Several works have been written on the Radha Soami Faith by its followers. The primary object of these writings has been to spread the teachings of the Faith. However, they are not comprehensive and lack in analytical approach. Professor Agam Prasad Mathur is the first who has produced a scholarly work on the subject. But his book entitled Radha Soami Faith: A Historical Study, (Delhi, 1974), is mainly concerned with the activities of the Agra Centre and its first three Gurus. There is no comprehensive work so far as the spread and development of the Radha Soami Faith in the Punjab, Haryana and Delhi is concerned. What were the reactions of the people when this Movement was first started in the Punjab by Baba Jaimal Singh? What were its relations with the Agra Centres? What are its cardinal teachings? How did it differ from other socio-religious movements such as the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj and the Namdhari Movement? Why was it opposed by the orthodox minded Sikhs? These are interesting, albeit, intricate questions in the socio-religious history of the Punjab which this study endeavours to answer. Thus the subject is fit for a scientific enquiry.
Soon after its conquest by the British Indian Government, in 1849, the Punjab was exposed to Western influence. The West and its new ideas generated a new atmosphere in the Land of the Five Rivers. They produced deep impact on the socio-religious life of the people. Inevitably, they also produced an equally strong reaction, because West came to the Punjab in the form of an alien rule; Western philosophy, cultural values and institutions were looked upon as challenging the earlier social order in the province. That set the socio-religious leaders of the Punjab at thinking and numerous movements made their appearance in the nineteenth century. These movements affected all the three major communities inhabiting the Punjab viz., the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs.

The most prominent of these movements were the Nirankari and Nanakhi among the Sikhs, and Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj among the Hindus. Almost all of them sought to improve the socio-religious order but could not succeed on account of various reasons. The Arya Samaj and Nanakhi movements tried to reform the society from within, but soon got lost in morass of political activity. The Brahma Samaj did not produce much impact for different reasons. However, it may be mentioned that these movements prepared people for a change even when they themselves did not succeed in achieving the object.
A new socio-religious and spiritual movement, namely, the Radha Soami Movement started in the Punjab in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Having been founded by Seth Shiv Dayal Singh at Agra in the United Provinces in 1861, it came to the Punjab in 1891. In that year was established its first centre at Beas, under the leadership of one of Seth Shiv Dayal Singh’s disciples, Baba Jaimal Singh. The latter made every effort to popularise the Movement among the Punjabis. As his approach and activities were not liked by other religious reformers in the state, he incurred their wrath. However, the Radha Soami Movement survived their attacks and with the passage of time it became popular.

The cardinal object of this Movement was to bring persons belonging to different communities on one common platform and to revive and spread the forgotten teachings of the Sant-Mat in the Punjab. Its main characteristics were, as indeed they are even now, true love and devotion. It revived the medieval Bhakti trend and ancient Guru tradition, when it insisted that salvation could only be achieved with the help of a living Guru. It represented a new version of God, characterised as ‘Radha Soami’ and introduced a well defined method of practice of ancient Surat Shabd Yoga to the seekers of truth. According to the Gurus of this Movement, not only an ascetic but also a man living in family can practise this yoga easily. Vegetarian diet, total abstinence
from alcoholic drinks, high moral living and regular daily
meditation are other essentials which are to be strictly
followed by the disciples.

No doubt, the Movement in the Punjab was started by
Baba Jaimal Singh but it was Maharaj Sawan Singh, who
systematized it. The latter succeeded spiritual Gaddi in
1903. That is why the year 1903 has been taken as the
starting point of this study. The Movement flourished under
the able and inspiring guidance of the successors of Maharaj
Sawan Singh. By 1974, it was consolidated in the Punjab,
Haryana and Delhi. In that year Sant Kirpal Singh, a disciple
of Maharaj Sawan Singh, who had established his centre in
Delhi, left for his heavenly abode. Hence 1974 is the end-
point of this study. But it may be mentioned that the
Movement is making progress even after 1974.

There has been dearth of the sources on this subject.
The National Archives of India, New Delhi, Punjab State
Archives, Patiala, and Haryana State Archives, Chandigarh,
do not have much material on the subject. This is
understandable the Radha Soami Movement, unlike other
contemporary socio-religious movements such as the Arya
Samaj and the Nmaehari movements, did not have political
overtones and hence the British Indian Government was not
much concerned with it. However, all other sources have been
consulted; most prominent of these are the records of Radha
Soami Satsang Beas Centre (Punjab), records of Dera Radha Soami Baba Bagga Singh Tarn Taran (Punjab), records, posters and pamphlets of Ruhani Satsang Sauan Ashram (Delhi), records of Sacha Sauda centre Sirsa (Haryana), records of Saidpur centre (Punjab) and the records of their sub-centres in the Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. In addition, the records of Shitomani Gurduara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar, the Revenue records and the records of Civil Courts of various districts have also been consulted. Besides, personal interviews with various prominent persons, including the Heads, Secretaries, Presidents, Managers and closest disciples of various centres of this Movement were conducted. In addition, I have tried to seek information through correspondence from educated Radha Soamis in India, U.S.A. and South Africa. The writer has also consulted the private papers of prominent persons in the region who had something to do with the Movement. Government records such as - Census Reports of the Punjab, Imperial Gazetteer of India, District Gazetteers of Punjab, Settlement Reports, Administrative Reports, Reports on native newspapers, etc. have also been used. In addition, Journals and Newspapers in Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, English have also been consulted.

Every effort has been made to collect the relevant information from various original sources mentioned above.
It has been, indeed, a difficult task. Care has also been taken to explain the meanings of the technical words used in the text in the brackets. However, to make the narrative intelligible, a glossary is given at the end. The graphs, maps and charts have also been prepared to show the growth and development of the Radha Soami Movement both in India and abroad.
Adopted from the Handbook of The Punjab, Western Rajputana, Kashmir and Upper Sindh (London, 1883).