CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

The thesis attempts a sociological analysis of modern religious organisations-sects, at Jammu, which serve the emigrant Kashmiri Pandits. The central theme concerns religious organisations as a source for search of identity, within the social context of emigration and diaspora. Religion is a way of life which influences the thinking, perception and categories of experiences, among the people who practice it. It is not a timeless entity as it undergoes change with urbanisation, modernisation and social mobility. The degree and pace of such change may vary from community to community. The influence of religion is pervasive and emphatic which creates a distinct cultural and social identity among its practitioners. These identities concretise in particular contexts such as the geography, history and socio-economic conditions. Religion is not an abstract concept. It percolates down to the everyday life of the individual effectively influencing and moulding his day to day living. It does not remain the domain of any intellectual group but mingles with the everyday existence of the common man influencing, and in turn getting influenced.

In Hinduism, the religious traditions are the outcome of inadvertent permutation, deliberate alteration and structurally necessary modification. Most of the beliefs and
practices are reformulated in the light of shifting contexts. In fact mutability is a hallmark characteristic of many concepts, rites, social forms and other phenomena generally subsumed under the rubric of 'Hinduism' (Vertovec 1994, 123). This is especially true when we look at modern Hinduism in diaspora. For a host of reasons and in different ways, the range of religious phenomena, so long associated with Hinduism, are narrowed or displaced altogether among the migrants and their descendents. Throughout the Hindu diaspora, there is evident a general course of change which has led from village and caste beliefs and practices to wider, more universalistic definitions of Hinduism that cut across local and caste differences. (Jayawardane 1968: 444)

Among the several angles from which the immigrant religion can be viewed, an important one is the development of sects or subsects as they spread across the country. Sects are approachable to the common man because of the simplicity in following them and their ability to cross geographical boundaries. According to Williams, the best approach to Hinduism is through acquaintance with a particular sect, (sampradaya) because study of a sect best fits the contours of the religious experience of many Hindus who worship in the temples and according to the prescriptions of specific traditions (Williams 1984, xiv).

Religion is an important component of culture. It gives the best entry point to study the culture of a
community. Kashmiri Pandit community, which is undergoing a crisis due to migration, fearing a loss of identity, can be best studied through their popular sects. The study of popular sects gives proper insight into the understanding of religious life and how it is practised by a common Kashmiri Pandit. The focus here is upon the elements of doctrine, practice and administration of these sects that have led them from local groups to national organisations and an attempt is made to trace this development. The study of such a modern regional form of Hinduism provides an approach to the study of Hinduism in general.

In section I and II of this chapter, we will situate the broad concepts used in this thesis, within a general body of literature on the sociology of religion. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive review of all the theories of religion. We will consider only those strands in the literature which are of particular relevance to the study of religious organisations. In section III we will summarise some prominent features of the Kashmiri Pandit community. These provide the necessary back drop for a broad statement in section IV, of the issues which are central to this thesis. A few methodological observations

1. There was a forced migration of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir valley from January 1990 onwards caused by rise of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. (Details in Chapter II and elsewhere).
are then registered in this section, followed by a more detailed account of the scope of the thesis in the form of a chapter outline.

SECTION-I

SECT

The term 'sect' is used in the sociology of religion to designate a particular kind of religious group or faction, having the same leadership, united by common religious beliefs and opinions that differ from the more generally accepted views. Etymologically the term can be related to the Latin, sequi, that means, to follow. The sociological definition of the term sect was given by Max Weber in the 'Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism' (1930). Weber was a pioneer in developing the church-sect taxonomy. He brought out a fundamental difference between the church, which he described as "an institution necessarily including both just and the unjust" (ibid, 144) and the 'believer's church' which viewed itself solely as a community of personal believers of the reborn and only these. In other words, not as a church but as a sect." (ibid, 145). Weber introduced this distinction in the course of a discussion of Christian organisations like the Baptists, Quakers and Mennonites. Another significant feature of the concept is the importance which Weber attached to the basis of membership of a sect, namely, the "only adults who have
personally gained their own faith should be baptised" (ibid, 145). Related characteristic was the sectarian principle of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* - a belief in exclusive salvation which the sect shared with the church, when the latter was in a socially dominant situation. Weber also noted the sectarian response of separation from the world. In the context of Protestant sects in the United States of America, he pointed to the alternative paths of development which a sect might take. Either it could find accommodation within the larger church structure, as in the case of Pietism, or it might emerge as an independent organisation. Since the process of scrutinizing new members was a vital part of sect maintenance, Weber thought that sects are necessarily autonomous, voluntaristic organisations. He also drew a significant parallel between the strict moral discipline practised within the sectarian community and that of a monastic order, pointing out that in both a period of probation was often required before full membership was accorded. Although Weber gave a starting point for the church-sect taxonomy, it was Ernst Troeltsch who provided an extensive treatment of sects.

In *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (1931), Troeltsch traced the origin of competing forms of Christian organisation to the gospel ethic within which both sect and church type of organisation were prefigured. The sect type could be identified in the idealistic, love-
inspired communism of such passages as the 'Sermon On The Mount', in which were combined "radical indifference or hostility towards the rest of the social order with the effort to actualise this ideal of life in a small group." (ibid, 82, Vol. I). In contrast to the sect, was the church type characterised by its accommodation with secular institutions. Central to Troeltsch's argument is the assertion that both elements could be contained within singular institution, though in a state of tension, for example the monastic community represented the sectarian strain within institutional Christianity. He argued that the tension between the church and sect resulted in the separate organisation. The church-sect taxonomy by Weber and Troeltsch provided the useful tool organisation for the analysis of organised Christian groups in relation to their environment.

The next important contribution to the analysis of sect was made by H.R. Niebuhr. In 'The Social Sources of Denominationalism' (1929) Niebuhr sought to expose the links between the Christian divisions or denominationism and socio-economic factors. He took the view that 'vital' religious interests existed principally and exclusively among the poor and were expressed in a sectarian form which over a period of time became 'compromised' by generational changes and a 'raising of social economic status of members'. Thus he thought that sectarian organisation was
valid for one generation. "Rarely does a second generation hold convictions.... " (ibid, 20). At the same time, an unintended consequence of the disciplined ascetic lifestyle of the sect was the accumulation of wealth which lead to compromise with the surrounding society and eventually to a more relaxed bourgeois organisation of the denomination. Niebuhr's image of the sect as an inherently transitory organisation, which was likely to be eroded by 'compromise' and change in the composition of its membership was to have considerable influence on subsequent discussion of types of religious organisation.

