CHAPTER 6

SUMMING UP
 AND
 CONCLUSION
In this chapter an attempt has been made to sum-up the major findings of the study and in the light of these some broad conclusions are drawn.

As media of communication plays an important role in making the people politically conscious, articulates and influences their voting behaviours, its impact and linkage on the voters of Khariar constituency has been assigned a significant place in the present study. The data suggests that a vast majority of voters, i.e. about 84% reported to have received such informations from interpersonal media. This clearly suggests that the constituency under study is predominantly backward and traditional. Because of poverty and ignorance, people depend on 'significant others' like ward-members, and Political workers for political information, and these persons are more likely to influence the voting decisions of the majority voters. In so far as inter-personal media of communication is concerned, it is found out that the reference group of relations, friends, neighbours and spouses has been the most important (33.33%). The most significant finding is the dominant role played by the local leaders who accounted for all most 24% of all sources of information about the forth coming election. Education is significantly related to source of information: for illiterates interpersonal source is the only mode of communication and with the rise in educations, the dependency on the interpersonal media declines.
Taking into account political information as an index of levels of political consciousness and articulation, the findings of the study suggests that the majority of respondents are mostly unaware and ignorant about the election and electoral process: about 80% did not know the date of election when only 15 days were left for voting, 18% did not know the name of the sitting M.L.A., 70% did not know the symbol of Janata Party, 17% of Congress Party and 87% of the symbols of the independent candidates. This shows the nature of political consciousness in the constituency where majority of voters constitute the politically ignorant lot.

There is significant increase in the political knowledge of the voters in the post-poll study: the proportion of voters classed under high information group rise from 17.33% in the pre-poll survey to 21.58%, in the post-poll survey. Similarly the proportion who scored low in the information index in the pre-poll survey reduced from 55.83% to 50.27% in post poll situation. The improve in the level of political information from pre-poll phase to post-poll phase indicates that factors internal to election particularly campaigning and efforts at political mobilization played a positive role.
Analysis of political information score in the context of demographic and other correlates the findings indicate that men were better informed than women, educated were better informed than the un-educated, those belonging to high caste were somewhat better informed than the SC, ST and backward caste.

The findings revealed an association between political information and participation in voting. It was found that an association between political information and voting exists only for rural voters: in rural areas 86 out of 95 non-voters belonged to low information category. But this hypothesis could not yield significant relation in urban booths because 71 out of 102 non-voters belonged to high information category. Examining the data in the context of educational attainment it was observed that 64.70% of respondents who scored high in the information index abstained from voting. Even about 48% of voters in the category of college education and 'high information category' abstained from voting. This however, should not be taken to mean that the voters in the upper strata of education are a political.

With regard to urban rural residence Sex and voting differential it was found that males (71.35%) and voters from urban areas (72.70) exceeded their counterparts. It was the younger (74.27%) and higher age (71.69%) group
which took keen interest in election than the middle age group (46.42). The middle age group between 35-50 years of age had been rather apathetic to the voting act. It appears that perhaps the voters in the middle age group here tended to be more alienated from political system and as such has been more indifferent to political participation than the younger and the elders. The participation in voting tends to decline with increase in education, it seems to decline considerably at the stage of higher-education. About 75% voters came from illiterate category, 69.84% from the educated category between VI to VIII, 52% from below matric category. The participation in voting act declined to 35% among those who are graduates. While the studies conducted elsewhere indicate an increase in participation of voting, with increase in the levels of education, in the present study an inverse relation is noticeable.

As we look at voters by caste and religion one finds that the proportion of minority voters (Muslims and Christians) went-up in comparison to Hindus. About 93% of the minority community went to the polls. However caste did not show any significant trend with regard to voting except for the backward caste. The proportion of voters among the backward caste went down, i.e., only about 43% in comparison to the total sample.
The timing of voting decision and voters identification with political parties or candidates being indicators of political commitments, an attempt was made to find out how many voters have political commitment or identification to different political parties or candidates. Of it was found out that 70(11.80%) voters made the decision on election day itself, 14.33% one week before, 14.67% two weeks before, 17.36% three weeks before and 08.60% more than three weeks before the day of election. About 20% reported to have decided on hearing their party/candidates contesting. This means only 20% are committed voters.

