INTRODUCTION
1.1. Rationale of the Problem

Traditional India was characterized by political fragmentation and linguistic-regional insulations, hierarchical social division and institutionalized inequality, cultural-ethnic diversity and of course social tolerance, primacy of group over individual and transcendence of mundane concerns (Singh, 1973:191). Each of these elements in the history of Indian society influenced the nature and types of social movements which originated and spread in India. Most of these movements were pre-political and religious in orientation, variously described as millenarian, chiliastic, revivalistic as revitalization, nativist, messianic etc. (Oommen, 1990: 32-33). Society in independent India is characterized by rapid urbanization and industrialization, planned economic development, a series of social legislations undermining several traditional values and extending protection to 'weaker sections', commitment to socialism, secularism, democracy and political pluralism as reflected in a multiparty parliamentary democracy. Each of these elements again influences the origin, the nature, the types, and the spread of social movements (ibid: 33).

Although India is often characterized as a rural country, its urban population is larger than the total population of many countries and some cities have grown at such a rapid rate that we now encounter the problems of over-urbanization. This has led to the migration of a substantial population from rural area, hitherto experiencing life in relatively fixed context with definite attachments. The emergence of a relatively mobile and free-floating urban-industrial population, coupled with certain distinctive characteristics of Hinduism, seems to be facilitating the emergence of a large number of urban-based sectarian movements centered around saints. Typical examples of these are the Radha Swamy movement, the Nirankari movement, the Brahma Kumari movement, the Divine light mission, the Satya Sai Baba movement, the Anand Margi movement, to mention a few. While all these movements can be included under the rubric of religious movements, they also have a certain measure of autonomy rather than a sectarian movement. The elements of traditional
Hinduism which seem to be facilitating the emergence of these movements are polytheism and the absence of Church. Hinduism has always had a multiplicity of Gods. Therefore, the acceptance of a variety of saints of autonomous origin seems to be innate to Hinduism (Oommen, 1990: 39-40).

T.K. Oommen (ibid.) also suggests that the system characteristics of society influence the ethos of a movement. Specifically with reference to India, he suggests that mobilization of a following would require the use of a religious vocabulary and the use of primordial attachments. It is true that most of the reformist movements of the late nineteenth century like Bramha Samaj, Arya Samaj, Pararthana Samaj and Theosophical society were movements of religious reform (Gore, 1989: 83).

India has a long tradition of socio-religious reform movements, individual protests against evils may be traced to the Vedic ages when Aadi Bhagwan Rishabh Dev protested against the cruel Vedic rituals. Bhagwan Mahavir, Mahatma Buddha, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, all protested against the caste system, inequality, poverty etc. (Prasad, 1990: XXIV). Most of the movements aiming at social reforms were directed against the existing inequalities, inhuman treatment of the majority by a few, awful customs and traditions which discriminate women from men, lower castes from the twice born etc. Most of the reform movements including Arya Samaj attempted a limited modification in the Hindu social order, rather than changing it totally.

Most of the social reforms in India have been addressed to the area of religion, spiritual tenets, customary practices, traditional evils, emerging social problems created by urbanization, and new modes of economy. These had very limited effect on the masses. Social reform however, should be visualized as a dynamic activity as the society will never be free from problems of one or the other kind (Misra, 1990: 68-80).

The main thrust of such socio-religious reform movement was to revive or rejuvenate the Hindu religion and society. The social reform movements contributed to the development of nationalism on regional and religious lines (Shah, 1990: 164). The reformers took up several issues. They included
elimination of or change in certain caste regulations and rituals: the 'sati' systems, widow remarriage, child marriage, status of women, girls' education, prohibition, etc. Though a few talked against the caste hierarchy and untouchability but most of the reformers (except a few who led the anti-Brahmin movement), did not challenge the social structure. They adopted a gradualist approach (ibid: 162). It is argued, 'In India, social reform did not ordinarily mean a reorganization of the structure of society at large, as it did in the west, for the benefit of underprivileged social-economic classes. Instead, it means the infusion into the existing social structure of new ways of life and thought; and the society would be preserved, while its members would be transformed (Heimsath, 1964:5).