Niebuhr was the first person who criticised the Weber-Troeltsch formulation as being static and sought to incorporate it into a propositional scheme based on the assumption that the sect type is inherently stable and exhibits a tendency to move away from its original 'pure' state towards achieving the status of a church; the basic assumption being 'sects do not remain as sects'.

Further advance in the analysis of sectarian characteristic was found in the works of Howard Becker, who, along with Milton Yinger and Peter Berger, forms the other strand of thought which reformulated the church-sect taxonomy given by Weber-Troeltsch. In 'Systematic Sociology on the Basis of the Beziehungslehre and Gebildelehre of Leopold Von Weise' (1932), Becker defined sect as a small
separatist group based on voluntary, religious qualified membership and having exclusive character. Like Neibuhr who wrote in 1929, Becker saw it as a precarious form of organisation prone with age to compromise and to transformation into a denominational type. "Denominations are simply sects in an advanced stage of development and adjustment to each other and the secular world." (ibid, 626) Becker also defined 'cult' by distinguishing it from the 'sect' by the fact that adherents of this loosely knit and unstructured form of religious expression were little concerned with protecting their organisation but were seeking "purely personal ecstatic experience, salvation, comfort and mental or physical healing" (ibid, 627).

In 'Religion in the Struggle for Power' (1946), J.M. Yinger introduced the important subtype of the established sect to refer to second or third generation sects which had not undergone the process which Niebuhr regarded as inevitable but had retained clear boundaries between their membership and surrounding social order. Yinger applied the simple term 'sect' to a fluid, non institutionalized group held together by common beliefs and religious experience of its members, a form of religious affiliation that is clearly very similar to Becker's category of cult. In 'Religion, Society and The Individual' (1957), Yinger introduced a characteristic of cult type which has frequently been used to differentiate it from the sect: he defined cults as
"groups that are similar to sects, but represent a sharper break in religious terms from the dominant religious tradition of a society" (ibid, 154). Yinger also distinguished three further sub-types of sects: the 'acceptance sects', characterised by individualism, 'aggressive sects' characterised by a rejection of existing society as totally evil, 'avoidance sects' characterised by pessimism and emphasis on a new life hereafter. In 1954 Berger wrote a paper, 'The Sociological Study of Sectarianism', in which he reformulated the Weber Troeltsch dichotomy by providing newer definitions of the types themselves. Becker, Yinger and Berger, pointed out that the taxonomy of religious organisation, as suggested by Weber-Toeltsch in terms of the antithetical concepts of church-sect highlighted the fact that these are two terminal points of a social continuum. It leaves unexamined the wide spectrum of organisations within each type. These types are best understood as abstract types, marking the terminal points of a continuum and expressing different ways of negotiating with the secular world and its powers. These scholars pointed out that there are many intermediate points along the continuum. Among them are the 'established sect' or 'institutionalised sect', 'cult', 'denomination' and 'ecclesia'.

In 1942, Pope elaborated on Niebuhr's theory that there is an inherent tendency towards deradicalization in the
development of sects. He argued that when the process of routinisation and institutionalisation sets in, the sects tend to compromise with the established religious and secular pattern to accept their pluralist situation and increase their organisational complexity and wealth to the point where they become denominationalized.

This thesis was rejected by Bryn Wilson who challenges their assumption that sects basically have a similar ideology, social composition, organisational framework and developmental pattern. He developed extensively the focus on sub types in his various articles and books. He wrote 'Sects and Society' (1961) 'Patterns of Sectarianism' (1967) and 'Religious Sects' (1970). His earliest work was concerned with the tendency of some sects to become denominations and with the evidence that others could persist over several generations. In order to identify more precisely the alternative patterns of development he devised subtypes of sects, initially four but eventually seven. Wilson defined sect as being identified by characteristics, such as, it is a voluntary association, membership is by proof to sect authorities of some claim to personal merit - such as knowledge of doctrine, affirmation of a conversion experience or recommendation of members in good standing; exclusiveness is emphasised and expulsion exercised against those who contravene doctrinal, moral or organisational precepts; its self conception is of an elect, a gathered
remnant, possessing special enlightenment, personal perfection is the expected standard of aspiration, in whatever terms this is judged; it accepts, at least as an ideal, the priesthood of all believers; there is a high level of lay participation; there is opportunity for the member spontaneously to express his commitment; the sect is hostile or indifferent to the secular society and to the state (American Sociological Review - 24, 1959, 3-15).

SECT IN HINDUISM

In the context of Hinduism 'sect' assumes a different connotation. Historically, Hinduism gave birth to many sects such as Buddhism, Jainism etc. which later became separate religions. One of the primary doctrines of sectarian Hinduism is 'bhakti' or devotion. The second feature common to all Hindu sects is the extravagant respect paid to gurus or preceptors. Thirdly, membership of a sect can be attained only by diksha or initiation at the hands of guru who teaches a special mantra or sacred formula.

In the paper 'Remuniciation in the Religious Tradition of South Asia' (1983), Richard Burghart differentiates Indian sect from the Christian sect. He says, "It must be borne in mind that the structure of Indian sect is different from that of a Christian sect and the former do not stand in any relation to an equalent of a church. Instead Indian sects are religious traditions maintained by relationship
between guru and disciple. During the present millennia most Indian sects have seen themselves as continuities in the reproduction of eternal knowledge (sampradayas). More recently sects have thought of themselves as societies (samaj), other ideas include followers of a path (pantha) and collectivities of individual resources (sangha). It is with regard to such Indian conceptions of social organisations that I use the term" (ibid, 652).

The Hindu sects are termed as 'sampradaya', which according to R.B. Willaims is, "a tradition which has been handed down from the founder, guru, through successive religious teachers and which shapes the followers into a distinct fellowship with institutional forms. Those who take initiation in this fellowship are called satsangis, companions of truth, because they seek the truth in the company of others, who share the same language, religious specialists, sacred scriptures, history and rituals." (In, 'The New Face of Swaminarayan Religion', 1984, xii).

