation in society. In South Africa, religious formations have played a seminal role in ensuring a just and peaceful polity, advancing the quality of life of all, and independent of class, race and gender formations.

Sawatzky, Ratner and Chiu (2005: 180) in their research on Meta-analysis of the relationship between spirituality and quality of life observed that results of meta-analysis reveal several findings that support the conceptualization of spirituality as a distinct concept that relates to quality of life.

Inter-faith solidarity adds needed levels of bridging and linking capital to religious groups’ ability to foster bonding capital. The creation of heterogeneous ties at multiple levels of society enables religious groups to infuse society with lived values and opens a potential conduit for internal transformation (Smith, 2007: 7).

Srinivas (2010) describes Sai devotees as global citizens, a surprise to people who would still assume that religion encourages retreat from social engagement: Rather than assuming the West as central to the project of contemporary modernity and identity politics, the Sathya Sai movement encourages us to question the essentialising tropes of Euro-modernity and the truth claims vested within. In a sense, then, it allows for a new postulation of non-Euro-American pluralism and its ideologically cosmopolitanism, from the margins of the global network (Srinivas, 2010: 326).

Few things sound as promising as the theorist’s claim that one cultural form has superseded another; and even fewer are equally hard to redeem in practical terms. By any ordinary sign of worldly prosperity religion appears to be well and thriving, contrary to the incessant reports of its imminent demise. If nothing else, the recent upsurges of the religious sentiment remind us that it doesn’t pay to declare things prematurely dead—for they come back to haunt you. Religion is more than alive, its growing power attests to the fact that it is being fed by a powerful under current. We can try to repress it, but repressing the undercurrent has historically proven to be an unadvisable tactic. We can declare it irrational; but this isn’t likely to have any more effect than the petulant admonition that sex is sinful. Despite admonitions people ultimately do what they want (Grigoriev, 2011: 196)
According to Elizabeth (2012), 'the social movement literature has paid little attention to the role of religion in progressive social movements, and almost no attention to the role of spirituality. And, yet it is clear that religious organizations have been major players in a number of such movements. In 1994, Marx and McAdam predicted that religious institutions are one of four seedbeds for future social movements, along with colleges, universities and stable residential neighbourhoods. Religious institutions provide a rich infrastructure for movement mobilization. It is clear, however, that the same religious texts can be and have been used to justify both progressive and defensive social movements. Furthermore, religious groups often decide that political action is outside the scope of religion. But if history is the best predictor of the future, it is likely that religious institutions will continue to be key players in progressive social movements. Very little attention has been given to the role of spirituality in motivating participation in progressive social movements, but a few recent articles have acknowledged how the spiritual aspects of religion serve as motivation for reform action (Snarr, 2007, 2009; Wald et al., 2005). The social sciences have been reluctant to engage the topic of spirituality, but spiritual motivation for involvement in progressive social movements is fertile ground for future analysis.

From the above review of literature, the following points emerge: -

1. Faith is positively correlated with the development of personality traits such as intelligence, trust, self-sufficiency, etc. (Bassett, 1985).

2. Communities may act as a medium between individual and God, thereby they play a vital role in both moral and religious transformation (Gibbs, 1987; Friend, 1994).

3. Spiritual practices such as prayer enhance individual's psychological and physical values (Stavros, 1998).

4. There is a universal religion that combined with ancient truths of east and west promotes individualistic, creative and volunteer approach to the spiritual life (Trout, 1998).
5. Religious charity is not determined by the factors such as lower income, fewer assets, less education and minority status (James, 2002).

6. Religious convictions are among the sources of motivation of citizens and in the contemporary world they are certainly among the more important sources of motivation of the free associational activity that constitutes civil society.

7. In the interests of transformation, religion as a discipline and religion as social formations could play a critical – analytical but also constructive role in the development of a just and human society.

8. Religions are constituent semi-autonomous formations and practices which work for social construction, social emancipation and transformation in the society.

9. Religion is a central point of reference and a key to understand society and social relationships (Lukes, 1973; Scharf, 1970).

1. 2.1 Objectives of the Study

Main purpose of this study is to understand the life, teachings and works of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and examine his contribution in social transformation, particularly through Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations. It addresses to the question, generally asked by people; in what ways teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba influence and to what extent transform the society. To be specific, the study has attempted:

1. To study the life, teachings and contribution of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in social transformation in different areas like education, health, social welfare, and spirituality.

2. To examine the aims, structure, activities and functioning of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, an organisation established by Sri Sathya Sai Baba and its contribution in social transformation with reference to Himachal Pradesh.

3. To study the experiences and views of selected sample of devotees pertaining to Sai Teachings, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation and Social Transformation.
4. To analyse demographic, socio-cultural and economic profile of the study area and the respondents.

5. To identify the areas for future research on the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and role of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in social transformation.

