Women Empowerment in its simplest form means the manifestation of realization of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance. It is both a process and the rest of the process. It is transformation of structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate under gender discrimination. It is a process that enables women to gain access to and control of material as well as information resources. The concept of women's empowerment throughout the world has its root in women's movement.

The government of India announced a National Policy for Empowerment of Women 2001, to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women belonging to weaker groups, including Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Castes. This policy reiterated the commitments made in the Ninth Five Year Plan in a more focused way, namely, that poverty equalization schemes should be implemented in an improved manner keeping the 'women' component in mind.

It also reviewed the impact of globalization on women. It was pointed out that there is a need for refraining policies for access to employment and quality of employment. The Empowerment Policy –2001 also highlighted the efficacy of resource management but it ignored the critical element of addressing land and gender issues.

Throughout the women's decade and thereafter the government's support for grass-root empowerment was hesitant, fragmented, discontinuous and experimental. Government functionaries responsible for programme implementation did not get much or no exposure to face to
face dialogue with grass-root women. They depended heavily for this purpose on NGOs wherever they existed.

The Gram Panchayats were created in Himachal Pradesh, which came into existence in 1948, by adopting Punjab Village Panchayats Act, 1939 in 1949. Panchayati Raj was set up here in 1954 as a result of the enactment of the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1953. This Act created a three tier structure of Panchayati Raj with the Gram Panchayats at the base, Tehsil Panchayats in the middle and Zila Parishads at the top. Now, the Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 has been implemented according to the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution (1992).

The present study is an effort to examine women empowerment in one state, that is, Himachal Pradesh. Even if it can not be generalized for the whole country, it is an initiation towards an evaluation of the participatory role of elected women representatives in rural local government.