Elaborating on the link between a sect and sampradaya, Peter Bennet in 'The Path of Grace: Social Organisation and Temple worship in a Vaishnava Sect' (1993) writes, "The category sampradaya is conveniently rendered sect, so long as one is mindful of the negative connotations of the occidental sect as a secessionist grouping and the positive connotations of the oriental sampradaya as a vehicle for transmitting and perpetuating a sacred tradition via a continuous succession
of preceptors. The lifeblood of a sampradaya is the sacred formula (mantra) which is whispered in a disciple’s ear by the guru at initiation: it can be traced back through an arterial lineage of gurus to a founder identified in some way with a particular divinity” (ibid, 5).

In the recent times important sects in India are relatively new and have emerged around the 12th century AD. These sects have been studied by sociologists as well as anthropologists like those mentioned above. Other important studies include ‘The Redemptive Encounter’ (1984) by L. Bab who has analysed three sects with upper middle class urban following, Arun P. Bali who has a paper on ‘Virasaiva Movement’ (1976) on the Lingayat sect in the South, Daniel Gold on the Radhasoami Movement in, ‘Lord as a Guru’ (1986), Paul Toomey on the Krishan sects (1986) and K. Kollen on a Shaiva sect, ‘Akhand Mahayoga Sangha of Varanasi’ (1976).

Most of these sects refer to other worshippers of Shiva or Vishnu or Shakti, who are neither in complete sympathy with traditional brahmanism nor excommunicated by it and who have new texts and rites in lieu of the old ones or at least to supplement the Vedas and vedic sacrifices. However it would be wrong to speak of a single, homogeneous sect associated with any of these deities. The many Vaishnavite sects, for example, are distinguished from each other, first by the particular form of Vishnu and his consort, they worship and second where the same form and consort are
worshipped, by differences in the mode of worship and body of theological doctrines and finally by internal organisation. The SriVaishnavas worship Vishnu and his consort Lakshmi, the Madhavas worship Krishna but not Radha, the Nimbakaras, Vallabhacharyas and Chaitanyas worship both Krishna and Radha but differ in several other respects (as studied by Paul Toomey) and the Ramanandis worship only Rama and his associates (as studied by Richard Burghart). In each sect, the founder and the things associated with him, are objects of special veneration. Each sect has an elaborate complex of rituals of temple and domestic worship and for life cycle ceremonies. It has its own specially emphasised festivals and sacrifices and its own identifying word or sentence of great religious potency. The sects are also distinctive philosophical stand points, as, for example the pure monism of Smartas, the qualified monism of Sri Vaishnavas, the dualism of Madhavas, the inner worldliness of Radhasoamis and the millenarianism of Brahma Kumaris etc. Some sects do not have elaborate philosophies although they do have their own special ideas and beliefs. While the philosophical and ethical position of sect is important in understanding its religious practice, other elements are influential. Each sect has not only its own sacred literature written by its founder and other leaders, but also a selective attitude towards the great texts of Hinduism. According to L.Reneou, in *Hinduism: An
Anthology' (1961), any sect has the following features in the Indian context: the sects do not rise to reject the main religious traditions, rather they act as anchor to the main tradition; adherence to a particular book or particular divinity by the sect; the line between sect and cult is thin due to the presence of charismatic personality; the sect has a philosophical standpoint of its own, particularly emphasising bhakti; the guru has a didactic relationship with each of his followers, and the ascetic founder of every sect is a historical personality.

CHARISMA

The most dominant figure in the development of modern Indian religion is the guru. The preceptor occupies a place at par with, if not higher than that of god. The worship of a living person as a manifestation of the divine is not a phenomenon unique to India, but it has certainly thrived here. The Indian guru may be seen by disciples in the image of a deity, an object of intense devotion or as one who imparts yogic secrets through his gifted insight and spiritual power. The guru charms his disciples and berates them, helps them in matters human and divine and teaches through trial and obstruction. To the disciple, the guru's actions present lessons to be cherished. Daily life around the guru is imbued with magic and mystery. The gurus, who are leaders, teachers as well as guides are essentially 'charismatic' personality. Charisma, therefore, is an
important aspect in understanding the guru as well as the religious traditions which centre and grow around the guru. In sociology, the reflections on charisma started with Max Weber's historical sociological analysis. In *Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (1946) Weber defined charisma as a "certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, super human or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader" (ibid, 358). Weber employed the concept of charisma in the context of a typology of authority he developed and used it as an attribute of a personality. To Weber, charismatics are creative individuals who emerge from crisis situations and the ideas they propound and propose, play an important role in the transformation of societies. In, *Charisma, Stability and Change : Gramdan-Bhoodan Movement* (1972), T.K. Oommen states, "These individuals may be philosophers, religious leaders, or social reformers." (ibid, 2). According to Weber, this unique, magical power can appear in three sometimes overlapping ideal types:

a) Charismatic authority : It is through the miraculous powers that a certain individual gets power over people. These people accept this authority because it
satisfies their non-rational needs and goals, which arise from their emotional perception of the situation.

b) Legal-rational authority: It is legitimated in terms of reciprocal accepted rules and legal norms. Through the hope of future rewards or the realisation of a future goal this form of authority and its organisation procedures get accepted.

c) Traditional authority: It rests on the belief in the holiness of century-old tradition and the legitimacy of those who on this ground exercise authority.

These three aspects, also mentioned by Weber as personal, institutional and traditional charisma show the fundamentals of its legitimacy. The different aspects of charisma are linked and can only be treated separately when one of them is at odds with the other. This can be seen in the paper by Donald Taylor, 'Charismatic Authority in the Satya Sai Baba Movement' (1987), where he shows the interrelationships between the three types of authorities and how the 'personal' and 'institutional' charisma are caught in a struggle.

Weber expanded the concept of charisma by talking about its 'routinization'. He said in its pure form charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structure. The social relationship directly involved are strictly personal, based on the
validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities. If this is not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon, but to take on the character of a permanent relationship, forming a stable community of disciples or a band of followers or a party organisation or any sort of political or hierarchial organisations, it is necessary for the character of charismatic authority to become radically changed." (1946, 364).