1.2.2 Need for the Study

From time immemorial, man has known the importance of spiritual growth, but in the 19th and 20th centuries, the glitter of rapid advances in science blinded man, he felt that science had the answer to everything, and faith in God and spirituality took a nose dive. The result is the chaotic world that we have today, where hate and greed reign, where abject poverty and preventable starvation deaths exist side by side with obscenely ostentatious life-styles, world torn apart by violence, strife and fear despite all the mind boggling advances made by science. Rapid developments in the field of science technology, computers, engineering, medicine, economics, politics etc. contribute immeasurable comfort and at the same time manifold miseries. The world around us is changing faster than we could imagine even just a couple of years ago. Political changes, economic changes, technological revolutions and now, environmental and ecological changes are affecting our society drastically and it is becoming crucial to our very existence.

Even the educational system is beset with many problems. Students' unrest, strikes in the educational institutions, lack of discipline among students and absence of moral values among educated persons are some of the common problems society is facing today. Mercifully, towards the end of the 20th century, and in this new millennium, human beings have been rediscovering the value of spiritual well-being. In fact, even the WHO, which is the world's highest scientific medical body, today defines health as a state of physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Modern man has a fair knowledge of how to cultivate physical and mental health. But when it comes to spiritual health, he seems to be confused. Therefore, today humanity requires a healthy social thought for the redemption of society. One has to transform oneself for one's own happiness and wellbeing of the society.
Sai Baba, based on eternal wisdom of east and west has been giving his teachings for more than last seven decades. His teachings focus at the evolvement of a peaceful world and humane society. Sai Baba has taken up the difficult task of transforming millions in his own style and mechanism. It is beyond one’s capacity to conceptualise his ways. Sri Sathya Sai Baba functions at multiple planes at the same time when he is imparting teachings, personal guidance and personal examples to persons who gather around him. He may address students in terms of "do good and don't do wrong", when Good and Evil are nonexistent mental creations; He may tell more advanced people that joy and pain are two extremes of the one continuum of experience. He may turn and tell another "Bad boy" and chastise in front of others. Sai Baba undertakes a challenging multi-faceted role, in which he teaches everyone in accordance to what he or she needs, and that varies often at the same point of time. In the past, other evolved beings, like Rama, Krishna or Jesus, had to do the same. Transformation is essentially the process whereby we begin to perceive and interact with the external world through ‘Constant Integrated Awareness’. We suffuse the power of love into our thoughts arising in the mind so that what we see, hear and do is good. Baba says - ‘When transformation is gained, you will find that you have travelled only from yourself to yourself, with God all the while in you, around you, with you and beside you.’

It is in this context that there is a need to understand, explain, and analyze the contribution of Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s movement, particularly Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, a largest organ of this movement in social transformation.

1.3 Research Methodology

Methodology is the science of research decisions. It provides rules and norms for the researcher to evaluate the decision for chosen approach and implement them in the research (Hessler, 1992). Social research, to be considered as such, has to follow a scientific approach. This entails that the conclusions of a determinate social research are achieved through a consistent method. Despite its consideration as science, social research is subcategorized as soft science, “its subject matter, human social life, is fluid, formidable to observe, and hard to measure precisely with laboratory instruments” (Neuman, 2000).
The present study has been conducted with sociological perspective. It has used descriptive research design and survey work for realizing the research objectives. The research methodology has been framed after carefully scrutinizing the objectives of the study. This section shows the procedure used to carry out the research study, the chosen sampling technique, the method of collecting secondary and primary data and the statistical techniques used to analyze the data.

1.3.1 Area of the Study:

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation is working in 126 countries of the world including India. In India this organisation is functioning in almost all the states. The ambit of its working is very wide and covers varied types of educational, service and spiritual activities intrinsic in the teachings and works of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. In order to understand the experiences and perceptions of devotees about the programmes and activities undertaken by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, an empirical study has been conducted in the district of Kangra, Himachal Pradesh. This area has been chosen with the following considerations:

1. District Kangra is the biggest district of Himachal Pradesh.

2. District Kangra has largest number of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithies and Sai Devotees in the state.

3. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of District Kangra undertakes a wide range of educational, spiritual and service activities.

4. No such study has been conducted so far in this area to analyse the contribution of religious teachings in social transformation.