It is further argued that the reformers either revolted individually or formed associations. These associations were of three types: general (or voluntary) associations; caste reform associations and religious reform bodies (generally called Samaj) (ibid.). The most prominent associations were related to religious reforms. Raja Rammohan Roy, who protested against the 'Sati' system, formed the Brahma Samaj which remained the centre for social reform activities in Bengal. The Prarthana Samaj came into existence in Bombay under the leadership of Mahadev Govind Ranade. The Arya Samaj, formed by Dayanand Saraswati, had predominant influence in Punjab and North India (Shah, 1990: 163).


Most of the reformist movements like Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj and Theosophical Society were the movements of religious reform i.e. they also include religious elements. These have indicated uprising
and gaining of higher status by certain communities (e.g. Lingayats in Virashivam Movement). There are still several emerging situations in which religious component appears to play an important part. Recently such trends have also been accelerated by the present political processes.

But despite all that, there are certain reform movements which are going on and aim at the betterment of society as a whole. Such movements are lesser studied and reported in the sociological literature. Therefore they need to be studied. In this context, the present work is a study of a reform movement i.e. 'Yug Nirman Movement' initiated by a spiritual/charismatic person having some religious components. There are more than 80 million followers around, having 2400 regional centers and 50,000 local centers, and it is said that more than 15 million people have left their bad habits following its practices. A Movement which has spread all over India and 80 other countries, it may definitely have some reformative/transformative impact on individual, family and community. Such vast social phenomenon or movement has not been studied by Sociologists. Therefore, there is a need to study such a socio-religious reform movement.

Most of the authors attempt a descriptive account of the origin, spread, strategy, ideology, organization, factions and splits within the movement (Oommen, 1990: 96). Objectives, ideology, programmes, leadership and organization are important components of the study of social movements. They are interdependent i.e. influencing each other. The objective of the movement changes from narrow particular local issues to broad aims for social transformation. Sometimes a movement which begins with broad objectives may in the process get bogged down to one or two particular issues. Ideology may also undergo change. It provides direction for evolving strategies and programmes and also keeps the participants together by developing feeling of ‘we-ness’. Various strategies and programmes are evolved to mobilize the people. They sustain the movement for a long period. Leadership which initiates or emerges in the course of the growth of the
movement plays a crucial role in articulating ideology and objectives, evolving strategies and programmes and maintaining the spirit of the participants (Shah, 2002: 17).

Thus sociologists, (Oommen, 1990: Shah, 1990, 2002; Gore, 1982; Rao, 1979 etc.) in substantive issues of study of the social movements, have suggested focusing upon the emergence/origin, leadership, ideology, organization, aims and objectives and consequences/impact (transformation) of the social movement. Select literature of the socio religious-reform movements also suggests these aspects.

1.2. Statements of the Problem

In the light of the above mentioned substantive and methodological framework following questions have been specifically studied in the context of 'Yug Nirman Movement' which has been going on for some years in different parts of India and has also gone beyond the national boundaries.

1. What are the conditions of the emergence of the 'Yug Nirman Movement'? 
2. What is the nature of its leadership? 
3. What are the aims and objectives and the ideology of the movement? 
4. What is the organization of the movement? 
5. What are the consequences (impact) of this movement? i.e. the social transformation takes place.

The first question, what are the conditions of emergence of the 'Yug Nirman Movement? means the social, cultural, political and economic situations of that time which may appear to make for the emergence of the movement. Specifically effort has been made to take note of the divine and supernatural conditions of the initiator under which he initiated the movement. These conditions have been described on the basis of the literature available and interviewing older persons who saw and knew the founder during those days.