It is interesting to note, however, that charisma is a term with mainly a referential function. When we ask for its meaning we mostly refer to a person or his special quality. Etymologically too, the Greek *charis* refers to a quality, namely, the beauty and grace that lies, like a veneer, upon the charismatic person. A lot of people are 'struck' by this special quality. These people are mostly neglected by social scientists, as is the case with Max Weber, who devoted his attention to personal traits of the charismatic. Sudhir Kakkar in *Shamans, Mystics and Doctors: A Psychological Enquiry into India and its Healing Traditions* (1982), puts forth the psycho-analytical approach, leaving space for people who get 'struck' by charisma and who become devoted to a charismatic person. Kakkar's theory is that these people unconsciously miss an ideal father/mother figure which drives them to go to all sorts of gurus and other saints like yogis, avtaras etc. Despite its one sided emphasis on the people who adjudge charisma to some one,
Kakkar offers an attractive point of view using the psycho-analytic approach. The charismatic and his specific social environment can only be understood when they are brought into connection. By describing both in interaction, the people who adjudge charisma get their place. Charisma is then seen within anthropological sense. In this context charisma takes the form of a product that in its rise and ongoing existence is totally dependent upon communication. In *Magic, Science, Religion and the scope of Rationality* (1990), S.J. Tambiah's extra dimension in the rise of charisma can be found in his use of the term 'transmission'. The transmission of charisma "through amulets and talismans between a Buddhist saint and his followers; or between the royalty and their subjects: the Indian concept of *darshan* of a deity whose eyes fall upon the worshippers as much as the worshippers view their deity--all these are intimations of participation" (ibid, 108) The transmission of charisma is not to be understood as a causal relation between charismatic and the persons involved, but as a reciprocal relation expressed fully in the term participation. By this Weber's analysis is expanded. All persons involved participate and thereby they communicate towards a shared understanding. The magical power, typical of a charismatic person, is such a shared understanding. Weber says that the belief in miraculous powers is as much effect of authority or power as, the satisfaction of needs and goals of the
people involved. Participation provides a context for authority and needs when both presuppose and reinforce each other. Most importantly charisma is not equal to authority only, but also to the need for authority. And the magical power is not only the characteristic feature of the charismatic but as well of those who attach this charisma to some one. This provides a nuance to Weber's analysis. By emphasizing the communal participatory aspect of charisma, Weber's mainly causal approach is broadened by a reciprocal understanding.

ASCETICISM OR RENUNCIATION

Hindu society is best known by caste, its most characteristic institution, and by renunciation, its best known cultural ideal. For conceptualising the institution of renunciation, the ideas of L. Dumont are relevant. In 'Homo-Hierarchicus' (1970) Dumont writes that renunciation is, "a sort of universal language of India" (ibid, 52) and the renouncer has been identified by him as, "a creator of values' in Indian (Hindu) religion and philosophy (ibid, 46) Dumont further maintains, "What one is in the habit of calling Indian thought is for a very great part the thought of a Sanyasi" (ibid, 12). For Dumont, the significance of this universal role lies with his further observation that the great religious and speculative movements of South Asia are led by individuals outside-the-world, whereas the Brahman, as the most excellent man-in-world, has played a
conservative role in absorbing the innovation of the renouncer. In his paper on 'World Renunciation in Indian Religions' (1960) Dumont suggested that the 'secret of Hinduism may be found in the dialogue between the renouncer and the man in-the-world (ibid, 37) Dumont's work on renunciation (1960) as well as on caste hierarchy (1980), though innovative and essential to the study of Hindu society and religion, have been variously developed and criticised by sociologists. Dumont contrasts the innovations of the renouncer whose social status "gave him a monopoly for putting everything in question, with the brahman scholar who conserves and develops knowledge aggregating it to the requirements of orthodoxy" (1960, 47). The socio-religious forms espoused by the renouncer do not deny those of brahmanic orthodoxy but rather places them in a relative and subordinate position to extramundane, ultimate values (ibid, 52). Dumont argues that the subordination of the temporal to the spiritual has allowed Indian society 'to found itself directly upon the absolute order.'

In, 'For a Sociology of Indias : An Intra Cultural Approach to the Study of Hindu Society' (1983), Richard Burghart argues that the sociological analysis should not continue to conceptulise Indian society as a total system. Representation of totality are universalizing objectifications by elite groups of their own specific
representations of totality be studied as distinctive and motivated objectifications circulating in an intracultural arena. In this arena, the renouncer, the brahman householder and the martial ruler contest and negotiate both the schema and the claims that privilege the particular knowledge and practices which secure their distinctive statuses.

Renouncer, however, monopolizes neither the significations nor the practices which confer value and high status in the Hindu society. In his study of the Brahmin entitled, 'Non Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture' (1987), T.N. Madan shows that it is the life of the man in-the-world or the householder which is most highly valued in Hindu society. "The interpretation offered in the book is that, although renunciation is undoubtedly a remarkable value orientation which permeates the world view of even the worldly householder, it does not bestow its distinctive character upon the everyday life of Hindus.' (ibid, 1). Other studies which also explore Hindu cultural configurations associated with non-renunciation and householders are, 'Wives of God King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri' (1985) by F. Marglin and 'The Fate of a Householder Nath' (1984) by Daniel Gold and Anna Gold.

The relation of renunciation and asceticism with the Hindu sects is an interesting dimension to the study of sects. Apparently the sects composed of entirely the ascetics represent a bizarre element in Hinduism. The
members of these sects go about scantily dressed, smear their bodies with funeral ashes, wear long matted hair and perform a number of physical feats. They maintain monasteries (akharas) where they are reputed to carry on occult practices and they also manage temples which enable them to keep in touch with the masses and recruit members.

'Indian Sadhus' by G.S. Ghurye (1964) and 'Sadhus in India' (1992) by R.L. Gross give a detailed account of such sects. In the paper, 'Wandering Ascetics of the Ramanandi Sect' (1983), R. Burghart emphasises the difference that exists in the construction of the concept of asceticism by an ascetic and a householder. By and large sects in India are composed either of entirely the householders (like the ones studied by Peter Bennet and L. Bab) or those consisting of both ascetics and householders (as studied by R.B. Williams) are more numerous and popular. In the latter kind of sects the ascetics are grouped into different monasteries, each having in its own care hereditary adherents, and its corporate property in temples, land etc. Many ascetics are found to be involved in intrasectarian rivalry and politics. When a sect is composed only of householders, the patrilineal descendants of the founder may preside over the sect.

