

**STUDY ON THE CONSCIOUSNESS TOWARDS VOTING RIGHTS OF RURAL WOMEN
WITH THE SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JORHAT DISTRICT, ASSAM: AN ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT:

Society is a complex phenomenon shaped by the reciprocal relationship between each and every member who lives under its roof. It is also a union itself, enabling humans to carry on their life activities and giving them the power to fulfill their wishes, desires and interests in order to make their lives easier, and better. Both man and women are equally important to society. Every individual regardless of gender brings unique perspectives skills and talent that contribute to the overall development and progress of society. Therefore state machinery grants some essential facilities for the upliftment of every person, which are better known as rights. State machinery and the existing government are always responsible for providing certain right to individuals in a collective manner so that citizens of a country able to receive a comfortable and sound lifestyle. All people are equal claimants to the right granted by the state regardless of race, religion, caste, gender. While it may seem easily accessible in theory, it is rarely used in practice. Times have changed. People are learning to keep up with changing times. But perhaps the lack of awareness, number of women across the 21st century's global and modernized world are deprived, humiliated and exploited in terms of achieving the equivalent of men, which has kept them away from what they deserve. This paper is intended to study the perspectives of women in the field of suffrage as a political right in our society especially in rural area with the aim of providing a thorough understanding of it.

KEY WORDS: Women, Voting rights, Consciousness, Society, Rural Area, Political Right.

INTRODUCTION:

As a developing like India its holistic progress in every field of society directly or indirectly still depends on its rural areas. Rural areas are the heart and soul of India. Women in this regard play a vital and active role. Rural women in other sense can be recognized as the backbone of rural development process, whether we accept it or not. Rural women in India are one of the marginalized sections of the society. After the 75 years of our independence we are still living in a society where women are, on one hand, taking the highest prestigious position in decision making and governance; and on the other hand, another section from the same society receives an underprivileged status. The Empowerment of women requires development in all spheres of life basically in education and decision making sector. Simultaneously creating political awareness is also a crucial factor to make them empower. Rural women play a crucial and catalytic role towards achievement of transformational society which ultimately led a sustainable society. The active participation of women on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision making and political involvement is essential to the achievement of equality, peace, stable society and finally a successful democracy through the process of rural development by strengthening their participation and create a long term consciousness in Political sphere. Political participation is a complex concept which can be comprehended by analyzing some of the intrinsic factors. Women participation in decision making is one of them. Rural women's political participation and empowerment are not only essential for a developing country's overall progress ,their recovery from the underdeveloped position has significant impact on country's development and but also a key to their socio-economic development which ultimately enables the country's decision making process. It is possible through Political participation especially make them aware by attaining voting rights. A vote has the potential to make a significant difference and making meaningful progress in rural women's life. As a underrepresented community make their marginalized voices are heard is at the voting booth.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The feminist's movements in pre-independent India played a crucial role in ensuring women's rights were guaranteed in the constitution. Sadly, their role in forging the republic remains underappreciated. The most glaring example is the case of the right to voter. India's women suffrage movement was closely linked with their fight for independence against British colonial rule. A major shift in India's electoral landscape is anticipated by the end of this decade. There seems to be a big revolution. Today, the scene of women voters' turnout is a remarkable turn of events in a deeply patriarchal, conservative society. But in rural areas scenario is different. No doubt that like in urban areas rural women can significantly participate in the electoral politics. But the factors which impact to vote in case of a urban site women, it is not similar to rural women. That's why the present study has much relevance to explore the determining factors which responsible for rural women Political consciousness.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1) To determine the level of consciousness of rural women towards voting rights.
- 2) To explore about rural women perspective regarding right to vote

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The present study mainly concentrate on the rural women's consciousness towards achieving voting rights as their voting rights. The study will help to explore the rural women perspective on electoral politics and to what extent. Also it will provide an understanding to get a clear cut picture to determine that which factors enables rural women to cast their vote and what kind of difficulties they face during the time voting.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research methodology is essential for undertaking a valid study. It is organized around the operational steps. It is a systematic strategy to any research work. It gives rationale to a research project.

RESEARCH DESIGN:

The main function of research design is to explain how a researcher will find answers to a particular research questions. It sets out a specific set of details of a research work. A research design should include the following: Sample size, sample design, sampling strategy, the frame of analysis, time frame etc. The present study undertook descriptive survey method.