With regard to purpose of voting the result indicate that 22.93% of the electorate through that the purpose of voting was to elect representatives, 17.36% thought that they voted to exercise their right as the citizen, 10% voted because they supported to a party, 18.21% thought that the people of voting was to elect a particular candidate whom they liked or had loyalty. It is disappointing to note that about 31% of the voters had no specific reason and they voted because others had done so and 19% of voters voted because 'somebody tld them to...do so.' Thus in this constituency about 50% of voters constitute the 'fluid' voters which could go in any direction irrespective of the political process and mobilisation. About 8% of the respondents categorically
stated that elections serve no purpose. It is an index of voters' weak sense of efficacy of the political system in general and voting system in particular.

When the respondents were asked to specify reasons for voting preference, about 55% of voters told that 'candidates' personal attention as one of the reasons of voting, 'Party' as the basis of voting was reported by 14.67%, only a small proportion voters (5.73%) had issue orientation, 17.91% had caste/tribe consideration, about 5% voted for change in leadership. The decision to vote seems to be influenced by other persons: Village concensus 11.29%, told by spouce 6.57%, told by village leaders 19.89%, more male voters (74.32%) than females (19.08%) had candidate consideration. There was no significant difference with regard to party as one of the considerations for the voting as almost equal proportion of male and female voters had such reason. Party as a consideration for voting was reported more often by urban than rural voters. 'Candidate' as the basis of voting was reported by almost equal proportion of voters from both upper and scheduled caste category of voters. The trend seems to decline in respect of ST and backward caste. Similarly 'Party' as the factor of consideration was reported mainly from upper caste and Scheduled Caste voters where the proportion with regard to ST and backward caste was very minimal. This indicates that most of the party sympathisers and members belong to
upper and scheduled caste category. It is interesting to note that a vast majority of voters from Scheduled tribe had ethnic ties as basis of voting where as this basis did not have any significant bearing on voting for other castes.

The overall finding of this study is that the electorate was more candidate oriented, more guided by personal considerations, other’s influences and pressures than party/issue orientated. If the former is treated as a non-political and party issue consideration as a political consideration, it is clear that non-political consideration matters more than political consideration in voting behaviour for the old voters, illiterates, semi-educated, females and rural voters.

The voters who participate in the politics very actively tend to take a positive stand while making voting decisions: they are more likely to vote for a political party, participate in the act of voting, decide their preference of voting on the day the names of candidates officially declared. All the respondents who were 'very active' have voted only to the political parties: 46.87% to the Congress 32.81% for the Janata and 1.56% for the B.S.P., with the only exception that about 19% of the respondents in the very active category voted for an independent candidate. However, this independent candidate is an old socialist member.
The campaign was in a very low key in the initial phase of electioneering as 60% of respondents did not have exposure to campaign. As election days approached, campaign took on some momentum. Another breakaway with the past practice was that state level leaders did not come to the constituency to canvass either for the party or for their candidate. For the first time in the election history Congress Party candidate put up huge hoardings and pasted huge number of posters. During this election it was not a cake-walk for him to win the election. On earlier occasions block voters for the royal house came from villages dominated by tribals, sundhi caste and scheduled caste groups. This time it appeared difficult with the contest of (a) Harizan caste person from the B.S.P. ticket (b) growing popularity of Duryodhan Majhi, a local tribal leader contesting from Janata ticket. Thus to influence the voters, Congress Party waged poster wars through opinion leaders, caste leaders and village 'Gountias'.

Distribution of voters by exposure to various campaign strategies by sex and place of residence indicates that in rural booths canvassing at personal level constitutes the most important source of campaign exposure. It constitutes about 67% followed by loud speaker (29.88%), campaign meetings (16.37%) poster and campaign. In urban areas exposure through loudspeakers constitute the highest source of campaign (76.32%) followed by campaign meetings (51.42%)
posters (42.87%), canvassing at personal level (36.30%). Whereas in rural areas door-to-door campaign is an important instrument of campaigning in urban pockets it's posters, meetings and loud speakers.

The data on socio-economic and demographic correlates at party/candidate preference, suggests that Congress Party was somewhat stronger in rural areas than in urban areas, popular among males than females. It had largest following among illiterates and with rise in educational attainment of voters the support base declined. With regard to sex and rural/urban residents party preferences for Janata did not show much difference. Age group of the voters significantly correlate with the voting preference. While majority of voters in the upper age category vote for Congress, with youngers in age the preferences go for non-Congress party. The Congress is more popular among Scheduled Caste Voters, ST voters and minority voters.

The study of the voting behaviour of the electorate of the Khariar Constituency reveals the general trends of Political process of the State.