SECTION-II

WOMEN AND RELIGION

Religion often appears to be highly oppressive to women, reinforcing and perpetuating women's subservience to
men. At the same time, women embrace religious teachings and practice with great enthusiasm. This results in a paradox in the religious lives of women. The argument put forward by western feminist literature is that the religions do not present favourable picture of women. Women are confined to the domestic sphere often in some form of 'seclusion' and even if they are allowed to move in public spaces 'veiling' or the social conventions related, for example, to the dangers of their sexuality impose similar restraints on their freedom. They are excluded from formal religion and from participating in important public rituals: they may be prominent in possession cults or healing rites but these can be seen as simply extensions of their traditional female roles. They are often either excluded or relegated to an area 'out of sight' in the church, the mosque, the synagogue or the sacred area. This is sometimes justified by their state of 'pollution' or by the view that they are distracting to men. Pat Holden in, *Women's Religious Experience* (1983) says, "This feminist viewpoint has of course correctly noted the repressive aspects of religion. If it has a major fault, it is that the self perceptions of western feminists, deriving mainly from the imagery of Judaeo-Christian tradition, are at times, projected on to women in other cultures. The danger of such an approach is that women in these societies are not allowed to 'speak' (not only vocally but also through lack of examination of
the religious action, mythology and symbolism which
invariably 'speak' more loudly). Thus it is not
coincidental that feminists are taking into account the
religious experience.

Rita Gross and Nancy Falk point out in 'Unspoken
Worlds' (1980) that, "there are few, if any, religious
systems in which men's and women's religious lives are
indistinguishable. But like practically every other
discipline focusing on 'human studies', the study of
religions has unconsciously operated in an androcentric or
male centered model of humanity. That is to say, it has
assumed that central and significant humans are male and has
investigated the world from a male point of view. When such
a perspective is taken, women like any other segment of
religious life, will be seen only as they appear to men.
This has meant that we don't really see women as human
beings at all but as objects, symbols, appendages to someone
else's enterprise, as problematic other, to be assigned a
neat place. (ibid, Xiii)....... data on women and men in
religious systems as well are much richer and far more
complex than anyone imagined when people are content to
study "religious man" alone. In fact it seems clear that,
to study religions properly, we must also begin attending to
the women who have constituted and do constitute at least
one half of almost all of the world's religious
communities." (ibid, XViii).
Feminists and women theologians are now beginning to consider the religious experience of women as distinct, although when we speak of religious experience, we are dealing with a topic which has long been problematic in social analysis. For some it implies an extraordinary moment of revelation, for others it may be present in the monotony of everyday activities. It generally indicates something that is unique and individual. Which, as Tonkin says, "no one can experience for anyone else" (1983, 166).

Nancy Falk and Rita Gross point out that two predominant themes emerge from their cross cultural study of the religious lives among women. Firstly, there is a contrast between extraordinary callings of women and the everyday concerns in women's religious lives. The ordinary calling of women in traditional societies around the world has been that of a wife and a mother. Women's religion can either call women away from the ordinary venture to the enterprises that are unusual for both men and women or it can validate and support women in their ordinary roles as mothers and wives. Secondly, that religious systems vary dramatically in their accommodation of or hostility to both extraordinary women and women called to fulfill ordinary roles. This accommodation or hostility could be either overt or covert and has a definite mark on its cultural system.

Studies on Hindu religion, by and large, show that although religious texts reveal 'male' views on the nature
of women's religious lives, but they also provide the 'voices' of women themselves. (J. Leslie, 1983; Bynnum, 1991). However case studies of everyday life show that Hindu religion is largely accommodating towards the ordinary roles and extraordinary roles of women. In, 'Women, Fertility and the Worship of Gods in a Hindu Village' (1983), Catherine Thompson challenges the often stated view that Hindu women have a low ritual status and are therefore excluded from religious worship. In the village that she describes in her study, women participate in the worship of Gods far more frequently than men. Menstruation and child birth can be seen to make women impure and polluting in some ritual contexts but in others the same physiological processes enable women to become important mediators between men and Gods. Papers, such as, 'Hindu Women's Family and Household Rites in a North Indian Village' (1980) by Susan Wadley and 'The Ladies of Lord Krishna: Rituals of Middle Aged Women In Eastern India' (1980) by James Freeman show that whether or not they operate within a religious context that is overtly male dominated, the women in these studies seemed to make for themselves sufficient accommodation to their needs and aspirations. In, 'The Womb of Mind' (1990) Renuka Singh has explored the status experience among the women of Delhi. She writes that, "when religion is internalised at a purely ritualistic level i.e. when women live according to specific religious practices or
adopt the ideology, then religion most often oppresses the believer. If, however, one experiences religion as a spiritual evolution in terms of developing one's awareness and powers of one's mind, then religion helps women achieve a sense of liberation *(ibid, 113)*.

Studies on women saints or the exceptional women, especially in the Indian context, are few. In, *Mother Guru: Jnanananda of Madras* (1980), Charles White shows the dramatic pattern of discontinuity in which the Hindu woman guru altogether left behind her role as a mother and wife to follow an extraordinary calling as a guru. A.K. Ramanunja's paper *On Women Saints* (1984) shows that Indian women saints invert and even subvert the traditional ideals of womanhood embodied in such mythic figures such as Sita and Savitri, adopting different patterns altogether. Another interesting observation made by him is that although these women saints may fight males in husbands and priests, they may love a male God, and while doing so remain 'feminine', and in her love poetry they rejoice in this identity. A similar instance about femininity amongst exceptional women is put forth by Meena Khandelwal in *Ungendered Atma, Masculine Virility and Feminine Compassion: Ambiguities in Renunciant Discourses on Gender* (forthcoming), where she examines the women renouncers. Khandelwal says, that "rather than giving up their femininity when they take sanyasa, these women become mothers." *(ibid, 10)*
The assessment by women of their own religious and historical tradition, has exerted some influence on feminist concern with the lives of women in cultures where religion still plays a dominant role. Religious world views of the past have been influential in shaping women's perceptions of themselves and this is particularly important to their sexuality, sociality and spirituality.