STUDY AREA:

The present study was conducted under Jorhat district of Assam. Specifically selected 5 villages namely Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon, Sonari Gaon, Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon, Dulia Gaon and Komar Khatowal Gaon.

SAMPLE SIZE:

Sample size determination is the process of choosing the right number of observations or people from a larger group to use in a sample. This is the sub-population to be studied in order to make a reference population. The sample size for the present study is 100 rural women randomly.

SAMPLE TECHNIQUE:

For this study purposive sample technique was used to collect data.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION:

PRIMARY SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION:

In this process, the data collected is assembling data for the first time, directly from the main sources. For this study primary data collected through:

INTERVIEW: To collect data for the study, direct interviews have taken from the respondents

OBSERVATION: Data also collected by observing the respondents.

SECONDARY SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION:

Secondary data is collected by someone else from the existing data already collected by others. In this study secondary data are gathered from research papers, websites and government reports.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The study targeted only rural women and restricted only a particular district (Jorhat).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Literature Review is the first operational step to conduct any research work. It is an integral part of a research process and makes a valuable contribution to almost the entire research. The literature review serves to enhance and consolidate researchers own knowledge base and helps to integrate the findings with the existing knowledge. The higher the academic level of any research, the more important a through integration of the findings with the existing literature becomes. Here are some existing literatures through which try providing conceptual understandings towards the research problem. These are:

Bidhan Subba (2022) on his paper titled “Study on the Political Consciousness and Awareness among the Women of Rhenock Area East Sikkim” described that how lack of awareness and political unconsciousness impacts on every dimensions of rural women’s life. Still a large section of society do not interested to actively participate in the political activities.

Arpana Singh (2021) in this regard revealed on “Rural Women’s Political Participation and its Impact on Society (A case study of District –Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh))” about the prevailing problems which impacts on rural women’s active political participation.

Subhashree Parida & Dr. Swapna S Prabhu (2023) on their article namely “Political Participation and awareness: A study on rural women in Odisha” recognized that rural women are more interested in social life in comparison to Political life. Their personal atmosphere have much more sense and value for them while things like Political participation does not contain any kind of meaning in their lifestyle and thought process.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF WOMEN: *TABLE NO 1:

| Name of the village | Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon | 18-35 | 4 | 20% |
| | 26-45 | 13 | 65% |
| | 46-60 | 2 | 10% |
| | Above 60 | 1 | 5% |

The study reveals that at Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon most of the respondents belong to the age group of 26-45(65%). Only 1 respondent(5%) comes under the 60 & above age group, which is the lowest one. 20% comes under the age group of 18-35 and 10% from 46-60.

***TABLE NO 2:**

| Name of the village | Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Sonari Gaon | 18-35 | 7 | 35% |
| | 26-45 | 9 | 45% |
| | 46-60 | 1 | 5% |
| | Above 60 | 3 | 15% |

The above mentioned table reflects that at Sonari Gaon 45% respondents are in the age group of 18-26, which is the highest one. Secondly 35% comes under the age group of 18-35. The age group of 46-60 contains 5% respondents. Lastly 15% respondents belongs to above 60 category.

***TABLE NO 3:**

| Name of the village | Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon | 18-35 | 2 | 10% |
| | 26-45 | 10 | 50% |
| | 46-60 | 5 | 25% |
| | Above 60 | 3 | 15% |

The above table clearly shows that at Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon, maximum no of respondents are from the age group of 26-45. 25% respondents are from the age group of 46-60.15% from above 60 age group and lastly only 10% comes from 18-35 category.

***TABLE NO 4:**

| Name of the village | Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Dulia Gaon | 18-35 | 4 | 20% |
| | 26-45 | 6 | 30% |
| | 46-60 | 6 | 30% |
| | Above 60 | 4 | 20% |

During the time of investigation it is found that at Dulia Gaon, the groups namely 26-45 and 46-60 having the equal no of respondents i.e. 30%.Similarly 20% from the age groups of 18-35 and above 60.

