In the foregoing chapters we have described some aspects of social and economic life of the Assamese Nepalis of lower Assam inhabiting three villages, Hirabari, Kiringbori and Tekeliakur Grant situated in Sipajhar area of Darrang District of Assam. The present thesis is based on data collected in the course of fieldwork undertaken for three years from 2002 to 2005.

The people of Assam as in the case of North East India may broadly be divided into tribal and non-tribal ethnic groups. The non-tribal ethnic groups may again be divided into different religious groups having varied cultural traditions. The Assamese Nepalis constitute one such group. The Assamese Nepalis identify themselves with Assam, their homeland and Assamese as their
language. The Assamese Nepalis also speak Gorkhali and Hindi. These Nepalis identify with the common culture, which they share with the Assamese people.

The Nepalis from Nepal have migrated to different parts of India including Assam and its adjoining areas in North East India due to various reasons. These are broadly historical, political, economic and geographical.

The history of Assam-Nepal connection is very old. There were matrimonial relations between the medieval ruling families of Assam and Nepal. It is held that Nepal king, Jaidev, married Rajyamati, daughter of Harshadev, a descendant king of Bhagadutta. Biswa Singha, the founder of Koch dynasty of Assam, married Nepali princess Ratna Kanti. There are historical evidences, which indicate that some limited migrations of the Nepalis took place prior to the coming of the Britishers to Assam in 1826. It is held that one group of pandas (priests) of the famous Kamakhya temple situated in Guwahati, the state capital of Assam, owe their origin to Nepal. The Nepali migrants gradually assimilated with the Assamese society. The Assamese Nepalis are distributed throughout the Brahmaputra valley districts of Assam in North East India. However, they are not distributed evenly throughout Assam. There is marked variation from district to district.
The overwhelming majority of the Assamese Nepalis are rural inhabitants and majority of them are cultivators. On the other hand, the Assamese Nepalis living in the urban areas of Assam are cattle breeders, service holders, businessmen, etc. In Assam, many of them turn into marginal farmers-cum-small dairymen. Some of them are engaged in road and building constructions. Still some of them are absorbed as security personnel, *darwan* (door security), *chowkidar* (campus security), peon, driver and carpenter, etc. both in the government and non-government sectors. Their economy mainly centres round cultivation. A lot of them also pursue other occupations such as schoolteacher, shopkeeper and businessmen or as servicemen in different departments. Now, cattle breeding has become secondary occupation due to lack of grazing land. It has been evident that the occupational mobility among the Assamese Nepalis through generations in the study villages is quite remarkable.

The family is the basic social unit among the Assamese Nepalis. Generally, nuclear families are mostly found in the three study villages. Quarrels between family members result separation in the family. The Assamese Nepalis are monogamous and they practise caste endogamy. Isogamy is the most prevalent type of marriage among them. Incompatibility between husband and wife, conflicts between mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, sisters-in-law
and between married brothers sometimes result into dissolution of marriage among the Assamese Nepalis. The kinship system of the Assamese Nepalis of the study villages is bilateral. The simultaneous use of both classificatory and descriptive terms is found among the study group.

The influence of indigenous (Assamese) folk beliefs and customs is quite appreciable in the socio-cultural life of the Assamese Nepalis. Elements both from their own tradition and the indigenous folk tradition of the host society coexist in the socio-cultural life of the Assamese Nepalis. This may be explained in terms of assimilation of the Assamese Nepalis into the indigenous society. Contact and communication between the Assamese Nepalis and other indigenous people through generation have resulted in sharing 'common definitions of the situation' within which they meet and share a 'common culture'.

All the three study villages are very old. The inhabitants of these villages identify themselves as Assamese. Both Assamese and Assamese Nepalis inhabit Hirabari village. In Kiringbori and Teckelikur Grant villages, there are a few Assamese families in each village. The Assamese caste villages surround Hirabari village. The Bodo, Assamese Hindu and Assamese Muslim villages surround Kiringbori village. On the other hand, Assamese Hindu, Garo,
Assamese Muslim and Bengali Hindu inhabited villages surround Tekeliakur Grant village.

The villagers of all the three study villages always maintain various relations with the wider society in the context of day-to-day activities, economic activities, religious functions and festivals.

There have been definite signs of assimilationist tendency among the Assamese Nepalis during the last nineteen decades or so. The Assamese Nepalis can be stated as assimilationist whose aim is to merge with the indigenous society.

The assimilation of the Assamese Nepalis who were originally migrants, may be stated as essentially ‘cultural assimilation’ and partly ‘structural assimilation’. The Assamese Nepalis are learning the manners and style of the Assamese society. The members of this group are not widely related to the members of the Assamese society, including the Hindus, on the intimate levels of family formation and so on.

In so far as the Assamese Nepalis are concerned, their seventh generation is in the process of assimilation. In view of the trend existing among the Nepalis, it is reasonable to expect that they will be able to merge fully with the Assamese society in the near future.