SECTION III

A considerable body of the literature that we have reviewed in the previous sections deals with the notions related to the organisational aspect of religion, especially Hinduism. In this study the public aspect of the religious life of the Kashmiri Pandits has been examined. Kashmiri Pandits are the only Hindu community in India who lived as a minority in the Kashmir Valley of the Jammu and Kashmir state till 1990. It is also unique as, unlike other Hindu communities, it is marked by the absence of a varna system or an elaborate caste system. The community has two brahmin subcastes-the Gors (priests) and the Karkuns (non-priests), which traditionally neither intermarried nor interdined. However, both the groups are referred to as the Kashmiri Pandits. Each individual member of the community is a Saraswat Brahmin; they follow the shrutis and are called the Shraut Karmis. Their veda is Krishna Yajur Veda and their grihsutra is Laugaksha. The Pandits are Shaivites and believe in the Trika philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism. In
practice, they worship the Shiva-Shakti. The Brahmins of Kashmir are divided into 199 exogamous gotras, each taking its name and claiming descent from a rishi. In addition they recognize an internal distinction between malamasis and banamasis - these terms refer to the astrological calendar used by the two divisions. The former base their astrological calculations on the phases of the moon, while the latter use the solar calendar. According to some historians, malamas Brahmins are the descendants of the eleven families that survived the reign of Sultan Sikindar, while banamas Brahmins are descendants of those families that returned to Kashmir during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin. Other historians state that malamas is the name given to the descendants of Kashyapa - the sage responsible for the creation of Kashmir Valley, whereas the descendants of the Brahmins who came to the valley from other parts of India are referred to as banamas. The above mentioned divisions, however, are not hierarchical and do not involve any restrictions on inter-marriage or commensality. In the past Kashmiri Pandits migrated outside the valley either due to religious fanaticism of the cruel rulers or to seek economic betterment. In most cases these migrations were economically fruitful for them as they did well individually outside the valley. However, these people suffered a severe cultural setback as they lost their language, customs as well as the physical connection with the land of their birth. (K. Pant,
Though known as 'Kashmiri Pandits' outside the valley, they became culturally distinct from the Kashmiri Pandits in the valley and came to be known as 'Bhata-Punjabi' (Bhatas or Pandits with an influence of Punjabis or non-Kashmiris).

In the recent migration of 1990 the Kashmiri Pandits of the valley witnessed a holocaust again as they were driven out of the valley. Having lost in terms of land and property like the Bhata-Punjabis of yore what a common Pandit now feared was a loss of identity. F. Barth shows that immigrants choose to emphasise one level of identity among the several provided by the heritage. He indicates that tribe, caste, language, region or state all have features that make them a potentially adequate primary ethnic identity group for reference. (We should add religion to the list as one of the components). He emphasises the necessity of the decision by the leaders of the community when he sees that which level of identity is chosen will depend on the "cold tactical facts and the readiness with which others inside and outside the group can be led to embrace and recognise these identities." (Barth, 1969: 33-34). The Kashmiri Pandits are in diaspora and they search for a cultural bond. At a global level this is done by organising
seminars, rallies and conferences to draw the attention of
the world towards their plight. Territorial settlement too
is being sought through the 'Panun Kashmir' movement. The
community is coming closer to share the concern over the
need to form and preserve its identity. They are organising
religious ceremonies and festivals. Contributions are made
to construct the temples and the ashrams which stand as a
symbol of the community's togetherness. As the religious
organisations are reforming and reorganising actively there
is a considerable increase in the number of people now
associated with them. Through religion the Kashmiri Pandit
community is deriving faith to face this crisis. Deriving
strength from their religious life the Kashmiri Pandits face
the uncertainties of whether they would go back to the
valley or not; whether to blame the governments (both
central and the state) or the forces which created the
secessionists or a particular community with whom they share
a history of mutual tolerance. Moreover through religion
these people prepare strategies of adaptation in a new
environ amidst new people and different cultures.

2. An organisation of migrant Kashmiri Pandits, dominated
by youth, seeking to regain for Kashmiri Pandit
community, the lost glory, dignity and honour in its
own Homeland in an area north-east of river Jhelum (the
Vitasta) with Union Territory status for the seven lakh
Kashmiri Pandits, territorial and cultural oneness of
India and compactness and homogeny of Kashmiri
Pandits.
SECTION IV

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims at providing detailed ethnographic information about the growth and development of three modern religious sects which play an important role in the lives of migrant Kashmiri Pandit community at Jammu. We see here that how due to displacement and emigration there is a modification in what these sects stood for in the past, in terms of the changes in the expectations of the followers, the pressures which build from the new environment and how these sects cope with these problems. As a part of the study, we hope to examine how these sects identify their religious values, such as the notions of auspiciousness and non-renunciation, as well as the religious phenomena like charisma and participation of women in religious activities. These sects differ not in terms of fundamental constituent elements but in the ways these elements are interrelated in various patterns.

The thesis makes a contribution to the study of role of religion, in the formation and preservation of personal and group identity, as well as, in providing a strategy to adapt in new situation created due to emigration.

Many secular organisations also contribute to identity formation and there are many Kashmiri Pandits who do not participate in religious activities. Immigration provides
freedom to break religious ties as well as reformulate them. However, few of the immigrants from Kashmir are vocally antireligious even though some complain about the rapid increase in the growth of the religious organisations and the waste of money in costly construction of religious shrines and ashrams when the community needs a financial base for building a secure future. However, it is difficult to identify those among the immigrants who could provide the counter point in the study of the role of religion. This study covers only a part of the emigrants, those who attend the religious ceremonies and are members of religious organisations. Religion for them is important in adapting to the new situation as well as in the formation and preservation of their personal and group identity. Religious commitment and ties, including ties to families and religious leaders of Kashmir provide for continuity with the past which is essential to identity.

The importance of our study is underscored by the nature of the field area in which it is set. The recent displacement and forced migration from Kashmir valley, of the Kashmiri Pandits, has rendered most of them homeless. They have emigrated to other places within the state or elsewhere in the country and abroad.

AREA OF STUDY

This thesis is based on field work conducted while living in Jammu City over a period of 14 months in the years
1993-94. Jammu city is the winter capital of the Jammu and Kashmir state and situated on one of the spurs of the rugged hills overlooking the plains and the river Tawi. The city is about 300 metres above sea level. According to the 1981 census its population was 2,06,135. The history of Jammu dates back to the epic period. In the ancient times Jammu was one of the 22 tiny Dogra principalities founded by Rajput adventurers from Oudh and Delhi. These Rajputs had moved up to North, at the time of Alexander’s invasion to oppose the Greeks. The two lakes, Mansar and Siroinsar, have given to the inhabitants of Jammu the name 'Dogra', a corruption of the Sanskrit 'Dogirath' (two lakes). The earliest mention of Jammu in recorded history is in connection with Taimur’s invasion in 1398 A.D. when the Rajput rulers of Jammu and the other principalities sank their differences to face the foreign invasion. During the Mughal rule Jammu retained its independence under the Rajput rulers who became Mughal feudatories. During the Sikh rule in the neighbouring areas of Punjab and Kashmir valley, Jammu kept on slipping in and out of the control of local feudatories. In 1815, the Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh gave away the principality of Jammu to one of his outstanding military commanders, Gulab Singh, who was originally from Jammu. Jammu now came under Gulab Singh. In 1846, Gulab Singh added Kashmir to his empire, and founded a separate Kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir, with its summer capital at Srinagar.
city and the winter capital at Jammu city.