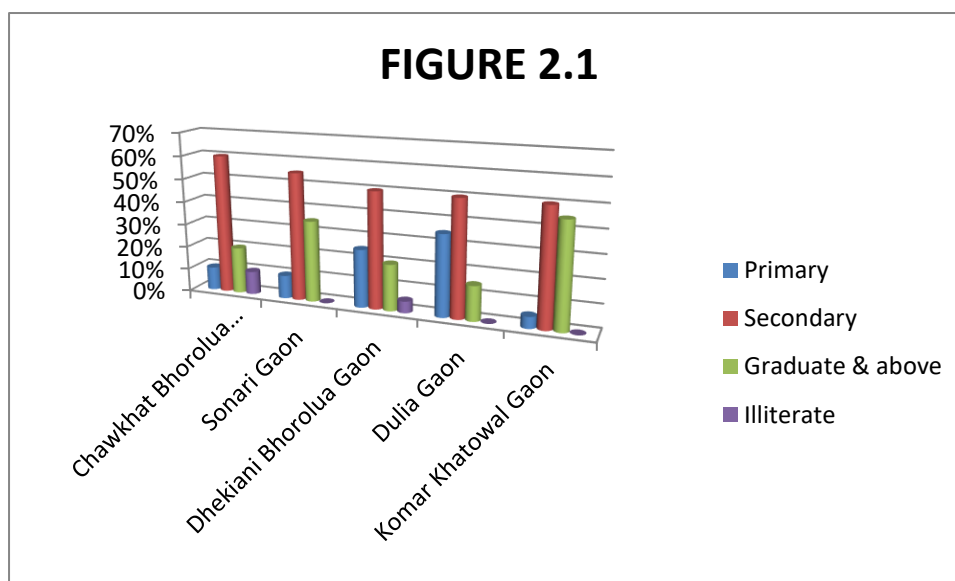
***TABLE NO 5:**

| Name of the village | Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 18-35 | 3 | 15% |
| | 26-45 | 11 | 55% |
| | 46-60 | 4 | 20% |
| | Above 60 | 2 | 10% |

The above data shown in the table 5 shows that at Komar Khatowal Gaon, 55% respondent comes under the age group of 18-45.Secondly, 20% from the 46-60 category, 15% from 18-35 group and 10% respondents under above 60 group.

EDUCATIONAL STATUS: *TABLE NO 6:

| Name of the village | Primary | Secondary | Graduate & above | Illiterate |
|------------------------|---------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon | 2(10%) | 12(60%) | 4(20%) | 2(10%) |
| Sonari Gaon | 2(10%) | 11(55%) | 7(35%) | 0(0%) |
| Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon | 5(25%) | 10(50%) | 4(20%) | 1(5%) |
| Dulia Gaon | 7(35%) | 10(50%) | 3(15%) | 0(0%) |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 1(5%) | 10(50%) | 9(45%) | 0(0%) |

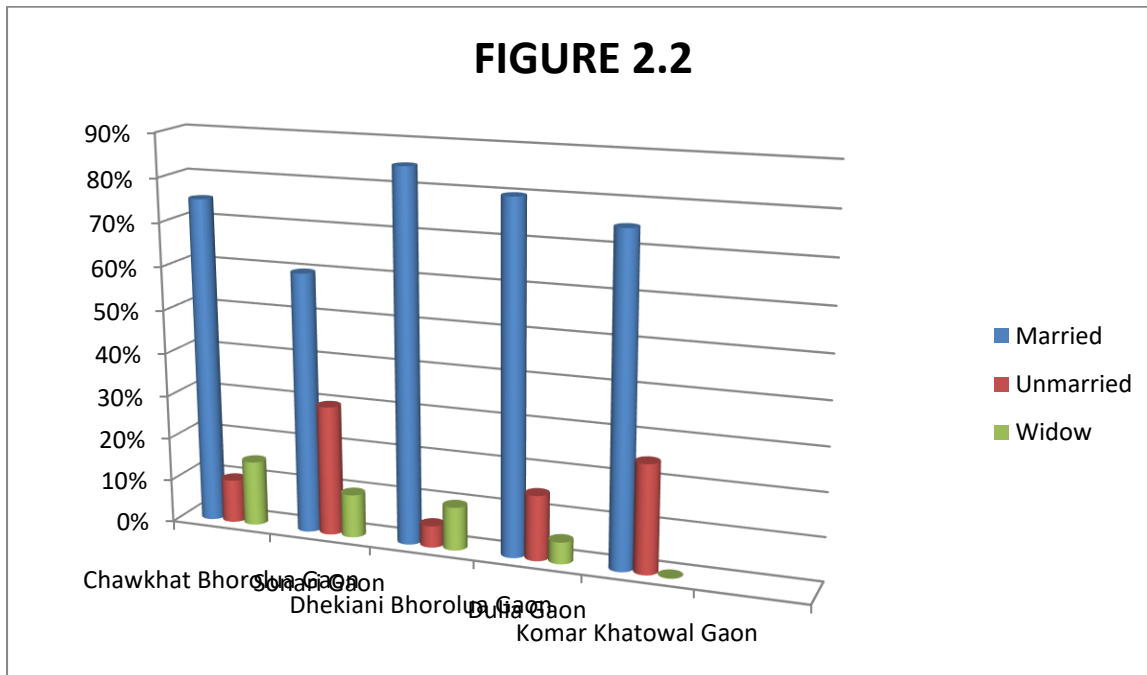


In terms of educational status, almost in every villages most of the respondents having secondary level of education. Similarly illiteracy quite negligible approximately in every 5 villages.

