INTRODUCTION

Due to several pertinent reasons, there is a consensus amongst the academicians and policy planners that India's development efforts should address itself to the transformation of rural society. Nearly three fourth Indians live in villages. In addition, rural population is perpetually beset with a plethora of problems e.g. wide spread illiteracy, extreme poverty, unemployment, deep-seated ignorance and superstition, worsening condition of environmental sanitation and drinking water. Half a century ago when India achieved independence, its natural resources were under-exploited in unplanned manner and its economic infrastructure was grossly under developed. Under such a situation, India's development planner tried to bridge the gap between underdevelopment and development, poverty and prosperity. To accomplish this in a short span of time, the strategy of planned techno-economic development was adopted. It was probably thought that generic development strategy would be the best way to utilize our rich natural resources and once we achieve economic development, equitable distribution of benefit will automatically take place. This development strategy is known as "trickle-down approach".

Now after fifty years, if we look back and evaluate the out come of such a strategy, it will not be inappropriate to conclude that these planning assumptions turned out to be grossly illusory. The income distribution has been far from being just or equitable and class differences have further widened (Dube: 1987). It was estimated that the lowest 40 percent of the population gets 17 percent of the gross domestic products, the middle 40 percent gets 33 percent, and the top 20 percent receives 50 (Seetharam: 1986). We failed to provide not only economic benefits but also certain basic needs such as education, health, sanitation, and drinking water.

Though inappropriate but genuine government efforts for rural development started only after the independence. Another set of activities, outside the government, was instrumental in mobilizing the people through their voluntary
efforts. In the pre-independent India, several Christian Missionaries and organizations set up medical and educational services in remote areas. Under the leadership of Gandhi, the freedom movement also concerned itself with the welfare of rural poor. These voluntary efforts continued even after the independence with their focus on variety of activities, which included child welfare, youth, women, and the handicapped. On top of all these activities, voluntary organizations' efforts were remarkable in the areas of water and sanitation. The tradition of voluntary efforts for water management and conservation in an organized manner is as old as Gandhi's call for voluntary actions in the early decades of the 20th century. Thus, in the past India has experienced two approaches in rural development: voluntary action and government efforts.

Any type of rural development strategy demands for distinct approach and organizational structuring. It makes heavy demand on the functionaries in terms of their commitment and orientation. In addition, it requires innovativeness in procedures and commitment for objectives and functional norms. All these demands of a development approach seem to stand in sharp contrast with the government approach. What our government has adopted is the traditional bureaucratic system characterized by hierarchical chain of command, hardbound procedures, and precedence based decision making and impersonal functioning (Khan and Thomas: 1998). On the other hand, voluntary organizations offer much promise and are better suited to implement development programs. Rural development is a challenge and an opportunity for the use of widely differing skills, abilities and initiatives, which voluntary organizations are more capable of putting up.

Due to the techno-economic approach and centralized and deep bureaucratization of development administration, community never comes forward to join hands in development work. Therefore, active community participation, which is a pre-requisite for the success of any rural development program, has been one of the most desired component of all the government
administered rural development projects. Even in the program like community Development, people participation was least. S. C. Dube (1958) found in his study that people responded merely in a subservient way to government's demand. As during the course of his study on Community Development program, one of the villagers said, "If the government wants us to do a thing, we should do it". This observation supports not only the fact that people responded passively but also confirms that immediately after independence, people had a blind faith in the government. The voluntary organizations have strong base and rapport with the community. The community with a maximum participation welcomes any program implemented by VOs.

The government of India had also started realizing the potential of voluntary organization by late 1970s and gradually involved them in rural development programs. Establishment of Council for Advancement of People Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) was another step towards growing concern for voluntary organizations and their role in Rural Development. Thus in recent years, a large number of voluntary organizations have come up throughout the length and breadth of the country. Most of them are dependent on government as well as on bilateral international organization for financial support.

Therefore, now voluntary organizations have established themselves as alternate of government agencies in implementing rural development programs in a more effective way. The role of voluntary organizations in rural development has been one of the areas of concern for scholars and development planner in last couple of decades and several studies were undertaken. Most of these studies, however, were based on theoretical understanding of voluntary organizations and very few of them attempted to validate their theoretical assumptions at the field level. In the present study, we will attempt to evaluate and answer some of the questions, which all of us have in our mind while thinking about the role of voluntary organizations in Rural Development, community participation and community empowerment.
Research Questions

The questions, which will be addressed in this thesis, are listed below:

i) Is the existing approach to rural development planning in India viable for an effective development process? If not what would be an alternate approach?

ii) What are the distinct features of voluntary organizations, which make them a unique agency of rural development?

iii) What is the role of voluntary organizations in promoting community participation and community empowerment in the context of rural development?

iv) What are the various factors, which determine the success or failure of a voluntary organization.

In the first chapter, an attempt will be made to present an outline of various approaches of rural development. The modernization perspective has been one of the most widely discussed issue in the past, particularly for those who were trying to fit in development process of the third world countries in this perspective and also those who were exploring an alternate paradigm. Modernization in the context of Indian traditions will also be discussed in this chapter. This chapter will be concluded with a detailed description of Gandhian Model of development and its viability in the contemporary India.

A comprehensive understanding of rural development in India will be the central theme of the second chapter. The first section of the chapter will describe and analyze rural development in a historical perspective vis-à-vis pre-colonial phase, post-colonial phase (Community Development Approach, Green Revolution, Garibi Hatao, and Target Approach). The second section will deal with the concept of participatory rural development. In this section, an attempt will be
made to develop an analytical framework to understand and evaluate the people's participation and empowerment in the context of rural development.

The third chapter has two sections. The first section deals with understanding of the concepts of voluntary organizations and the spirit of voluntarism. Historical evolution of voluntary action within India as well as in global context will be described. The role and expectations from voluntary organizations have been changing over the years and it will be useful to understand this change before placing voluntary organizations in the present context. It will be worthwhile to outline various issues and concerns about voluntary organizations, which have emerged in recent years. Therefore, these issues such as sustainability of a VOs project, role of VOs in major projects, relationship with the government, administrative and technical efficiency, organizational conflict, ethics and honesty, individuals interest, bureaucratization, ideology, and VOs and state relationship will be discussed. In the later part of the chapter, role of voluntary organization in rural development and community participation has been outlined.

In the beginning of chapter four, issues of water, particularly water management and related socio-economic and legal issues has been taken up. In the second section, the empirical findings of the study are presented. The case study of two voluntary organizations namely People's Science Institute (Dehradoon) and Tarun Bharat Sangh (Alwar) and their innovative water conservation and management projects will be discussed in detail.

The entire study is concluded in the fifth and last chapter. The research questions, as outlined earlier, have been addressed in view of the theoretical framework and the empirical findings.