Jammu is inhabited by the Hindu Dogras who are divided into several castes. They speak the Dogri language, a mixture of Sanskrit, Persian and Punjabi and has origin in the Indo-Aryan branch of Sanskrit. The Dogra Brahmins are mainly engaged in agriculture with a minority among them officiating as the priestly class. The Dogra Rajputs have traditionally made army their profession. Apart from these two castes Jammu is inhabited by the Khatris and Mahajans who are originally of Punjabi stock. They follow a sedentary occupation like trade and commerce. Dogra Harijans comprise another large segment of the population. They are agriculturists and some pursue semi-skilled professions including the cobblers and scavengers. Among the Muslims who are in a minority, the 'Chibbalis' and the 'Sudans' are of Rajput origin and a martial race.

The prominent feature of the socio-cultural life of the city are its temples; Jammu is known as the city of temples. These temples built in large members from ancient times were restored and a large number was added to them under the Dogra rulers. These temples are dedicated to the chief deities of Hindu Pantheon like Shiva, Rama, Krishna and goddess Durga. The people of Jammu also worship the 'Peer Baba' - these are tombs of Muslim Saints probably of some sufi order of medieval times. There are seven Peer Babas in the Jammu city whose worship is practised by the Dogra
Hindus and Muslims with great fervour.

In the post-Independence era political discontentment has engulfed Jammu as a consequence of the perceived dominance of the Kashmir valley in the affairs of the entire state. The people of Jammu have been simmering with discontent and craving for autonomy. The main cause of tension, irritation and occasional agitations in Jammu is the feeling of political neglect, religious and ethnic discrimination and the hegemony of the valley-based administration.

KASHMIRI PANDITS IN JAMMU

In 1947, when Maharaja Hari Singh the descendant of founder Gulab Singh, acceded to India, Jammu and Kashmir became a separate state in the Indian dominion. The state had its summer capital at Srinagar and the winter capital at Jammu city. Since that time many Kashmiri Pandits who were holding government jobs came to Jammu to work and lived here with their families. The group consisted of people in professions like medicine, engineering, teaching, banks, public works department, irrigation and so on. These men had been born and mostly educated in the valley and were married to the women who had come away from the valley only after their marriage. These Kashmiri Pandits had ancestral properties and most of their relatives in the various parts of the Kashmir Valley with whom they were in regular touch.
They visited the valley often on various social, cultural and religious occasions. They married their children into the Kashmiri Pandit families in the valley; the marriages were mostly held in Srinagar itself. Their main reason for migration to Jammu was the economic necessity. Initially most of them expected and looked forward to return to the valley after their retirement from service. However, with time things changed (details in Chapter-II). Political conditions as well as the socio-economic compulsions in the valley made them review their plans of return to the valley for good. Meanwhile, in Jammu too, opportunities soon came their way and they purchased land and built houses. As the Jammu City grew these Kashmiri Pandits settled down here and became prosperous. Their children grew up and sought to settle in Jammu or outside the Jammu and Kashmir state rather than go back to the valley. Prior to 1990 there were 35000 Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu who maintained contact and had links with Kashmir. Although a socio-cultural organisation called Kashmiri Pandit Sabha had been set up at Rehari, Jammu its main function did not extend beyond providing for the methods of disposal of the dead according to the Kashmiri Pandit Karmakand and occasionally organising a religious hawan etc.

In 1990 due to the rise in terrorism in the Kashmir Valley, the Kashmiri Pandit community migrated en masse, most of them seeking shelter in and around Jammu, where they
began to live in camps as well as in the rented houses.

**REASONS FOR SELECTING JAMMU**

Jammu is clearly a special place of considerable historical interest. One of the reasons for selecting it as the site for field work is its proximity to Kashmir valley, being a part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The primary reason is that the bulk of about 3.5 lakh Kashmiri Pandit emigrants who had to flee the valley in 1990, are staying in Jammu city and around it. (T.N. Kaul, In, 'The Tribune (Chandigarh) November 11, 1995; B.S. Jamwal, in, 'The Times of India' (Delhi) April 3, 1996; M.K. Teng and C.L. Gadoo, in, 'White Paper On Kashmir' published by Joint Human Rights Commission). The other reason relates to the visibility of the processes of various religious activities that the emigrants are involved in. The Kashmiri Pandits re-grouped and re-formed their religious groups in which they gathered in large numbers and built sacred buildings which now dot the landscape of Jammu. These religious organisations made regular requests for support and furthermore they were successful in gaining allegiance and contributions to support many programmes, activities and building projects. Jammu became the base for re-establishing the religious organisations from where they spread to the other parts of the country and abroad.
THE DATA

In this thesis we have selected three religious organisations to be studied. These are - The Bhagwan Gopinath Ashram, The Ishwar Ashram, and the Govind Kaul - Kamlawati Ashram. Although there were other religious organisations too, which functioned actively in Jammu, for the convenience of the study, we had to restrict the number to three. The main criteria for the selection of these three sects are -

1) that they are headed by a Kashmiri Pandit, man or woman, the preceptor of these groups.

2) The following in each of the groups is large and chiefly comprises emigrant Kashmiri Pandits.

3) The three groups quickly settled in Jammu City. Each built its own ashram where it held regular congregations and celebrations in accordance with its traditions.

