

Political Awareness of Moran Women

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Abstract: Moran is a tribal group of Mongoloid origin who live in the Northeastern districts of Assam. It is believed that they migrated from the Hukong valley of upper Burma into Assam long before the Ahom came to dominate Assam. At present they are confined in Tinsukia district of Upper Assam and a few sections are residing in Dibrugarh and Sivasagar districts of Assam. They belong to OBC category and they are seeking for ST status. The men women ratio is like other parts of India but the women are quite backward in education, political, economic sectors. This paper will highlight the political status/awareness of Moran women on the basis of field study and observation. The conclusion of the paper will trigger the causes of their political status along with few suggestions to improve their conditions.

Key Words: Moran, Awareness, Panchayat, Mass agitation, Election, Political Party

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I. INTRODUCTION

Moran is a tribal group of Mongol origin who live in the Northeastern districts of Assam, though there are some in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh (north of Assam). It is believed they migrated from the Hukong Valley in upper Burma into Assam long before the Ahom came to dominate Assam. Over time they moved from centers on the eastern edge of Assam, then to the Brahmaputra River and thence north to where they are found in numbers today in Tinsukia District but there are families of Morans who chose to stay in some of the early centers of Namrup, Sivasagar, Moran and Moranhat, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. Tinsukia contains the town of Ledo which was the beginning of the famous Ledo Road of the China-Burma-Indian Theater in WWII.

People belonging to Moran community are mostly found in Tinsukia District. There are seven blocks, four revenue circles, eighty six GaonPanchayats and one thousand one hundred eighty one villages. The four revenue circles are Tinsukia, Margherita, Doom Dooma and Sadiya. Majority of Moran people are confined in Kakopather (former name was Kakotal, the capital of Moran state). Kakopather is a development block which was established in 1964. The total area of Kakopather is 83,152 sq. km. Kakopather is the main area which is completely dominated by the Moran people. Total population of Kakopather block is 2,23,494 and total female population is 1,10,009. As per 2011 census report 53,754 women are literate in this area which is just 48.86%. The female literacy rate of this area is below the national level (65.46%) and it is also less than the state literacy rate.

II. POLITICAL AWARENESS:

Education plays an important role in the entry of women in politics. Educated women only can actively participate in governmental affairs. Success of Indian democracy depends on the participation of both male and female. But in the male dominated society, the participation of the women in political affairs is not up to expected level. Thus, the present study will find the level of political awareness of the Moran women. This study will add new knowledge and information regarding the participation of women in politics. The findings of the study will greatly help different governmental departments, NGOs and individuals working for the development of women. It will also encourage the researchers to engage in further studies in the same line. The study will also reveal the low level of participation of Moran women and the causes behind it. The various studies related to political empowerment of women have been done merely to confine the political impression that women are not independent voters, most of them are guided by the male guardians of the family. The 73rd constitutional amendment has provided a large number of women members in the rural political institutions but most of them are lacking the decision making capacity due to poor education and/ political knowledge. In many cases, women lack information and political awareness which prevent them from active participation in politics.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present paper is about “political awareness among the women of Moran community of Assam”. The objective of this study is to know the level of political awareness among the women of Moran community. The purpose of the study is also to analyse women empowerment through political participation and their role in the development of the society. Since, the study is confined to Moran women and the Morans are found mainly in the Kakopathar area of Tinsukia district, the study covers different GPs under Kakopathar development block. The investigator has randomly selected 300 women respondents from different age groups who represent the whole scenario of the studied area. The collection of data was carried out from field investigation and different secondary sources. Data information so collected have been tabulated and analysed with the help of simple statistical tools and inferences drawn there in. The primary data are collected by seeking answers to a set of pre-conceived questions through proposed interviews. The data are collected from at least 20 respondents from each GaonPanchayat of studied area. Samples are collected from the GPs are representing different age groups of women of Moran Community. The interview schedule was designed in such a way so that detail information about the political awareness of Moran women can be gathered. The data collected from different offices such as block office and statistical department have helped to get the information about population, literacy rate, work force etc of the entire study. It also used travel guide, communication system of different areas for the purpose of the study. The answers to the questions have been converted into percentage (%) through simple calculation for the purpose of analysis. The important findings of the field study may be summarized as follows: The surveyed women were divided into four age groups.

