Chapter-5

Setting

and

Field Work
The District: Aligarh (The Area under study)

The Aligarh district of Western Uttar Pradesh is located in a fertile agriculture area of Ganga-Yamuna Doab. It extends from 27°29' North latitude to 28°11' North Latitude and 27°29' East longitude to 78°38' East longitude and is situated 135 km North of Agra on Delhi-Calcutta Railway and Grand Trunk District of Bulandshahr, on the North Ganga separates it from District Badaun, on the East and South-East lies in the District of Mathura, and on the west it is separated from Haryana by the river Yamuna. The greatest length of the District is about 120 km from Yamuna to Ganga near the Northern border and the maximum breadth from North to south is some 72km (Singh 1987:1). Physiographically the area consists of the vast alluvial plain having a gentle slope from North to South and South-East. The highest point on the surface is about 640 feet above on the southern border. The elevation is about 640 feet above on the southern border the elevation is about 622 feet. The whole district present’s an almost level appearance and is remarkably homogenous in character. The land surface at places is varied by several depression and elevations. These depressions have resulted from the action of the surface water, the elevated portions in the form of sand ridges are remnants of deposition.
The general topographical layout is therefore very similar to that of the doeb, and on the basis of the alluvial and old alluvium. The former is confined to the terraces and flood plains of the river and their tributaries. While the latter invariably occupies the higher ground above the flood level of the rivers. Thus in Aligarh District, from the low Yamuna flood plains in the west, the level rises to the high up land in the center and then further east it descends into a slight depression formed by Kali Nadi from Kali Nadi further east, the land again raises and finally merges into the Ganga flood plains. A cross section of the remaining portions of the district provides more or less the same features. An exception is, however, the broad depression which lies in the southeast of the District. Here along the right back of Kali Nadi the land, after an interviewing rise from a few miles, falls steadily to merge finally into the depression which extends over the whole tract of land up to the river Sirsa in the West. Of the river that flow in the area, Yamuna and Ganga barely touches the fingers and Kali Nadi is the only is the only important line of drainage. All other rivers are ephemeral in nature and freshets after a heavy downpour. Among such rivers are Karon, Sirsa, Senger and Nim (Amani 1976: XIII-XV).

According to the census of 2001 the total population of Aligarh District was 2,990,388 persons. In which male population was 1,607,222 and female population was 1,383,166. The sex ratio according to the
census of 2001 of Aligarh District was 861. The density of population was 798 persons per sq. km in 2001. The literacy in the district was 44.9 percent. Males are more literate than females being 259.9 percent and 26.8 percent respectively. The land owing and cultivating castes of the district are Brahmins and Jat. Lodha and Rajputs are relatively small land owner's and cultivators. The two castes – Baniya and Muslims are the trading and manufacturing castes besides Brahims and Jat, Yadav and Rajputs enjoy superior status in the district.

Aligarh District can be rightly called a rural district. It has only 25.15 percent urban population. The whole of population of the district lives in twelve blocks in which there are 1,749 villages and twenty township among which Aligarh is the District headquarters and chief urban center. Aligarh District reflects its picture of backwardness characterized by high density of population, illiteracy, crunch of financial resources, technological backwardness and very high dependence on agriculture and small fragmented agriculture holidays, resulting in low productivity, widespread unemployment and under unemployment.

**Universe of the Study: Lodha Block**

The universe of the study is lodha block of Aligarh District. The lodha block comprising of twelve (12) nayay panchyat (Judicial
Panchyat), which consist of 60 gram panchayat and 20 gram Panchayat were headed by women Pradhan. The total population of lodha block as per 2001 census was 200462 thousand in which male population was 108352 and female was 92110 respectively. The total literacy rate of lodha block according to 2001 census was 43.7 in which male was 59.9% and female was 26.8%. The lodha block of Aligarh District has been selected as the universe for two major reasons: first, the researcher being a resident of Aligarh District and had been interacting and observing women Pradhan participating in Panchayat Raj Institutions. Hence, it was considered worth while that for deep analysis the researchers experience could be usefully utilized. Secondly, the lodha block itself provides a fascinating field for research because most of the women Pradhan belong to different caste, age, educational levels and different socio-economic background etc.