MARITAL STATUS: *TABLE NO 7:

| Name of the village | Married | Unmarried | Widow |
|-----------------------|---------|-----------|--------|
| Chawkhat Borolua Gaon | 15(75%) | 2(10%) | 3(15%) |
| Sonari Gaon | 12(60%) | 6(30%) | 2(10%) |
| Dhekiani Borolua Gaon | 17(85%) | 1(5%) | 2(10%) |
| Dulia Gaon | 16(80%) | 3(15%) | 1(5%) |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 15(75%) | 5(25%) | 0 |

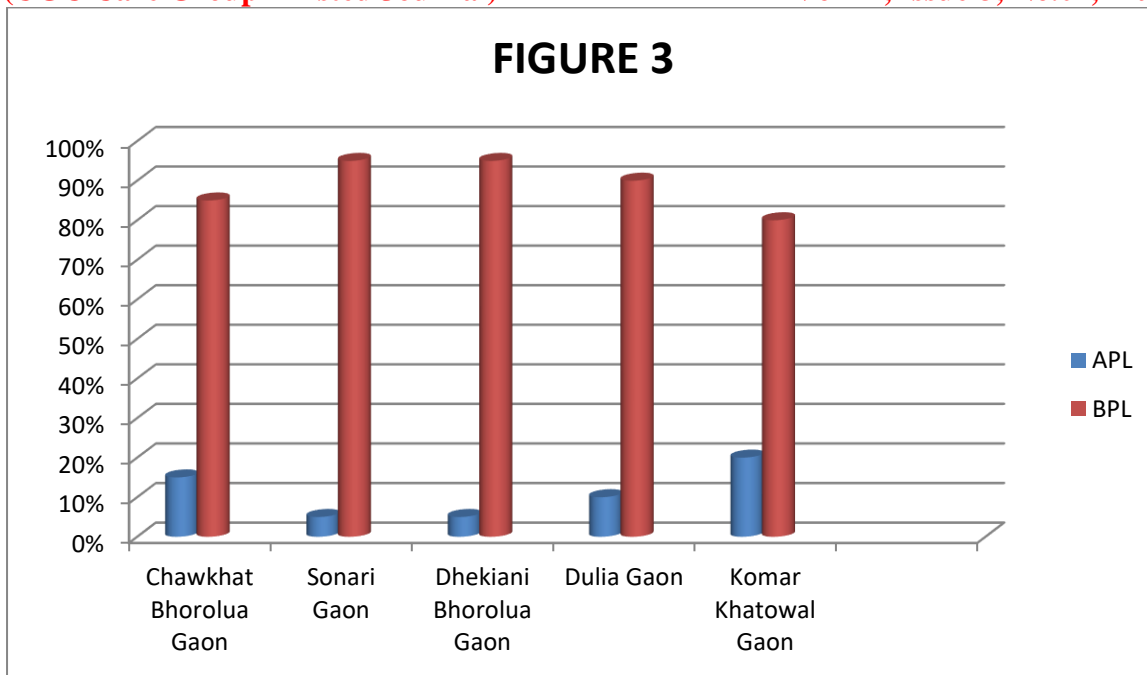
FIGURE 2.2



The table clearly reflects that among the villages in Jorhat district in terms of marital status, maximum respondents are married. The percentage is same for Chawkhat Borolua Gaon and Komar Khatowal Gaon. Then for Dhekiani Borolua Gaon its 85% which is the highest one in the table. For Dulia Gaon its 80% and 60% for Sonari Gaon.