The second question, 'What is the nature of its leadership'? aims to know the leadership. It takes note of the life history of the founder leader of the movement, his bringing up, education, family life, social-cultural and spiritual
activities, personal characteristics and other extra-ordinary talents. Specifically it has been tried to find out the charismatic attributes of the overall leadership of the movement from its initiation till the present.

The third question, "What are the aims and objectives and ideology of the movement?", aims to know the changes to be brought in and how, i.e. ideas, aims, methods, programmes, means, emergence and its religious base. Several aspects of the whole programme have been included here. Ideology means the dominant ideas which are considered responsible for bringing change in the society, and these ideas are manifested in the aims, objectives and methods of the movement. The method has been focused on hundred points programme of the mission of the movement.

The fourth question, "What is the organization of the movement?"? Means taking note of the organizational structure, its headquarters and adjoined units, its subsidiaries and the branches. Their working processes and management to promote the activities of the movement have also been studied.

The fifth question, "What are the consequences (impact) of this movement?"? Aims to examine and observe the impact of the movement on the participants/followers. The social transformation that takes place as a consequences of the movement. This question looks into the impact on individual self, on family and on community at large. These impacts have been observed in empirical situations.

The impact at individual-level has been observed on these aspects of life-performing yagya, meditation-recitation, learning good habits, leaving bad habits, learning other arts and skills, status mobility in family context, status mobility in the village context.

The impact on family-level has been observed as participation by family members in the activities of the movement, cooperation and unity among the family members.

The impact at community-level has been observed on health, education, occupation, and social reformation namely drinking/alcoholism, caste feeling/untouchability, decrease in rate of crime and dowry. Impact as unity
among villagers has been observed in terms of participation in collective activities/greater we feeling, respect of villagers in the wider society and activities for movement itself.

1.3. Area of Study

The movement has been spreading in villages and towns in various parts of India and also outside. As far as the personal information from the headquarters at Hardwar is known, it has been spreading in almost all states of India. At first, it was started by the founder in his native village in Agra district of U.P. and finally, Hardwar becomes its headquarters. Thus, the movement appears to have spread in this region from Agra to Hardwar at first.

There are some villages which have come to the limelight in the media also where functions of the movement have taken place in addition to the very first village where the initiator has initiated it. Thereby, the present study has been focused on the initiator’s village in Agra district and one other village in western U.P., which is situated in between initiator’s village and the headquarters, Hardwar.

Thus, the present study has been focused on two villages: One Anwalkheda in district Agra situated in the north east of the historic city of Agra about 24 kms. away. This is the village where the founder of ‘Yug Nirman Movement’ late Pt. Shriram Sharma was born, has a national and international identity for the ‘Yug Nirman Movement’. The second village is Shaulana in district Ghaziabad. Here at first only one person, Ramkrishna Sharma, initiated this movement in 1990. The achievements of this village were very well highlighted in the mass media. Now, this village is known for a continuous participation in the

*In the initial proposal in addition to such two villages- initiator’s village and two other villages from this region which have been reported into media were proposed to be studied-observations of activities in an urban area were to be included. But after collecting facts from two villages, it appears to be sufficient in volume as well as quality to indicate the impact of the movement. Therefore data collected from two villages only is reported corresponding to the fifth objective of the present research.*
movement. This village has become a 'Model Village' for the activities of the movement in the list of the headquarters, Shantikunj, Hardwar.

Socio-cultural context of the area of study (both the villages) is described in detail in Chapter six onward.

1.4. Universe, Sample, Respondents

All persons, men-women, married-unmarried, young old, upper castes-lower castes, poor-rich are regularly/occasionally participating in the activities of the movement. Participants/followers may be divided conceptually into two types members and public. There are three types of members: The inner core members, the committed members, the less committed members; there are also three types of public: sympathetic public, hostile public and unaware public (details of levels of membership are described in chapter second).