- Age group-18-35 years-

The women within the age group of 18-35 years are educated and 10% of them have completed post-graduation, 30% graduate, 50% studied up to higher secondary and 10% of them have studied up to high school level. 25% women of this age group are working women but only 9.5% contested in election and became the member of GP. Though they are not willing to active political participation but at least 50% of them have been involved in mass agitation regarding various socio-economic-political issues. They are aware of different political parties and in favour of that political party only which can give job opportunities for them. They strongly support women’s political participation as both men and women have equal rights. The women belonging to this age group are in favour of woman Prime Minister/ Chief Minister. They are conscious about their rights and duties and they cast vote in each election according to their own choice. (Figure-4.1.1; 4.1.2; 4.1.3; 4.1.4)

Women Representation (graphical expression)

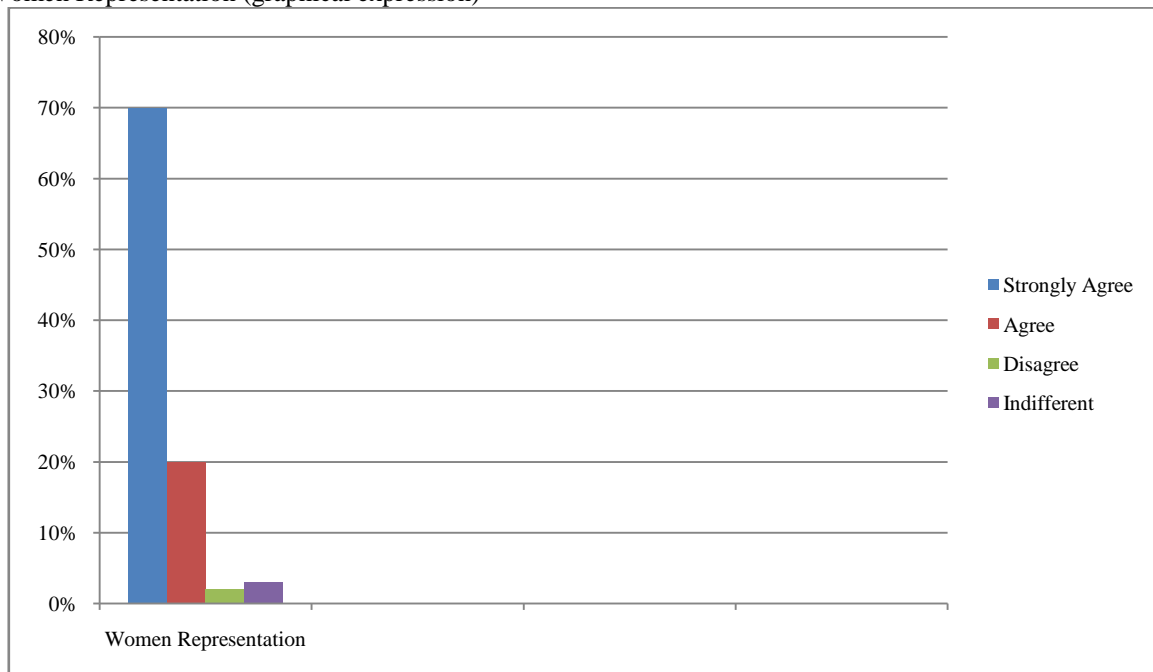


Fig. 4.1.1

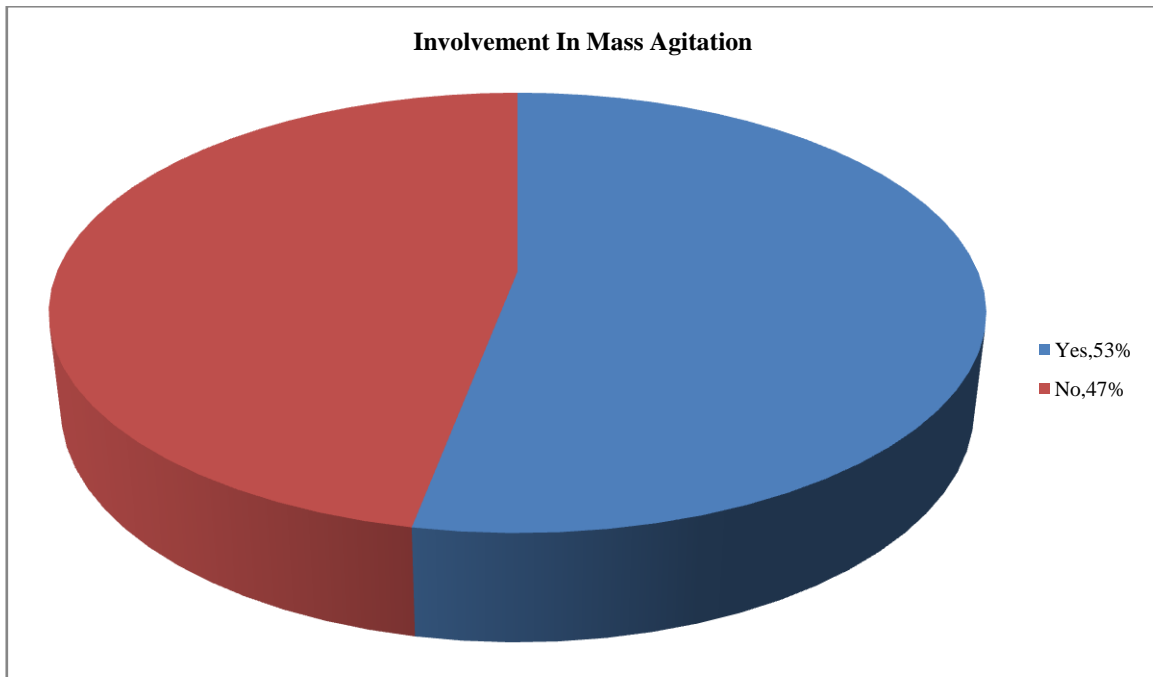


Fig. 4.1.2

SUPPORT FOR WOMAN PRIME MINISTER

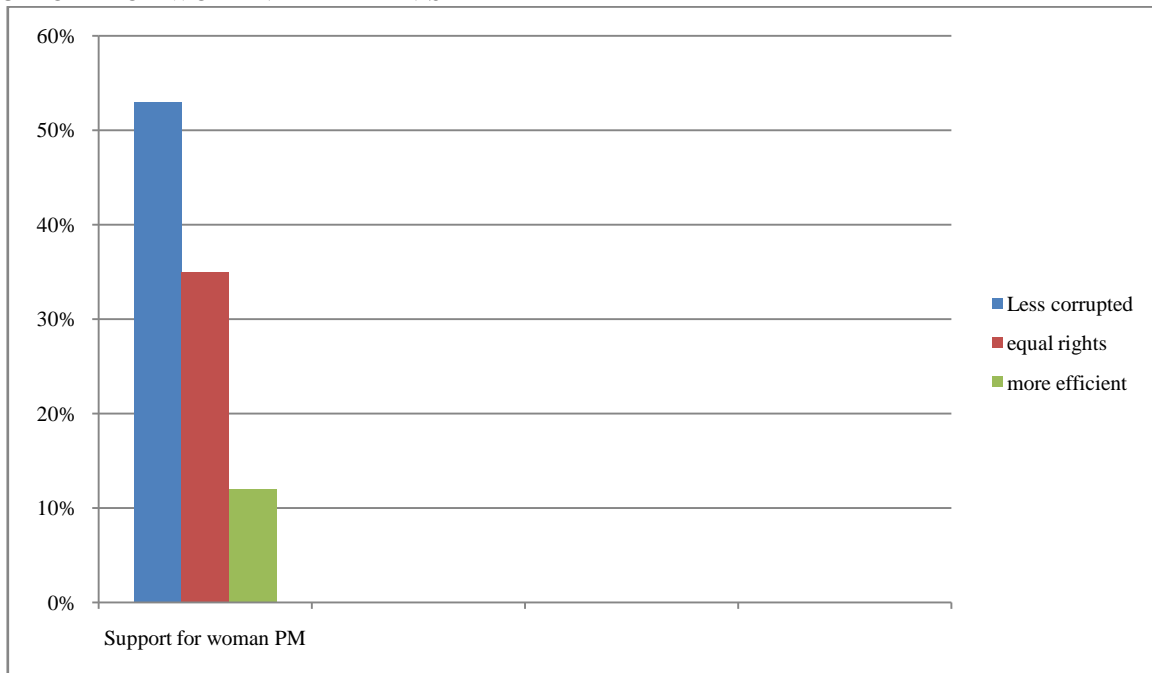


Fig.4.1.3

REASON FOR CASTING VOTES