ECONOMIC STATUS: *TABLE 7:

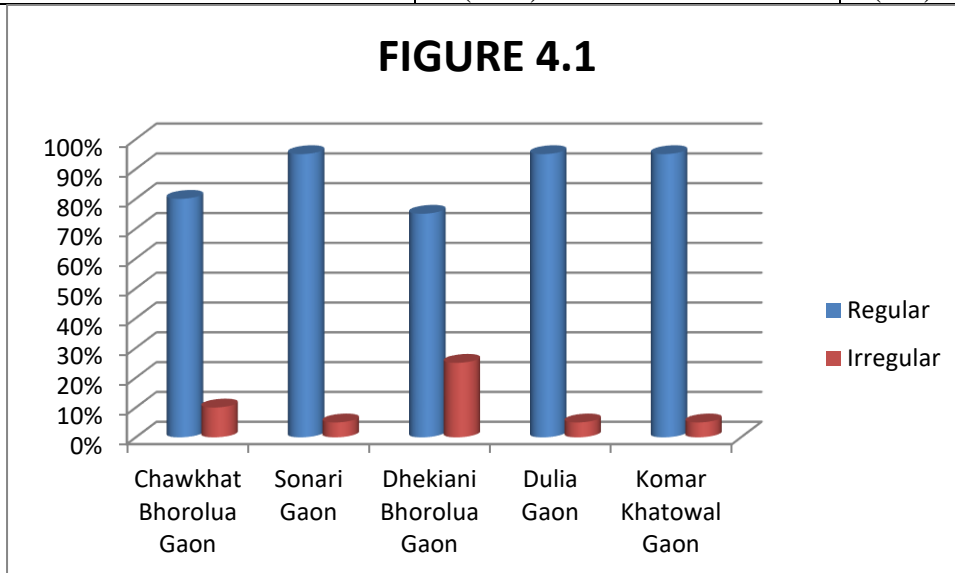
| Name of the village | APL | BPL |
|-----------------------|--------|---------|
| Chawkhat Borolua Gaon | 3(15%) | 17(85%) |
| Sonari Gaon | 1(5%) | 19(95%) |
| Dhekiani Borolua Gaon | 1(5%) | 19(95%) |
| Dulia Gaon | 2(10%) | 18(90%) |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 4(20%) | 16(80%) |



The table shows the economic status of the respondents. In every villages most of the respondents belongs to BPL category. In this regard the percentage for Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon is 85%, for Sonari it is 95%, for Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon it's same like the previous village, for Dulia Gaon it is 90% and 80% for Komar Khatowal Gaon.

NATURE OF VOTING: *TABLE NO. 8:

| Name of the village | Regular | Irregular |
|------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon | 18(90%) | 2(10%) |
| Sonari Gaon | 19(95%) | 1(5%) |
| Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon | 15(75%) | 5(25%) |
| Dulia Gaon | 19(95%) | 1(5%) |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 19(95%) | 1(5%) |