As we initially proposed that the two villages would be selected for the study. The total number of the active followers/participants would constitute the universe of the study. Our exploratory work has suggested that in each village there are approximately 8000 people and about 2000 persons found to be actively and regularly/occasionally participating. Among the 2000 active participants, very few are the members of inner core, some are committed members and a good number are less committed members, whereas some what sympathetic public also constitutes the set of respondents. 5% of the active followers (i.e. 2000) have been selected, from different socio-economic background, as the set of respondents from each village.

Thus purposive sample representing the participants of different categories of age, sex, religion, caste, educational level, occupation, income, marital status and types of families have been selected. 100 respondents in each

---

\(^1\) From a village of about 5000 population about 50% were estimated to actively and regularly participating, thus from three villages 50-60 respondents each were proposed to constitute the sample size approximately 150-200 respondents. Since field study has focused on two villages the population around 8000 each followers of several dimensions approximately 2000 each, therefore from these two villages a sample size of about 100 respondents each (about 5%) appear to be justified for analysis and quantification for arriving at findings. Thus, 100 respondents each from two villages have been interviewed.
of the two villages constitute the sample size of 200 respondents which have been finally selected for the study, by using purposive-random sample technique. Data collected from the 200 participants from two villages would be presented in chapters seven and eight separately.

1.5. Techniques of data collection

Data have been collected with the help of some specific research techniques like- observation, interview, interview schedule/guide, case study, personal/organizational records and other secondary records. At first stage observation technique has been used to collect the information. Initially some case studies have been undertaken to understand the maximum possible aspects. For a larger group of respondents, interview and interview guide have been used at the second phase of data collection.

At the first stage we have collected the information as participant observer by living in the field (the headquarters, its organizational units and in the two villages) for some months during the period of 1998 to 2001. During this period the researcher tried to understand the maximum possible aspects of the movement like its origin, leadership, ideology, organization and the ritual practices and religious-cultural life cycle of the two selected villages. During this period the researcher also met with the members of inner core committee of the movement, conducted some depth, focused and repetitive interviews with the committed members of the movement. During this period the researcher tried to show himself as committed member/participant observer (i.e. member of the ingroup) of the movement so that reliable information could be gathered by establishing rapport.

At the second stage, 200 participants have been selected for interview, 100 from each village. These two hundred active participants have been interviewed on several variables (as proposed in the beginning) with the help of an interview guide. The data have been collected during the period of 2002 to 2004 through frequent visits to both the villages, particularly on the 'occasions of importance' for the movement.
For knowing the origin/emergence, leadership, ideology and organization of the movement, largely secondary sources have been used. The documents in various forms (i.e. books, magazines, papers, pamphlets, reports and other records) available at the headquarters and other centers of the 'Yug Nirman Movement' have been specially consulted and facts described in these documents have also been supplemented and verified through the knowledgeable persons available in the village and at the headquarters; facts of the life of the founder were cross verified through elderly persons who themselves have seen the founder, growing and propagating.

1.6. Methods of Data Analysis

Like other sociological surveys, two major methods were adopted for processing and analysis of the collected data quantitative and qualitative, as proposed data would be analyzed, qualitatively and quantitatively. Data collected through participant observation would be analyzed qualitatively. Quantitative analysis would be done of the data collected through interviews of 200 respondents. Univariate and bivariate analysis of the various aspects of the problem would be undertaken.

Thus, for the purpose of data analysis and interpretation, two methods have been used: qualitative and quantitative. The facts collected through observation, depth and focus interview have been analyzed through qualitative method of analysis. Data collected with the help of observation, interview and interview guide from 200 respondents, 100 from each village, have been analyzed through quantitative analysis. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) has been used for quantitative analysis. Simple classification, tabulation, proportions have been used to arrive at the findings. Simple statistical techniques and also associations and co-relations have been looked into to indicate the degree of relationship between background factors and impact variables.