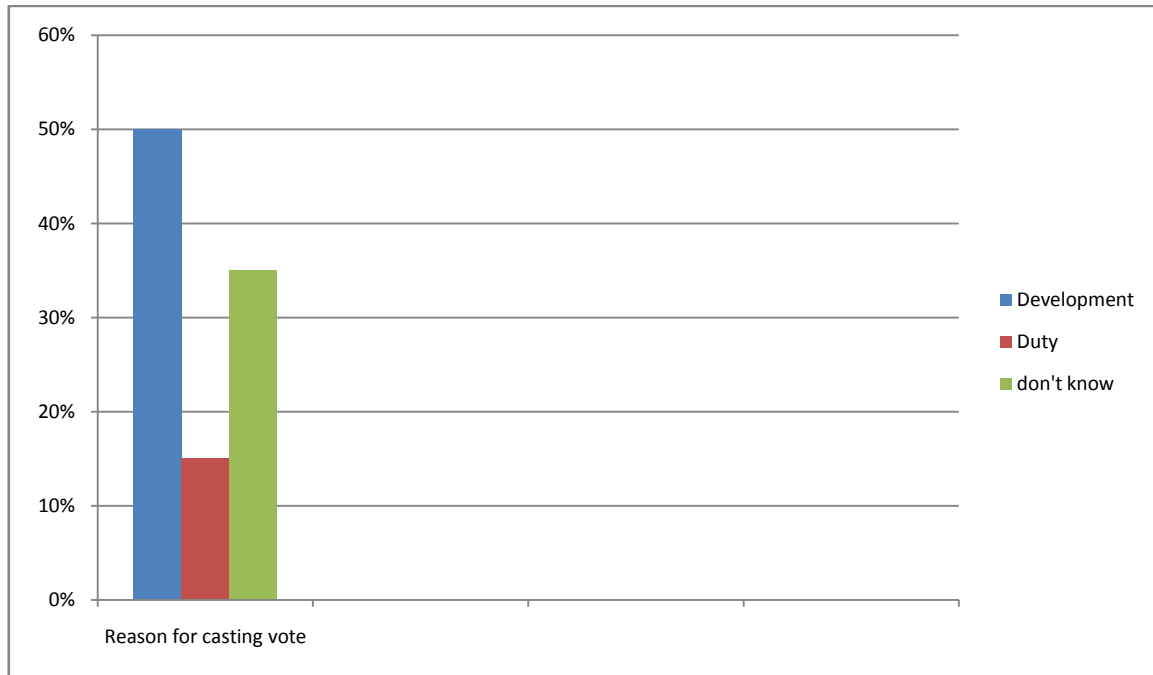


Fig.4.1.4

- Age group-36-50

95% women of this age group are literate, 30% of them are working women, 30% of them have been involved in mass agitation for different social issues, 2% of them are members of different socio-political organisations, 10% of this age group are members of GPs. They also support women’s political participation and aware of different problems of their people as well as their area. 20% of them are not happy with the role of Govt. and different political parties. They cast vote in each election but 70% of them cast vote as per the choice of their family members (Figure-4.2.1; 4.2.2).

