CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

All over the world women are not treated equally as men. Her capacity to do any important work, to take any important decision is a matter of doubt among men. Her contribution to family as well as to society seldom gets recognition. Women throughout the life live under the subjugation of men. Majority of them enjoy little freedom or no freedom in their life. Women throughout the human history seen to be suffering from various social injustices, rules and restrictions of societies, specific to women only. Such conditions attracted the attention of many social scientists and has resulted in growth of women studies. In the present study an attempt has been made to highlight the status of women in two rural tribal societies of Kamrup district, Assam. They are the Boros and the Garos inhabiting in two different villages of Kamrup district, within the Boko Revenue Circle. In the study womens’ position has been investigated mainly in domestic sphere of life, in economic activities, in education, in marital life and in inheritance of property.

The study has been presented in seven different chapters. The first chapter comprises the introduction of the above issues or the problem. Also it embraces the objectives, justification and methods of study. The review of literature is also included in the introductory chapter. For fulfilment of the project, definite anthropological techniques have been used. The study is based on primary data collected from study area.
The chapter II comprises the short account of the study areas and the communities. Also it exhibits the demographic outline of the study villages. In Bhogdabari there are 92 households of Boro community. The total population of these households are 496, with a number of 251 males and 245 females. The population ratio is 1000 : 976. The Singpara village has a population of 418 in 78 households. Among them 204 are males and 214 are females. The ratio of male female population is 1000: 1049.

The women’s status in domestic life has been highlighted in chapter III. In this area of study husband’s cooperation in rearing and caring of children, and in carrying out household works are examined. The study reveals that large section of women of both the societies received husband’s help in rearing of their children. In carrying out household work also a very large section of Boro women get husband’s help. Similarly women also help their husbands in domestic life. Almost similar type of mutual cooperation of husbands and wives are found in Garo society. It appears that large sections of Boro women cooperate with their husbands in deciding the matter of children’s education. In this matter same percentage of Garo women are also involved with their husbands. Apart from this, few Garo women has taken decision independently in the matter of their children’s education. Within the area of domestic life some other aspects are also investigated. From the study it comes to light that only a few Boro women has freedom of spending of household earning, while among the Garos relatively larger section of women are free to spend whatever they earn. However, women of both Boro and Garo societies get freedom on their individual earning. Searching about women’s freedom of movement it is found that both Boro women and Garo women enjoy freedom in routine outing. But majority women of both the societies have no freedom of movement. Only a small section of Boro women has freedom to move outside. Among the Garos also almost equal section of women exercise such freedom. The study on husband’s assault shows that the Boro
women do not suffer from such atrocities and their position is very good while the Garo women’s position is not as like as Boro women.

In chapter IV, it has been tried to focus on women’s role in maintaining household economy. Women’s freedom of earning is also investigated in this chapter. The study reveals that the women of both the societies are involved with earning. A good section of Boro women has one means of earning while some of them have more than one occupation. Few Boro women earn individually, while majority extend their help in the process of family earning. The Garo women also earn for the family. Some of them earn through participating in agricultural activities, while some others earn individually. Apart from the earning processes, women’s participation in decision making is investigated in the aspects of buying and selling of materials. The study reveals that a large section of Boro women participate in the aspect of buying and selling of family land, in selling of major household products, in purchasing of household valuables and in buying of day-to-day necessities of life. However they are not dominant participants in their society. In the said areas of economic field the Garo women’s participation is also considerable, but not equal to their male counterparts. In purchasing of day-to-day objects, few Garo women takes independent decision and it reflects their freedom in transaction of money. In the matter of land use the Boro women’s position appeared high as they work side by side with their husbands and advise in the matter of crop selection, irrigation and the likes. The Garo women also participate with their husbands in the matter of land use, but the Boro women are more progressive in this matter.

The chapter V highlighted the educational status of the Boros and Garos of study area. As per study, among the Boros the male and female literacy rate is 86.45% and 75.51% respectively. On the other hand, male literacy rate of the Garos is 90.68% and of female is 90.65%. It is found that though not equal to men, the Boro women’s status is
high in terms of literacy rate. On the other hand, the Garo women’s status is higher than their Boro counterparts in this regard. However, in attainment of higher education the Boro women’s position is found behind men of their society, where men’s highest attainment is Master of Science and Graduation in Engineering and women’s highest qualification is B.A. Among the Garos the highest qualification for both males and females is graduation. Thus regarding attainment of higher education much difference are not observed between the women of two communities.

Regarding facilities of women for getting education like their male counterparts, it comes to light that at about 60/70 years back the women of Boro society did not get equal facilities of education with their male counterparts. At that time few male child were aware of education and they got their parent’s support. But it is noteworthy that at that time the Garo women had got almost equal facilities of education with the men of their society.

Presently all young females of Boro society are taking education and majority of them are getting almost equal facilities of education with other young males of society. Similarly, all young females of Garo society are getting almost equal facilities of education as found by the young male children of their society.