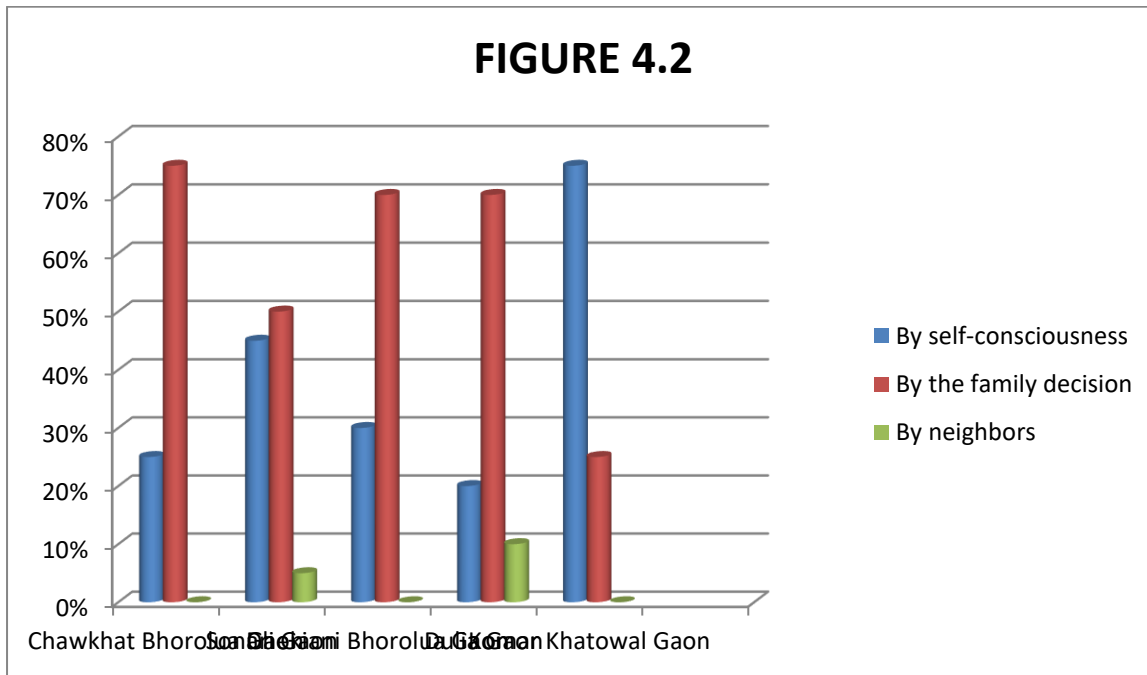


The above stated table clearly that maximum no of respondents from every villages give their vote in regular basis. It is 90% for Chawkhat Bhorolua GAON, 95% for Sonari Gaon, 75% for Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon, again 95% for Dulia and lastly the same percentage for Komar Khatowal Gaon.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR VOTING: *TABLE NO. 9:

| Name of the village | Self consciousness | Family decisions | Neighborhood |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon | 4(20%) | 15(75%) | 0 |
| Sonari Gaon | 8(40%) | 10(50%) | 2(10%) |
| Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon | 6(30%) | 13(65%) | 0 |
| Dulia Gaon | 3(15%) | 13(65%) | 4(20%) |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 15(75%) | 4(20%) | 1(5%) |

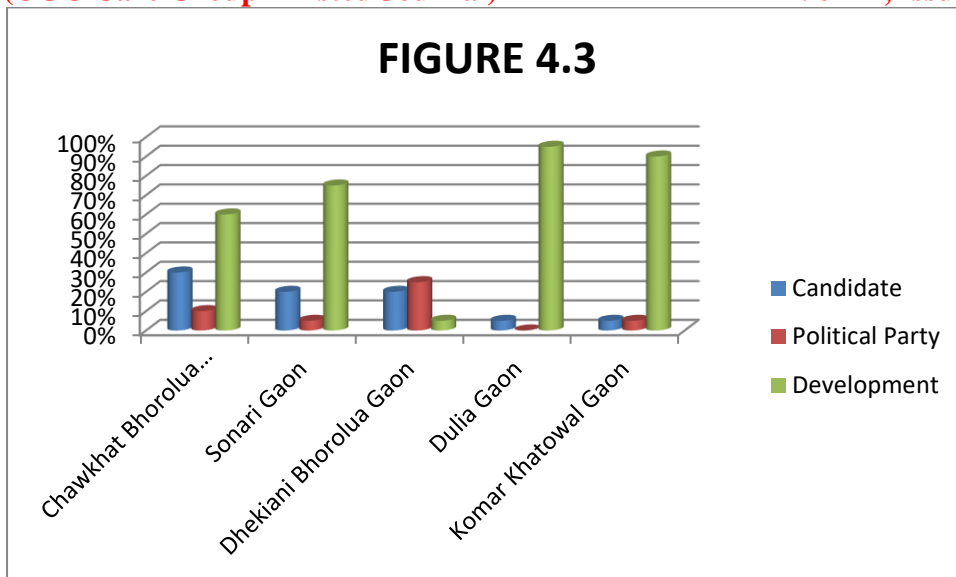
FIGURE 4.2



Regarding the determining factors responsible for voting among respondents shows that family decisions play a significant role. Maximum respondents cast their vote not on the basis of their self-consciousness but the influence of their family members.

BASE OF VOTING: * TABLE NO. 10

| Name of the village | Candidate | Political Party | Development |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|
| Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon | 6 | 2 | 12 |
| Sonari Gaon | 4 | 1 | 15 |
| Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon | 4 | 5 | 11 |
| Dulia Gaon | 1 | 0 | 19 |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 1 | 1 | 18 |



SOUECES USED BY RESPONDENTS TO GET NEWS ON ELECTION:*TABLE NO. 11

| Name of the village | NEWSPAPER | TELEVISION | RADIO | INTERNET |
|------------------------|-----------|------------|-------|----------|
| Chawkhat Bhorolua Gaon | 1(5%) | 9(45%) | 1(5%) | 8(40%) |
| Sonari Gaon | 0 | 15(75%) | 0 | 5(25%) |
| Dhekiani Bhorolua Gaon | 0 | 11(55%) | 0 | 8(40%) |
| Dulia Gaon | 1(5%) | 10(50%) | 1(5%) | 8(40%) |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 0 | 4(20%) | 0 | 16(80%) |