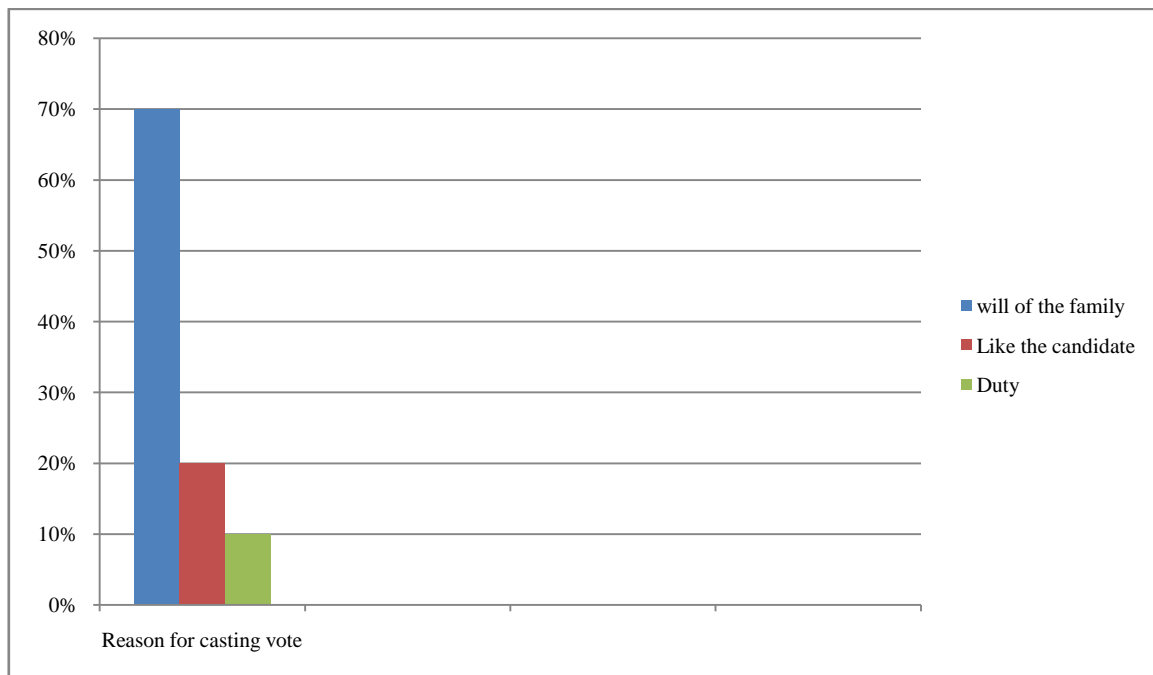


Fig. 4.2.1

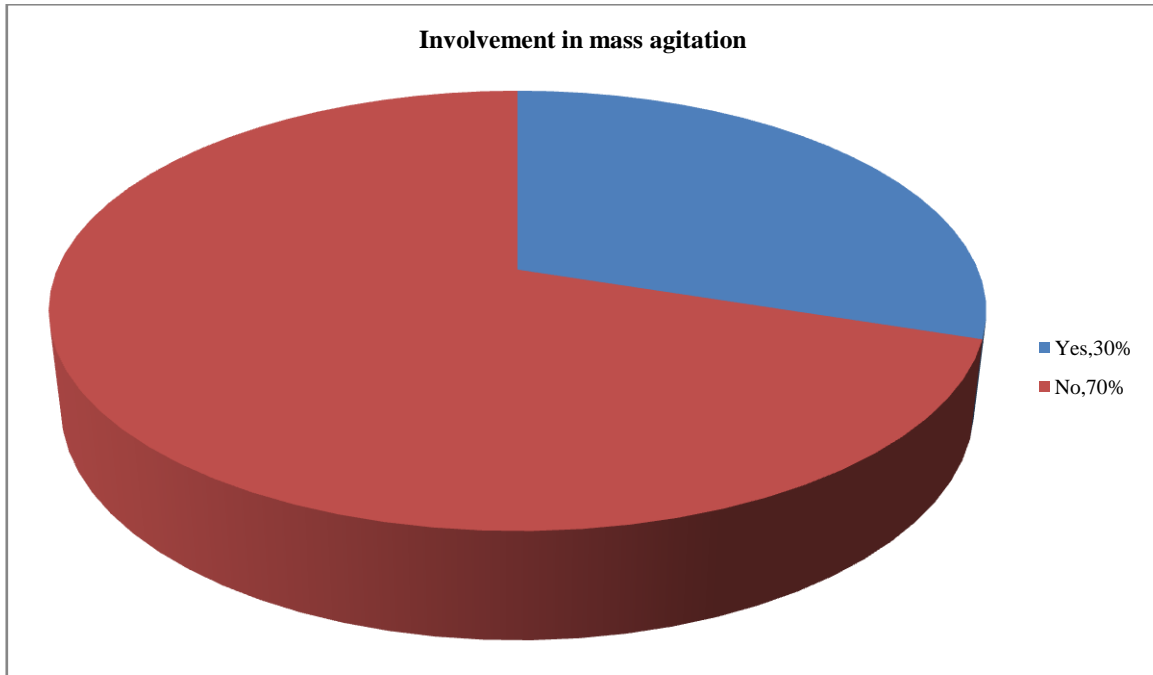


Fig. 4.2.2

- Age group-51-65 years

40% of this age group are literate and 10% of them are high school passed, 10% of them are working women but there is no GP member out of them. 1% of them are the members of various socio-political organizations, 50% of them are not aware of the problems of the state or their own area, 50% of them cast vote regularly but 90% of them are motivated by friends and family members while casting their votes. For them, anyone who work for the people can be a good P.M. or C.M. (Figure-4.3.1)