The women’s place in marital life is sited in chapter VI. The study reveals that though the Boros are endogamous regarding community, the society is not so rigid about it. The majority Boro girls normally marry within the age of 16 - 20 years. Such practice is not considered as child marriage following the view of Boro society. In view of a sizeable section of men and women of Boro society, parent’s choice is ideal for selecting the spouses of their sons and daughters. However, in real life a good section of boys and girls choose their life partner themselves.
The study shows that a sizeable section of Boro women (49%) married at their own choice. Similarly 58% men also had chosen their wives themselves. It appears that almost 50% of Boro women had enjoyed freedom of choosing their life partners and thus the position of Boro women in this aspect is satisfactory to some extent.

Among the Boros the daughters are never forcefully married. Even if any girl leave to her lover’s house without any consultation to parents of both the party she is not forced to come back or punished; rather, such a couple is recognised by society with some formalities. The society’s recognition to such couple indicates liberal attitude of Boro society towards their children’s choice. The Boro daughter’s freedom of choosing life partners is reflected through such cases.

Among the Boros polygyny (two wives) is found though not common. A section of society’s attitude towards divorced women is not favourable. The widows and the barren women are expected to remain away from participating in some auspicious occasions. A widow is never forced to remarry or to remain unmarried. Such freedom indicates favourable position of a widow in Boro society.

The Garos are strict followers of clan exogamy. However, rare cases of inter community marriages are found. Majority women informants got married in between 21 - 25 years of age. Only one woman was married at the age of 15 years.

For a large section of men and women of Garo society, parent’s choice is ideal in selection of spouse for sons and daughters. However, study shows that large section of men (83%) and women (75%) of Garo society had married at their own choice. It reflects a difference between the general view of society and their practice.
Presently, arranged marriage is the common form of marriage among the Garos. Some arrangement takes place after mutual understanding of boys and girls. Among the Garos the proposals of marriage comes from girl’s side.

In Garo society women are customarily authorised to choose their life partners. In a Garo family daughter’s choice is always counted, even in if they choose a boy of other community. A few parents choose son-in-law for their daughters, but they do not force her for her consent.

There are rare instances of separation of husbands-wives in Garo society. The society’s impression to divorced women is not favourable except a few women who think otherwise. Among the Garos a barren woman are not seen as other woman. In Garo society a widow marriage is allowed, however she is never pressurised. Polygyny is not found in Garo society. According to them it is due to the influence of Christianity.

It is fond that the women in both Boro and Garo society are enjoying freedom of choosing life partners, however for Garo women it is acquired freedom and for Boro women it is achieved. In the matter of remarriage of widows, women of both the societies are found in favourable position. In both the societies the barren women are not treated as other women of the society. Absence of polygyny keeps Garo women in higher position than the Boro women. In both the societies abandoning of wives is also seen. In both Boro and Garo society changes are taking place regarding the customary rule of marriage. However, the overall position of Boro and Garo women of Kamrup district are found very satisfactory in marital life.

The women’s position in terms of property inheritance has been displayed in chapter VII. Acquiring of parental properties by women was focused to find out the position of women in terms of property inheritance. Few case studies are also presented as
a part of findings. The study reveals that in Boro society though patrilineal inheritance of property is the rule, yet a small section of Boro women are getting parental properties. Few of them are inheriting the properties, while some others are getting either as parent’s token of love or as their financial care for daughters. Among the Garos, daughters are the majority in inheriting parental properties. Among the males very few men are getting parental lands and these are some exceptional cases of inheritance. It is common that majority of them follow the rules of matrilineal inheritance. Thus regarding inheritance of parental properties the Garo women’s place is always higher than their male counterparts. Also in terms of inheritance of property the Garo women’s place is above the place of Boro women

Conclusion

After investigating the women’s position in the above parameters, it appears that in both Boro and Garo society there is cooperation between husbands and wives in carrying out domestic works and in rearing and caring of their children. The study reveals that the women of both Boro and Garo societies have freedom of earning. On the other hand only few Boro women have freedom of spending household earning. However, they have full freedom to spend their own earning. Among the Garos, an average section of women has freedom of spending household earning without consultation to anybody. In spending of own earning, the Garo women enjoy similar freedom as the Boro women enjoy. However, in spending of household money the Garo women’s status appeared higher than the Boro women. Regarding freedom of movement, it appears that a small section of women of each Boro and Garo society enjoy freedom of movement, other’s freedom is limited to
their routine outing only. The women of the two societies are enjoying similar status in this aspect of life.