The Bhagwan Gopinath Ashram was a well established religious group in Srinagar, where prior to the migration of 1990, it had an ashram and was looked after by a registered trust. It was the first ashram of its kind which had installed a marble statue of its preceptor which was worshipped by thousands of devotees. Most of these devotees migrated from Srinagar in 1990, leaving behind a locked ashram. At Jammu the new ashram was built in the very same year of migration and was ready for the public in May 1991.
The Ishwar Ashram established its ashram-cum-temple complex in June 1993 at Jammu, where it functions under a trust. Prior to the migration the Ishwar Ashram, which was established by its preceptor in Srinagar, functioned as a famous centre for the learning of Shiva-Trika Philosophy. Although most of the devotees had left Srinagar in 1990, their preceptor, Lakshmanji continued to stay back with some of his devotees. These devotees continued to stay on, even after the death of Lakshmanji in September, 1991. The Ishwar Ashram is the only religious organisation with links in Kashmir.

The Govind Kaul-Kamlavati Ashram is headed by a woman preceptor and is the only organisation which had an ashram at Jammu prior to the migration. With the migration an influx of large number of devotees from Kashmir, the ashram was extended to accommodate the same. The group follows the Radhasoami philosophy, although it has no formal ties with any Radhasoami sect. The group mainly comprises women householders. It is the only group with a fair share of the devotees who lived in Jammu prior to the migration.

THE TECHNIQUE

The data is studied using the historio-analytical method to ascertain the potentially useful paradigms for studying the religious life and practices of an emigrant community. The main research technique employed was
participant-observation at the level of each ashram and at a more general level in the everyday life of the members of these sects, as expressed in the form of religious and cultural events such as the marriages, pilgrimage, meetings, rallies etc. In addition, a certain degree of involuntary participant-observation of an agitation by the local people of Jammu, against the admission of emigrant students to the medical college and other educational institutions, extended the scope of the field experience. The information gathered by this method was complemented by two specific types of inquiries. First was the informal and unstructured interviews with the group of subjects, such as the new comers to these sects, the office-bearers, the youth, the intellectuals and the leaders of the Kashmiri Pandit community (political as well as socio-cultural). The second source was a survey carried out at the level of individual devotees (60 in each group) who are regular in attending the congregations and the celebrations of these groups. Both the interview and the questionnaire were devised to generate qualitative information along with some basic quantitative data.

I was engaged in the field work at Jammu from October 1993 and participated simultaneously in the activities of the three sects. At the Bhagwan Gopinath Ashram, congregation for the daily aarti is held from 5 PM to 6 PM. On the first Sunday of every month, a homa is held from 4 PM
to 5 PM, in addition to the usual aarti. At the Ishwar Ashram, the Sunday Puza is organised on every Sunday in two phases. From 9 AM to 11 AM recitations are held from the various Shaiva texts, followed by the formal classes on Kashmir Shaivism, which are conducted from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. The ashram remains open on all the days from 9 AM to 12 noon in the mornings and from 4 PM to 9 PM in the evenings to enable the devotees to hold recitations from their sacred texts and perform aarti. At the Govind Kaul-Kamlawati Ashram, the satsang is held on every Sunday from 2 PM to 6 PM. Apart from this, the three sects follow elaborate calendar of festivals. (Details in Chapters III, IV and V).

Although the field work ended in December 1994, I made subsequent trips to the field in 1995 as well, in order to fill in the gaps that were left during the earlier stay. Moreover, I interviewed the Delhi based devotees (especially the office bearers) of these sects as well as visited the Delhi ashrams of the Bhagwan Gopinath Ashram and the Ishwar Ashram.

During may enquiries in the Govind Kaul-Kamlawati Ashram and the Ishwar Ashram, I realised that not being an initiate was an impediment, because some of the important practices in these groups are disclosed only to the initiates. Moreover, on the question of funding and finances in general, the Bhagwan Gopinath Ashram and the Kamlawati Ashram were not forthcoming. Nevertheless apart
from these minor problems, the members of the three groups were generally helpful in allowing me to participate in their sacred worlds.

**SCHEME OF STUDY**

The Chapter I of this study titled, *Introduction*, has been divided into four sections. In these sections we have discussed the broad concepts used in this thesis and situated them within a general body of literature on the sociology of religion. This has been followed by the statement on the objective of the study, the methodology used in the field work and a brief chapter outline of this study.

Chapter II, 'History of Kashmiri Pandit Religion: An Overview', is a prelude to the next three chapters, which basically, as the name of the chapter indicates is an attempt to trace the historical perspective in which the religious sects have emerged amongst the Kashmiri Pandits. The chapter is divided into four sections which broadly correspond to the influence of the particular religion practised by those in power. Needless to say, the religion of the rulers was not the only factor affecting the course that religion was taking in the valley. Nevertheless, the dominant religion (understood here to mean the religion of the rulers) does provide us with a convenient basis on which to divide the different periods for study. As religion
is influenced by the attitude of the state with regard to societal matters, there is more to the basis of periodisation than mere convenience.

In Chapter III of the study, entitled, 'Deification of a Guru : Devotion And Spirituality In The Bhagwan Gopinath Ashram', we have given the ethnographic details of the Bhagwan Gopinath group. The chapter is divided into three sections. In this group it is the 'unconditional surrender' to the preceptor, Gopinathji, which underlies the apparent activities. Only by surrendering unconditionally, the devotees can partake in Gopinathji's anugrih which he performs through his miracles. To strengthen this bond of give and take between the guru and themselves, a whole network of social activities are undertaken by them which include the aarti, the feasts and the social service activities.

Chapter IV, 'Transmission Of A Sacred Tradition : Worship Through Learning In The Ishwar Ashram' gives us an indepth insight into the philosophy, organisation and practice in the Ishwar Ashram. At the Ishwar Ashram it is the practice of dedicated study of Shaiva texts, to attain the self realisation, which is emphasised. For this the devotees come together on several occasions throughout the year.

In chapter V, 'Women's Religious Experiences :
Householders In The Govind Kaul - Kamlawati Ashram', we examine yet another religious sect which revolves around the charismatic personality of its guru, Kamlawatiji. The life blood of the Govind Kaul - Kamlawati Ashram, is the sacred formula (shabad) whispered in the householder’s ear by the guru at the time of initiation. All the activities performed by the sect - like participation in satsang, recitation of the lilas which contain esoteric meaning, intimate contact with the guru etc. - can be understood within this matrix.

Finally, in Chapter VI, some concluding observations are made which state the various findings in the light of the analysis of the ethonographic work on the three sects, in terms of the sociological theories. In addition to the findings, this study also raises some questions which could be helpful to the future study on religion in diaspora. No attempt is made at providing comprehensive solutions to the fundamental problems that are identified.