Fig. 4.3.1

- Age group-above 65

The last group of women of this study are the women belonging to above 65 years of age. 98% women of this group are illiterate and do not cast their vote. They are indifferent about the problems and no idea about MP/MLA or politics. But 80% of them know about Congress political party, 2% know other party also and rest

have no idea about political parties. They are unaware about present Prime Minister and they do not have any idea about political awareness.(figure-4.4.1)

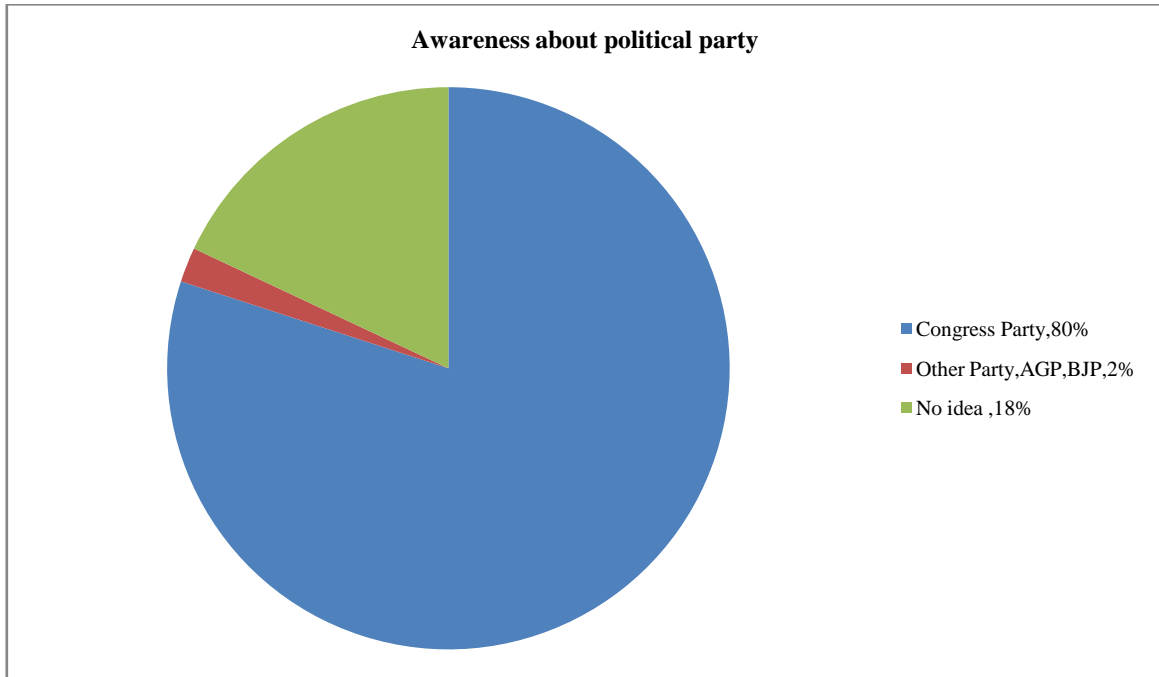


Fig. 4.4.1

It has been observed from the responses that 55% of Moran women know the name of present prime minister and majority of them are aware of Congress political party. They are concerned about rise and poor road condition of their areas. They cast votes in the elections with a hope to improve their socio-economic conditions. But hardly, 2% of them are interested to join active politics. The level of political awareness of Moran women has been explained graphically with the help of a pie chart (Fig. 4.5)