In consideration of the point of women’s participation in decision making, it appears that large sections of women of both Boro and Garo society participate with their husbands in deciding the matter like children’s education. Apart from joint decision, few Garo women took independent decision regarding children’s education. Thus it appears that the status of the Garo women is higher than her women counterparts of Boro society in deciding the matter of children’s education. In various aspects of economic activities also, large section of Boro women participate with their husbands in making decisions. Similarly, in these aspects a large section of Garo women accompany their husbands in taking decisions. Apart from joining their husbands, a small section of Garo women independently decide the matter of purchasing of day-to-day objects. Thus it is reflected that the status of women of both the societies are very high in consideration of women’s participation in decision making. Also it appears that few Garo women are enjoying freedom of taking independent decisions. In the matter of agricultural land use also women of two societies are enjoying almost similar place.

The study exhibits that the Garo women are enjoying customarily approved freedom of choosing their life partners as among them proposal of marriage first comes from girl’s side. The Boro women are also enjoying freedom of choosing their spouse, though society does not encourage them to do so. Few parents against their will accept children’s choice. It may reflect the favourable place of Boro women in terms marriage. However, the status of Garo women is higher than the Boro women in marital life.

In terms of literacy the Boro women’s status is high but not equal to their male counterparts. The literacy rate is worth mentioning that they are ahead of other ST
population of Assam, where as per the census record of 2001, the literacy rate of ST population of Assam is 62.5%, where the male and female literacy rate is 72.3% and 52.3% respectively. Regarding literacy rate, the status of Garo females, as well as males is very high and almost equal to each other. The study reveals that at present in terms of equal facilities of education to both the gender, women of both the societies are enjoying very high status.

Regarding property inheritance in Boro society, though sons are the normal heir of parental properties, daughters are also not totally deprived of it. In special circumstances they also get parental properties. It indicates that the position of Boro women is not bad in terms of property, but cannot be compared with her male counterparts. In respect of inheritance of parental property, the Garo women’s status is very high and well above the level of their male counterparts.

A search on prevalent marriage system reveals that among the Boros monogamy is the general rule, but rare instances of polygyny is found though society does not encourage it. On the other hand, the Garo families are monogamous. The study also reveals that the Boro women are free from husband’s assault, while very few Garo women have such experiences, though very rare.

After considering every objective, one by one, it is found that it is not possible to state the status of women in few sentences. Also to draw an overall status is also not possible. However, after examination it appears that the status of Boro women is high in domestic area except the matter of spending of household earning and in the matter of freedom of movement. In economic field she has saying in transaction of household materials. Also she has freedom of earning. Thus a Boro woman’s status can be called high in domestic life. In the world of education also the Boro women’s status is high as
she is enjoying almost equal facilities with men of their society. The Boro women’s status is reflected high in the area of education also. However, the prevalence of polygyny, though rare, has some negative impact on high status of Boro women. In terms of property inheritance the Boro women’s position is lower than men.

The Garo women’s status is high in domestic life except the rare practices of husband’s assault. In the matters of economic activities the Garo women’s status is high. In the field of education also the Garo women’s status is very high since long back. The Garo women’s status is remarkably high in terms of marriage. Regarding the inheritance of property, the Garo women’s position is very high, as they are the actual heir of their parental properties.

As both the tribal societies are not under total male domination, therefore, the status of women there cannot be termed as bad. After examining the accepted parameters in the study, it is found that the Garo women are slightly ahead in the area of education, in marital life and in terms of inheritance of property. The matrilineal system may be a factor in this regard. However, in domestic sphere of life and in activities relating to economic matters the women both society enjoy equal status.

**Verifying Hypotheses**

If the hypotheses are examined the following facts come out from the study. The position of Boro women is lower in the family in the aspects of freedom of spending of household earning, in freedom of movement and in marital life (as polygyny is seen). But in other aspects of domestic life her position is almost equal to her male counterparts. Thus the hypothesis A is found partially true.
It appears that the Boro women (patrilineal) are enjoying right to express their views in the area of economy, in educating their children and in choosing their life partners. Thus a part of hypothesis B is established true. As revealed in study the women of Boro society are enjoying the right of earning, which verifies the truth of another part of hypothesis B. The study also reveals that the Boro women have no right to spend household earning, and hence a part of hypothesis B is not established.

Regarding women’s freedom of taking decision in different aspects of life, it appears that only a small section of Garo women had taken independent decision in selecting school for children and in purchasing the day-to-day objects of life. The women’s independent decision in other aspects of study appears very negligible. Thus it is reflected that the women of Boro society are not free to take decision independently, and on the other hand, few Garo women has such freedom and the hypothesis C is found almost correct in case of both the societies.

It is known to all that the Garo women inherit parental properties, as their family is matrilineal; but her status is appeared almost similar to Boro women of patrilineal society, in the aspect of domestic life and in the area of economic activities. Only in the areas of education, marriage and property inheritance, the Garo women’s status is reflected as higher. But we have to keep in mind that the Garo women’s better status in education is somewhat affected by the impact of Christianity, the religion of the Garos. Thus in one word, it cannot be said that women’s status is higher in matrilineal society, though they may inherit parental property and therefore the hypothesis D may be interpreted as partially true.