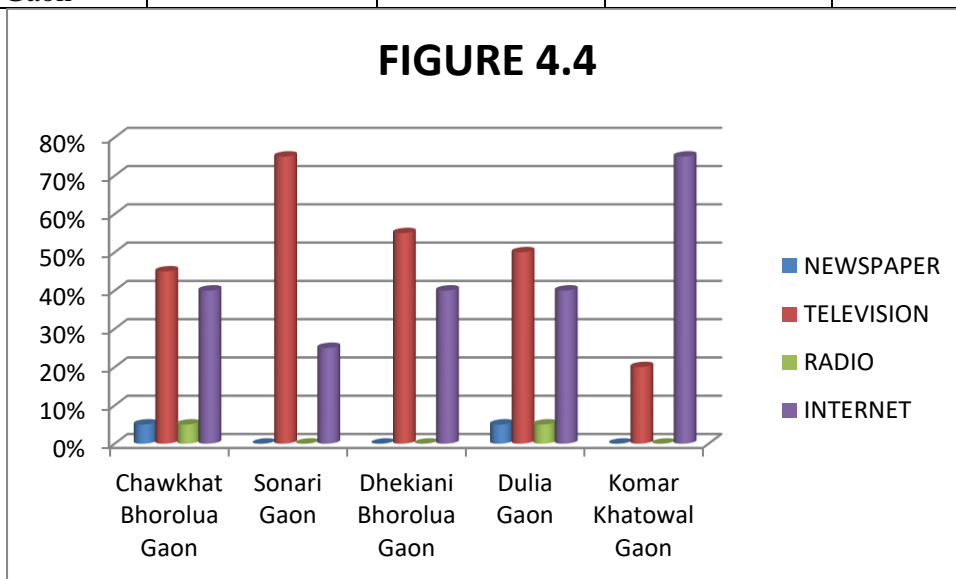
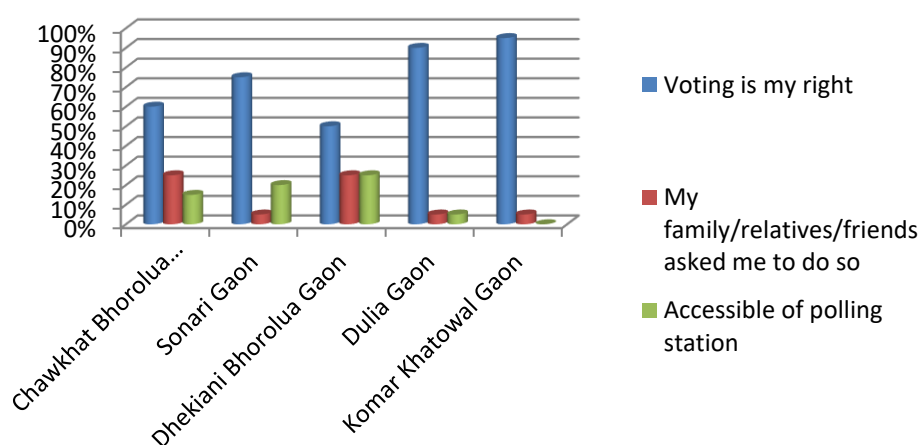


Table 11 refers that respondents mostly used television and internet to access information related to election.

REASON FOR VOTING:*TABLE NO. 13

| Name of the village | Voting is my right | My family/relatives/friends asked me to do so | Accessible of polling station |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Chawkhat Borolua Gaon | 12(60%) | 5(25%) | 3(15%) |
| Sonari Gaon | 15(75) | 1(5%) | 4(20%) |
| Dhekiani Borolua Gaon | 10(50%) | 5(25%) | 5(25%) |
| Dulia Gaon | 18(90%) | 1(5%) | 1(5%) |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 19(95%) | 1(5%) | 0 |

