Chapter 1

Introduction
The mid-1980’s saw the term ‘Empowerment’ becoming popular in the field of development especially in reference to women. More recently, the word has entered the vocabulary of development agencies such as United Nations. Empowerment is a widely used term both-in popular and scholarly literature but loosely used. It’s meaning often seems hazy and un-clear. The concept has been defined in different ways.

According to Karl (1995), “Empowerment is a process and not, therefore, something that can be given to people. The process of empowerment is both individual and collective, since it is through involvement in group that people most often begin to develop their awareness and ability to organize to take action and bring about change.” According to Gupta (2001), “Empowerment has been understood as a process of participation in decision-making that enhances the ability of disadvantage and power-less individual, to enhance their self-confidence and willingness to participate equally in economic and political system”. According to Matin (2003), “Empowerment may be understood as a process by which a group/community becomes aware of their rights and use it for enhancing their quality of life”. According to Bystydzieńki (1992), “Empowerment as a process by which oppressed persons gain some control over their lives by taking part with other’s in the
development activities and structures that allow people increased involvement in matters which affect them directly. According to Sahay (1998), “Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making and control, and to transformative action.” According to Bandura (1986), “Empowerment is the process through which individual gain efficiency, defined as the degree to which an individual perceives that he or she controls his or her environment.” According to Baltiwala (1995), “Empowerment can be understood as the process of challenging power relations, and of gaining greater control over the resources, may be termed as empowerment.” According to Sharma (1991), “The term empowerment refer’s to a ranges to activities from individual self-assertion to collective resistance. Protest and mobilization that challenge basic power relations.” According to Barker (1991), “Empowerment as a process of helping a group or community to achieve political influence or relevant legal authority.” According to Zippy (1995), “Empowerment represents a means for accomplishing community development tasks and can be conceptualized as involving two key element giving community members the authority to make decisions and choices and facilitating the development of the knowledge and resources necessary to exercise these choices.” According to Betelle (1999), “Empowerment is a way of
addressing the problem of right that remain un-inforced....the main point behind empowerment is that it seeks to change society through a re-arrangement of power.” These definition refer to Empowerment as a process by which people developed the ability or capacity to become aware of their rights and opportunities by sharing power and participating indecision making so as to control resources and circumstances and bring about change. Since, power is the root of the term ‘Empowerment’, it is necessary to define power.

The origin of the term ‘empowerment’ can be traced to the concept of power to see the relevance of its use for the study of people empowerment. The concept of power in political sociology can be best understood by max Weber who had the largest influence on the sociological study of power to which he assigned a wide significance in every major social domain. He wrote, “Now: classes’, ‘status groups’ and ‘parties’ are phenomena of the distribution of power with-in a community”. Weber off-quoted definition of power is as follows: “In general, we understand by ‘power’ the chance 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” (Weber 1978: 926). The conception of power referred to above-power as that which some have over other’s, corresponds to what may be called the zero-sum approach to
power. Some have power to the extent that other's are without it, the more power some have, the less other's have of it. The concept of empowerment becomes relevant when those in power share power with other's so that they participate in decision-making.

Empowerment is derived from the word “Power” as used above. The prefix “em” is 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”. Thus, “to empower” is to make or cause power. Yet, the actual definition offered for “empower” are “to give power or grant power, give ability to, enable, permit”. These definitions all refers to a process where by power is given gained, or permitted. Yet, power must be developed or taken by the powerless themselves, as well as being granted. It is possible both for individuals or groups to empower themselves as well as being the recipients of power bestowed by other’s. The definition of “empower” as a transitive verb relates back to the connection of the prefix “em” to the noun “Power”. This can be define as to gain Power, to develop power, to give, grant, or permit power. The noun “empowerment” which is not listed in Webster’s New World Dictionary (1982), refers to the process by which Power is gained, developed or given. A people moves from a condition of relative powerlessness to relative power through the
empowerment process. Those in power give power to other's who gain or develop power and so they are the recipients of power granted by the powerful. Those in power share power with other's so that they participate in decision making.

The history of people empowerment in modern India can be traced back to the period immediately after the mutiny of 1857 when Sir Syed Ahmad Khan wrote a book “Causes of Indian Pevolt” in which he pleaded for the participation of Indians in councils to bridge the gap between the people and the rulers in order to prevent such mutiny. Attempts for people participation in decision-making were made in pre-Independence period by then British viceroy lord Ripon (1882) in local-self-Government Act, Royal commission upon decentralization (1909) and Government of India Act, 1919. The question of representation of different population groups such as women was not considered and was limited to the resident male. This reflected the prevalent ideology of patriarchy which did not address the question of women's participation. It was Gandhiji un-equivocal support to the enfranchisement of women and their massive participation in National movement which led to the demand for immediate acceptance of adult franchise without sex discrimination which was accepted by the Indian National Congress in the Karachi session in 1931.
Attempts were made for people's empowerment in post-independence period by the constitution of India, Balwantray Mehta and Ashok committee reports. The promise of adult franchise without sex discrimination made by the congress earlier was fulfilled by Indian constitution. For granting equality to women in all spheres including their rights to vote. Article 40 of the Indian constitution stated the organization of panchayats as a directive principle of state policy but did not grantee political representation to women indecision making bodies. Both Balwantray Mehta and Ashok Mehta committee reports recommend the co-option of two women member's or token participation. There was very little participation in decision-making bodies after Independence. This led to the demand of women empowerment. Women empowerment has been defined in different ways.