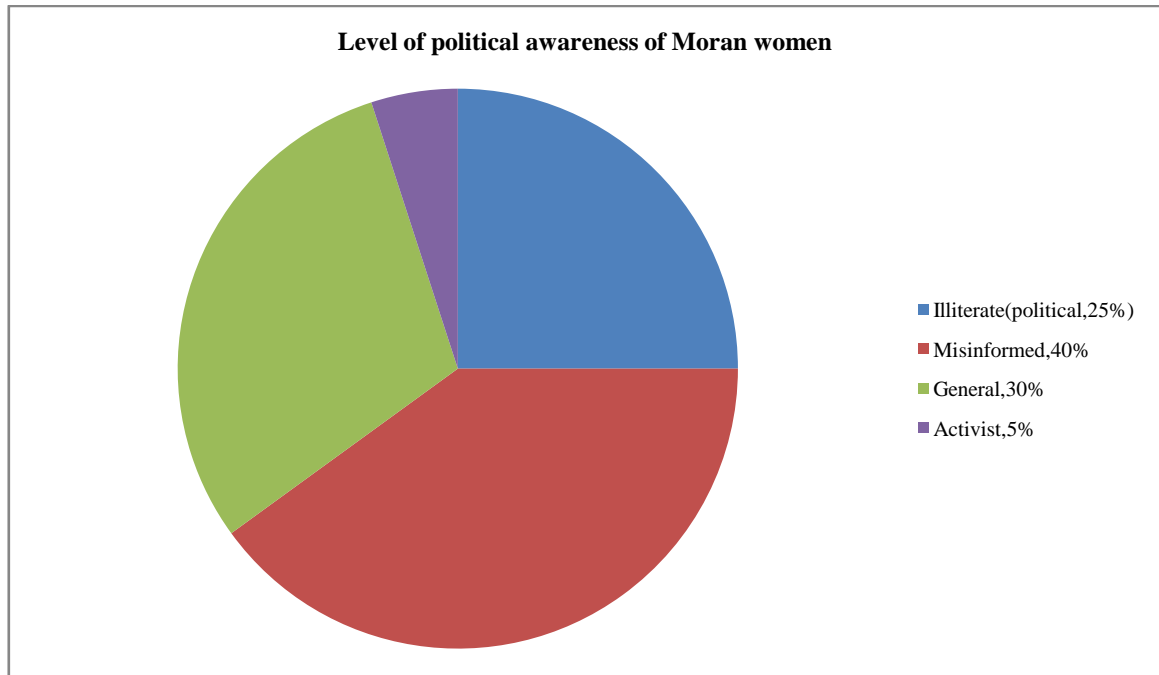


Fig. 4.5

IV. CONCLUSION

Present study is an attempt to understand Moran women's political awareness and analyse the process of political transition and modernization at the grass root level, mainly after the introduction of 50% reservation of seats for women in the Panchayat institutions. The study is based on survey of 20 GaonPanchayats, 28 women members, 5 women GP Presidents 300 villagers and a few knowledgeable persons covering seven blocks, four revenue circles.

Moran community is mostly confined in Kakopathar area and their society is traditional in nature. People live on agriculture. Among the Morans very few doctors and engineers are there. The first and only woman representative in Assam Legislative Assembly from the Morans was TarubalaBoruah, who died on 22nd February, 2014. She was elected as MLA (Cong.) from Sadiya Constituency in 1972 and continued till 1977. Later on she joined BJP. She was the President of Indian Tea Labour Association of Doom Dooma Branch.

From the study it has been found that though the participation of Moran women in grass root politics has increased slightly because of the implementation of reservation of seats for women in local institution. But it is not upto the level of satisfaction. Generally Moran women do not show much interest in politics. It is evident that though women contribute to mobilization of members in Political Parties., they lack support from such political parties to advance their political careers. It is also revealed from the study that women empowerment can be ensured through women participation in various stages of political spheres. Level of awareness among the Moran women is not up to the mark. Women members of Panchayats are not properly educated. As a result they have to depend upon their husbands or other male members of the GP. The number of educated women is also less but the number is increasing in the age group of 18 – 35 years. In general the level political awareness is very low. For political participation and awareness, political parties and education play an important role. But the general Moran women are not interested in joining political parties. As a result, for the sake of constitutional provision, the political parties approach those women only who have political background and thus, get the ticket to contest in election. To encourage more and more women to join political parties it is necessary on the part of political leaders to visit the villages frequently and train women so that they can handle every issue of Panchayats independently.

Political awareness of Moran women and their participation in political affairs will boost their level of confidence, ability to communicate and ability to participate in public life, career paths, financial capabilities and political experience among others. It is important for government and other NGO's to empower women to provide more and more spaces for women's participation but also involving men as key players in gender dialogue. It is necessary to empower women in education and politics equally with male counterparts. Increase in participation of women in civic education can contribute to increase participation of the citizens in questioning inequality and misappropriation of both human and financial resources in the public sector, influence other women and youth to participate in politics and thus enable them to influence policy making and equal distribution of the development outcomes. Awareness campaigns, political training, easy access to higher education, infrastructural development of the villages will help women to participate in large numbers. Until and unless moral boon of the women are not customized their level of awareness will neither be commendable nor influential.

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