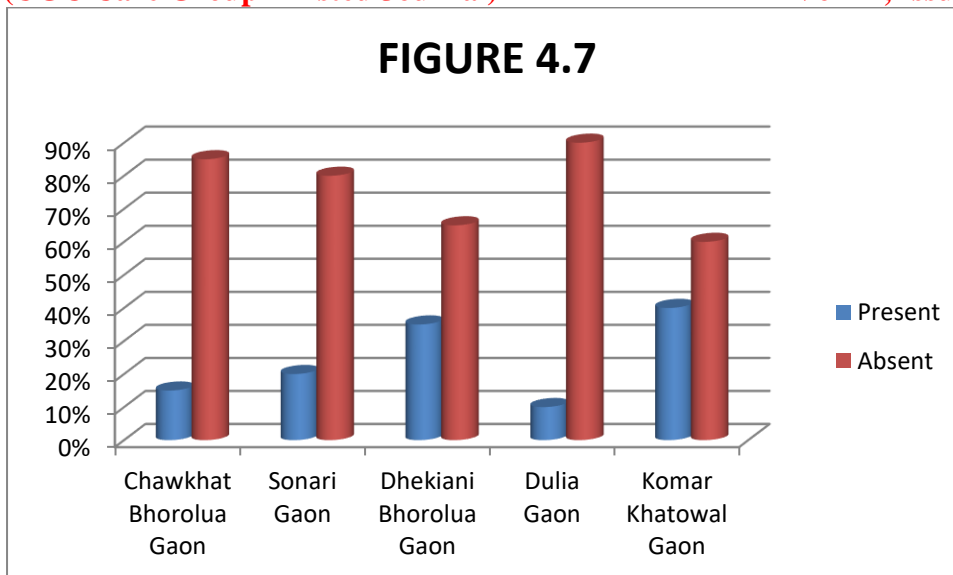
FIGURE 4.6



From the study it is clear that most of the respondents cast their vote by thinking that voting is their right. Its good sign for a democratic country.

ATTENDING VOTING AWARENESS MEETINGS:* TABLE NO. 14

| Name of the village | Present | Absent |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|
| Chawkhat Borolua Gaon | 3(15%) | 17(85%) |
| Sonari Gaon | 4(20%) | 16(80%) |
| Dhekiani Borolua Gaon | 7(35%) | 13(65%) |
| Dulia Gaon | 2(10%) | 18(90%) |
| Komar Khatowal Gaon | 8(40%) | 12(60%) |



In the above arranged table 14, data revealed that most of the respondents are attending the awareness camps, meeting organized to generate awareness and consciousness among rural women. The absent percentage is higher in comparison to the percentage of their presence.

FINDINGS:

1. From the study it is clear that almost from every village's maximum no. of respondents are come from the age group of 26-45.
2. Maximum no of respondents i.e. have secondary education. Illiteracy quite negligible.
3. Most of the respondents are married.
4. Economic status reveals that maximum no of respondents are from below poverty line (BPL).
5. Almost every respondent regularly cast their vote.
6. Family decision is the major determining factor responsible for voting.
7. Development is the highest recognizing base of voting among most of the respondents.
8. Television and internet are the reliable sources of maximum no. of respondents to get news of election.
9. Almost every respondent having their voter id cards.
10. Maximum respondents cast their valuable vote by thinking that "Voting as right".
11. Most of the respondents are aware and attending voting awareness camps, meetings.

SUGGETIONS:

1. Education is the primary key to change the world. It is the backbone for women development also. It is a weapon through which women can transform their life to a great extent. So, by making them educated we can develop their active and cooperative and conscious thought.
2. Awareness camps and workshops must be organized in rural areas at regular basis to inform the rural people about the importance and necessity of voting.
3. Now a day's woman can turn out in large numbers in election across the country actively participate in electoral politics by casting their valuable vote. Political parties used them by knowingly or unknowingly to shaping their political fortune. Therefore it is important that they must be conscious that nobody can misguide them during the time election.
4. Rural women are still facing several socio-economic and gender based inequalities in every sphere of society. If they want to raise voice against those discriminations and inequalities, "right to vote" provides them a platform in front of the world by having their voice heard.
5. Women need to be self-conscious. Because the data collected from the study it is reflects that in all those five villages in Jorhat district maximum women cast their vote on the basis of the decision taking by their family members. The ability of rural women to exercise their voting rights

independently and freely is an important step towards the advancement of women's participation in the political process.

CONCLUSION: Human rights are a fundamental condition which led a sound and beautiful life for every human being. Women also a significant creature of the nature. Like male counterpart of the society they have equal right to live a organized a healthy live by gaining each an every rights granted by the state machinery for their country people. In this regard political right is one the determing one. In the realm of Political rights voting right is an important one. Once someone said that “when women vote, women win”. So, it is the best way to meet gender equity based society which ultimately creates a progressive country.

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