According to Hatim (2002), Empowerment of women mean's to give power to women particularly the increasing participation in decision-making and power sharing in the representative bodies. According to S.L. Sharma (2000), Women's empowerment signifies increase in women's power to achieve equality with men. According to Pillai (1995), Empowerment is an active, multi dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. According to Goel & Rajneesh (2003), Women empowerment is not
something which can be handed over to women. This is a process which involves sincerity, earnestness and capacity and capability on the part of both men and women. According to Chandra (1997), Empowerment in its simplest form mean’s the manifestation of re-distribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance. According to Devadas (1999), Empowerment is an active process enabling women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. According to Kumar & Rani (2001), “Empowerment mean’s empowering women socially, economically and politically so that they can break away from male domination and claim equality with them.” According to Kabeer (1990), “It is a radical transformation of power relations between men and women. So that women have greater power over their lives and men have less power over women’s lives.” According to the country Report of Government of India (1995), “Empowerment mean’s moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to own power. It would promote women’s inherent strength and positive self-image.” Women empowerment refers to the process by which they develop a ability or capacity to became aware of rights and opportunities by sharing power and participation in decision making so as to challenge patriarchal structure and to bring about a change. The socio-religious reform movement of the 19th century in India such as Brahmo-samaj, Arya-
samaj, Ram Krishna mission and Prathna Samaj which were led by enlightened Indians were an attempts to challenge the Patrirarchal structure and bring about a change in the interior status traditionally assigned to women. The national movement led by Gandhiji also enabled them to break the shackles of traditions and this new awakening among women become the basis for their social reform. These movement's influence the British Government to get law's passed and giving equal rights and ensuring Justice to women. Subsequently, the Indian constitution accepted the principle of equality of sexes and its preamble spoke of equality of status and opportunity and of social, economic and political justice irrespective of sex. This legal and constitutional framework did not bring about a change in the lifes of women.

The national level planning in India initiated various programmes for the betterment and their analysis revel's various approaches for the implementation of programmes for women. The concept of 'welfare' to 'development' and to 'empowerment'. The first and second Five year plan were welfare oriented but third fourth and fifth Five year plan recognized women as equal partners for national developmen. rather than as target's for welfare policies. In the sixth, seventh and eigth Five year plan (1980-97) the long term objective of all development programmes for women was to bring about a change in all aspect of life. This was the
result of the national committee on the status of women in India
"Towards Equality" constituted by government of India 1971 and
submitted in 1974 reported that the planning and dynamic social change
has affected women adversely and emphasized that women economic
condition more deteriorated in free India than under colonial rule. All the
development programmes gave a great deal more work to women but
they had less control over their lives and basic recourses and did not
participate in decision-making. This may be called development without
empowerment. Acknowledging the fact that women’s equality in power
sharing and active participation in decision-making was very strong
instrument to achieve the goals of women development. The 73rd
constitution Amendment Act 1992 and implemented 24th April 1993 in
order to gave women a share in power and ensure participation in
decision-making in Panchayat raj to make women an instrument of
development and social change. It’s marked a watershed in the
empowerment of women because it brought women in large numbers in
Panchayats. The implementation of the 73rd constitution Amendment Act
must be examined to find-out the extent to which it has empowered
women in the sense that sharing power and participation in decision-
making has made them aware of their right’s and opportunities and has
enable them to challenge the patriarchal structure and bring about a change.

In this study of the implementation of 73rd constitutional Amendment, research was carried-out to find out the extent of empowerment of twelve (12) women Pradhan of lodha block of Aligarh district. Aligarh district consist of twelve (12) block’s and lodha block consists of 12 nayay panchayats in which there were 60 gram-panchayats and 20 were headed by women. The researcher selected one women pradhan from every nayay-panchayats. The case study method was used with the help of participant observation and interview-schedule. The aim’s of the study were:

- To find-out the extent to which women empowerment taken place through panchayat raj by determining the awareness of right’s and opportunities, their ability to challenge the patriarchal structure and capacity to bring about change.

- To find out the sociological parameter’s which leads to women empowerment.

- Consequences of women empowerment on family and society.
To suggest the guide and policy implication that would form of an action strategy to empower women so as to improve the working of Panchayat raj Institutions, this will make a research both empirical and paraxological.

The study starts by taking a history of people's empowerment in modern India in the quest of women empowerment for a share in power and participation in decision-making. Recognizing that women have been denied a share in power and have little participation in decision-making, chapter two highlight's the need for the empowerment of women by examining the effort's that have so far been made so that women are able to challenge the patriarchal structure in the society and bring about a change. Chapter third review's the literature this is available for the empowerment of women through panchayat raj particularly after the passing of 73rd constitutional Amendment Act, chapter fourth is a description of the field setting and the research design used for the study. Chapter fifth contains the case study of twelve women pradhan and in chapter sixth there is a analysis and interpretation of the case-studies to find the extent of empowerment and the sociological parameters of women empowerment. In the concluding chapter discusses the consequences of women empowerment and suggest the guideline and policy implication for women empowerment through Panchayat Raj.