**Research Design**

Research design is generally meant for deliberate anticipation of research so derive systematic and logically sound conclusion. Among its various aims, one of the important is to decide the data to be collected data to be organized. As research differ in terms of purposes, so designing of research can not be uniform. This present study is broadly concerned
with exploring the problem that whether the women are empowered through Panchayat Raj or not. This is the study of an area which has hitherto remain un explored, so there was need for exploratory Research Design. Exploratory research is mainly concerned with gaining familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insight into it, or to formulate a more precise research problem or to develop hypothesis (Wilkinson & Bhandurkar 1988; 103-104). It include two aspects, first is to define the population or to determine the universe of the study and second, is to select the samples which have almost all the major characteristics of the universe. Since this study was a exploratory study the purposive sampling method was used in order to select sample for the present study the researcher used purposive sample method. When the researcher deliberately or purposively select certain units for study from the universe it is known as purposive selection. In this type of sample selection, the choice of the selector is supreme and nothing is left to chance. It is more useful especially when some of the units are very important and, in the opinion of the researcher, must be included in the same. So, as we know that lodha Block comprasing of twelve nayay panchayat, for the purpose of study, the research took one women pradhan from every nayay panchayats. The basic assumption behind purposive sampling is the exercise of using sound judgement and
appropriate strategy so that the researcher can hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample and thus develop samples that are satisfactory in relation to research needs. A common strategy of purposive sampling is to pick cases that are judge to typical of the population in which one is interested. (Wilkinson & Bhandarkar 1984; 289-290). As far as Data collection is concerned the researcher used case study method with the help of interview-schedule and participant observation. Good & Halt (1952), had observed that the case study is not a specific technique. Different social scientists used case study method with a view of describing “qualitative” aspects of social life, which they thought, cannot be capture merely by statistical methods. This method is thought to be useful in probing many facets of social unit. In order to describe the characteristics of whole unit, some cases are selected with the assumption that they represent whole unit (Good & Hatt 1981: 314). In view of the fact this is an exploratory study design to gain familiarity with hitherto unexplored and to gain insights. The study could only be carried out through case study method. The researcher opted not to present the collected data in the statistical mode. Quantification did not appear to serve the purpose and consequently the case study method was adopted.

As mentioned earlier that the researcher used participant observation and interview-scheduled the techniques of data collection in
this study. Every researcher does observe the unit being studied in one way or other. Moreover, exploratory researches as ours are not possible without participating in the life of the people being studied or watching them closely. Participant observation helps researcher together sufficient information before starting to investigate according to the specific problem formulated. While employing participant observation, researcher generally faces two kinds of problems one of the problem of accessibility and acceptability among the people being observed. If the researcher is accepted by the people, second problem crises. It relates with the possibility of influencing the behaviour of the people by the presence of stranger that is may become conscious in reveling information, needed by the researcher. As far as interview schedule is concerned, the interview schedule mostly consist of structured open-ended questions. Interviews were conducted individually and free time of the respondent. Though questions were formulated in english, they were explained in the language of the people. Respondents were encouraged to give as mush as information as they desire. No intervention were made during the time of interview except at the time when respondent seemed to have some problem either in understanding question or formulating answers. The information converted through interview were simply described as far as possible in the same words.
Field work is the most crucial as well as difficult part of the research procedure. The success of field work depends on the confidence created by the investigator in the respondent. This depends, to a large extent, upon the nature of the information required. The drawback with women and especially of rural areas, about their personal, family, society matters, most of the respondents are obviously reluctant by themselves and many times women are not allowed by their husbands and their elder male family members to be interviewed. The main problem faced during the field work was to get appointment with the respondents. They often expressed their inconvenience to be interviewed during their working hour's many of them are busy in their house-hold activities and some of them went to the fields. To overcome this problem the investigator has fixed the appointment with every respondent in advance. After getting the permission for interview, the next problem that emerged was to obtain continued acceptability and rapport and proper responses for this purpose their local language was used as a medium of conversation, and every item of the schedule was explained to the respondent where ever they felt difficulty to understand its meaning and contents. Besides, at the outset, some questions of general nature were asked, and gradually they were reconciled to more personal questions. Some women were difficult to interview. They were not ready to give credence to the
educational purpose of our work. While some respondent openly refused to discuss their family life, many of them were brought round with great difficulty. It is to be noted here that at certain places the researcher found it very hard to elicit information because of the absence of the male member in the family and the women pradhan were quite suspicious in allowing outsider into their house. However, most of the respondent very co-operative when it was explained to them it was a purely academic study and nothing to do with governmental matters and their personal identity and other information would be held strictly confidential. Therefore, the investigator had to spend considerable time with each respondent to establish a rapport and win their confidence in order to collect the relevant information. After the collection of the data the next step is to sort out the information for processing. This is done to draw meaningful inference from the raw data which was collected through interview schedule. In this regard the following procedure was adopted in the present investigation. In other to understand the analysis of the data in the present work, it is necessary to keep briefly into the framework of interview schedule. This would enable to finding out variable and their associate questions. The analysis of the data has been done with the help of case studies. These cases have thrown light on the relevance of certain important aspects of the research topic under investigation.