Chapter-1

INTRODUCTION
This is study of empowerment of Muslims through Panchayati Raj Institution since the Muslims form a disadvantaged and marginalized community in India which is behind all other communities except SCs and STs in all most all indicators of developments. In the discourse on development across the world, the term empowerment has gained currency during the last few decades. The mid 1980s saw the term empowerment becoming popular in the field of development especially in reference to disadvantaged and marginalized groups. More recently, the word has entered the vocabulary of development agencies such as United Nation. Empowerment is a widely used term both in popular and scholarly literature but it is loosely used. Its meaning often seems hazy and unclear and it is not properly defined. A review of literature suggests that while there has been much debate at the theoretical level as to what empowerment comprises of but, there has been little primary research at the grassroots level to contribute to our understanding of what empowerment means in everyday terms. The definitions of the empowerment given by various authors are necessary in order to operationalise the term so that it can be used for these studies.
Various authors on empowerment emphasize change in power relation as in the following definitions.

According to Sahay (1998: 18) “The process of challenging existing power relation, and gaining greater control over the resources of power, may be termed as “empowerment”. According to Batliwala (1995) “The process of challenging power relation, and of gaining greater control over the resources, may be termed as empowerment”. According to Parthasarthi (2002: 17) “Empowerment is all about power for so long powerless and changing hitherto biased balanced of power”. According to Morgan and Boolman (1989: 197). The concept of empowerment has been defined as a spectrum of political activity ranging from acts of individuals resistance to mass political mobilization that challenge the basic power relations in our society. The concept connotes attempt to change the social and economic institution that embody the basic power relation in our society. According to Barker (1991: 74) Empowerment as the process of helping a group or community to achieve political influence or relevant legal authority. According to Sharma (1991), the term “empowerment” refers to a range of activities from individuals self assertion of collective resistance protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations. According to Beteille (1999:591) “.....the main point
behind empowerment is that it seeks to change society through re-
Empowerment is an ongoing and dynamic process, which enhances
women’s and other marginalized and alienated group’s abilities to
change the structures and ideologies that keep them subordinate. . . .
Empowerment is therefore clearly concerned with power, and
particularly with power relation and the distribution of power between
individuals and groups.

Other authors on empowerment elaborate the concept by
emphasizing capacity for greater participation in decision making and
greater control over resources as in the following definitions.

According to Sahay (1998:22) “Empowerment is a process of
awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to
greater decision –making power and control, and to transformative
action”. According to Zippy (1995) Empowerment represents a means
for accomplishing community development tasks and can be
conceptualized as involving two key elements giving community
members the authority to make decision and choices and facilitating
the development of the knowledge and resources necessary to exercise
these choices. According to Barker (1991) Empowerment is often
described as building community capacity which involves enhancing
the aptitude of community groups to procure and manage social and economic resources. According to Momin (2004: 8) "Empowerment refers to the enhancement of people's capability to acquire control over personal, economic, social, political, and cultural resources in order to improve their life situation". According to Gupta (2004) "Empowerment has been understood as a process of participation in decision making that enhance the ability of disadvantages and powerless individual to enhance their self confidence and willingness to participate equally in economic and political activity"

These all definitions refer to bringing about change in power relation and capacity for greater participation in decision making and greater control over resources.

Since power is the root of term empowerment' it is necessary to define power. The concept of power in political sociology can be understood by Max Weber who had the largest influence on the sociological study of power to which he assigned a wide significance in every social domain. Weber off quoted definition of power is as follows: "In general, we understand by power the chances of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action. The conception of power referred to above is that power which some have
over others correspondents to what may be called the zero-sum approach to power. Some have power to the extent that others are without it, the more power some have, the less other have of it. Hence empowerment refers to the process by which those with no power or less power are able to gain power.

Empowerment is derived from the word “power” as used above. The prefix “em” attached to the noun “power” to create a verb. According to Webster’s NEW World Dictionary (1982) this prefix is used to form verb meaning to make, make into or like, cause to be. Yet the actual definition offered for Empower are to give power or grant power, give ability to, enhance permit. This definition all refers to a process where by power is given gained or permitted. Yet, power must be developed or take by the powerless themselves as well as being granted. It is possible for individuals or groups to empower themselves as well as being the recipient of power given by others. The definition of empower as transitive verb relates back to the connection of the prefix “em” to the noun power. This can be defined as to gain power, to develop, to give, grant power. The noun empowerment which is not listed in Webster’s New World Dictionary (1982) refers to the process by which power gained, developed or given. A people moves from condition of relative powerlessness to relative power through the
empowerment process. Thus the disadvantaged and marginalized groups get power through the process of empowerment. This process is used for disadvantaged and marginalized groups to bring about change in power relation and capacity for greater participation in decision making and greater control over resources.

India is a plural society which is multi-religious and multi-ethnic. It is divided into communities and community based identities on language, religion, cast and tribe. These communities vary in terms of socio-economic profile with some communities being marginalized. There are substantial differences in socio-economic and demographic profiles of major religious communities in India, mainly resulting from socio-cultural and historical reasons. This is the case with Muslims in India. Although they have wage progress since independence and especially since the late 1980s. They remains far below the national average in almost all areas of life. Though they are largest minority in India because of large absolute numbers, though percentage wise they are minority given that India is host to the 2nd largest population in the world exceeding one billion (Sheriff & Azam, 2004:7-8). In India Muslim are economically as well as politically marginalized. This manifested in the grossly disproportionate representation of the community in parliament and state legislatures,
in the central and state Government, in the police and Para –military forces, in the judiciary and bureaucracy, in the public and private sectors, in the higher professions and in institution of higher learning (Siddiqui, 2004:i). The reason given by the Muslims is lack of Governments concern about development of community. But others emphasis the Muslims mentality of defeatism and motivational deficit as the reason for the marginalization. Whatever its reason may be, it must be said that no country can be stable and progressive if substantial sections of its population fail to keep pace with the rest and remained marginalized.

The empowerment of the Muslims is thus crucial for the country because this is the only way in which this disadvantaged and marginalized group can secure its rightful place in a democratic framework and keep pace with others communities in development. The empowerment of Muslims will bring about change in power relation and give them capacity for greater participation in decision making and greater control over resources. One way to bring about the empowerment of Muslim or any such marginalized group in Indian society is by giving them representation in the strategic institution which would make democracy and development real and effective (Beteille, 1999:596). Such institutions are the parliament state
legislatures and Panchayati Raj Institution and adequate representation of Muslims in these would insure the proper functioning of democracy and bring about their development. Democracy depends on people participation at the grass root level. Empowerment of the Muslims through Panchayati Raj Institution can also be a mechanism for their development. Therefore a study of the extend of participation of the Muslims in the PRIs will indicate the extent to which democracy is successful at the grassroots level. The empowerment of the Muslim through Panchayati Raj Institution will also the way by which the development of the community can be ensure. This is the reason for making this study of the extent of empowerment of the Muslims through PRIs in a district of Bihar.