1.3.2 Universe of Study

For the purpose of present study, every devotee of District Kangra is the unit of study. Hence, all the devotees who are members of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh form the universe of the study. At the time of conducting study, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of District Kangra had 42 Samithies. In these 42 Samithies have been grouped, for administrative reasons, into four zones. In all, there were 3500 devotees/members out of whom 1682 were males and 1818 were
females. Samithi-wise details of members/devotees in the district of Kangra are as given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1
Number of Devotees in Various Sai Seva Samithies of District Kangra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Name of Samithi</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zone – I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kaloha</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sehri</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Paragpur</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dhaniala</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Dadasiba</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rakkar</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dehra</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kathog</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Banakhandi</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jwalamukhi</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Suraani</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Tihari</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bani</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Barwara</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kasba Kotla</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Banjaa Da Bauru</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Bhatoli Phakorian</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Nagrota Surian</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>1320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Palampur</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Rajpura</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bhawarnaa</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Patti-I</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Patti-II</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Panchrukhi</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Dheera</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Khaira</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>1035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Durg</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Paprola</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3.3 Selection of Sample

A sample of 350 persons i.e. 10 percent of the devotees was randomly selected by giving proportionate representation to various zones and gender as is evident from Table 1.2. Out of the sample of 350 devotees selected for the study, 168 were males and 182 were females as given in Table 1.2.

### Table 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1682</td>
<td>1818</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After screening of the questionnaires collected for the study, in all 324 questionnaires were found fully filled up and usable for data tabulation and analysis (see Table 1.3). In this sample of 324 devotees, 159 and 165 were males and females respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>49.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>50.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>324</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3.4 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The present research is a descriptive study and also based of survey work conducted in District Kangra. For conducting the present study two types of sources of information have been utilised for collecting information and data.

1.3.5 Primary Sources of Information

For analyzing and understanding the impact of Sai Teachings on social transformation, primary data has been collected with the help of questionnaire from the devotees of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The data was also collected from the district presidents of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation through personal interviews. Observation method was also utilised to get information about how the teachings of Baba affect the behaviour and actions of Sai Devotees in study area.

The researcher used questionnaire as the main instrument for primary data collection. The questionnaire which was administered for data collection has three sections. First section includes questions relating to Background Information of the respondents such as age, religion, nationality, education, gender, income, basic amenities, media exposure, etc.

i. Second section is devoted to solicit information about teachings and contribution of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in Social Transformation
ii. In third section, information has been sought about respondents’ understanding of Sai Organisation and their involvement in the activities of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation.

iii. Fourth section contains questions relating to the role of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in social transformation experienced by the respondents at individual, family and society’s level.

Both open-ended and close-ended questions have been included in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were posted and emailed to some respondents and were also administered through personal interview, depending upon the availability of the selected respondents. Further, for supplementing the collected information, observation and personal interview techniques have also been used.

1.3.6 Secondary Sources

Secondary data has been utilised for understanding the life, philosophy and teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, his contribution in social transformation both at national and international level. Secondary information was collected from various publications of Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh. Some of which are as under:

2. Satyam Sivam Sundaram, Vol. I to VII.
6. Compilations of Discourses Given by Baba during different festivals and occasions: Birthday Discourses, Christmas Messages, Dasara Discourses, Discourses during Guru Pooornima, Discourses to Overseas Devotees, Divine Discourses on Life, Death, and Liberation, Sadhana, the Inward Path (quotations from discourses), Sai Echoes from Kodai Hills.
Numerous books, articles and reports published by several thinkers and organizations have been consulted and referred. The data and information was also collected through Internet.

1.3.7 Model for Analysing Transformation

The following quotation of Sri Sathya Sai Baba amply describes transformation process:

*If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in character;*
*If there is beauty in character, there will be harmony in the home;*
*When there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation;*
*When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the World.*

Baba established Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations and gave directions and guidelines how to bring transformation.

From his teachings, works and functioning of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, a model has been evolved for studying the transformation process as given in Figure 1.1. The Model exhibits that individual transformation comes with purification of heart. “For any good and bad, three basic things are thought, word and deed. In order, therefore, to purify our thoughts, words and action, we should undertake some kind of *Sadhana* (spiritual practice). We should make right attempt to bring about the harmony between thought, word and deed. This is what was meant when they said that the proper study of mankind is man” (Summer Roses in Blue Mountains, 1976:17).
• Attending at least once in a month Bhajan /Nagar Sankirtan organized by the Organisation
• Participation in Community Service & other Programmes of the Organisation
• Speaking softly and lovingly to everyone

Figure 1.1
Model Describing Relationship between Nine Point Code of Conduct and Social Transformation
Through various activities such as Bal Vikas, Sathya Sai Parenting and Family Bhajan, transformation takes place at the family level. This process is further intensified by community level activities such as community bhajan, seva programmes and individual’s conduct in the society. This ultimately leads to order in the nation and peace in the world.

1.3.8 Analysis and Interpretation

The data and information collected with the help of questionnaire was compiled and tabulated. The tables were put in proper order and the collected data was subjected to statistical operations starting from coding, scoring, tabulation to the writing of the research thesis. A code design was prepared and the data was classified into meaningful categories. The collected data was edited, processed and analyzed with the statistical techniques. Only percentage method of statistics was used as statistical tool. Qualitative analysis has been carried out wherever required.