CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study endeavours to examine the different dimensions of the festival in two situations-Assam and France. Festival is one of the important cultural complex through which various aspects of the society are reflected. This study has conspicuous limitations because it tries to evaluate the festival 'Bihu of a state (Assam) and Christmas of a country (France). However, the present study tries meticulously to provide transparent picture of the aforesaid festivals in two situations. The data of the study has been presented in the following chapter:

Chapter I, i.e., Introduction, includes the problem under study, review of literature, and methodology through which the pedestal of the study is established. Second chapter gives an appraisal of the socio-cultural situations of Assam and France. The nucleus of the study is festival and therefore a prelude of festival of Assam and France are given in Chapter III and Chapter IV, respectively. The prime festival of Assam is Bihu, which is a Spring festival and observed by all the communities of Assam irrespective of caste and creed. Chapter V gives a meticulous description of the Bihu festival of Assam along with the Christmas in France.

In the present study, some important aspects has been taken into consideration such as festivals of Assam and France, similarities and dissimilarities of festivals of both the study areas, fertility cult associated with the festivals of the study areas,
involvement of both the societies to their respective festivals, etc. Though Assam and France are geographically different to each other, both the areas are similar to its way of celebration, especially in regard of festivals. Assam is an excellent example of unity in diversity. People belong to varied cultures represent Assam as a paradisiac land for the common people. On the other hand, France is one of the largest migrated populated countries of the world. Annually a large number of outside dwellers migrated to France for various reasons. Besides Roman Catholic and Protestant, a good number of people belong to Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism etc. reside in France. Both the areas are very much flexible in cultural acceptance. The customs, traditions, belief and ways of life of the Assamese and the French people are completely different although the people of both the areas are culturally very rich. Like Assam, France has also liberty of religion. As told by a lady named Salley Ploteau from Rouen of Normandy in France, French people of her native place participate in other religious festivals also. She told that, she herself take part in the festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi, Dewali, etc. of the Hindus, Nanak Jayanti of the Sikhs of India residing in France. She also likes to participate in Chinese New Year festival there.

Assam and France are culturally related to each other for a long time. Annually a large number of French tourists visit Assam especially to see the one horned Rhino in Kaziranga National Park and to enjoy the scenic beauty of Majuli, one of the largest river islands of the world. It was very much interesting to see that some of the French tourists speak Assamese also. In the study it was found that France is a liberal country in practicing religion. After French Revolution, many social
restrictions were abolished in France. French people, who belong to the same culture, speak same language, food habit is also same but they practice different religions. Majority of the people even do not believe in religion. From the religious point of view we can see a reverse picture in Assam. Religion plays an important role in the life of Assamese people. Almost every aspect of Assamese people are more or less controlled by religion.

It was observed that festivals of both the regions, specially Bohag Bihu and Christmas are similar to each other to some extent. Some of the common traits of these two festivals are:

(i) Bohag Bihu and Christmas are celebrated not to establish a new religion but to bring peace and amity.

(ii) Bohag Bihu is performed by different communities with different name. Boro celebrates Bohag Bihu as ‘Baisagu’, Rabha as ‘Baykho’, Mishing call it ‘Biu, among Deuris Bohag Bihu celebrated as ‘Bisu’. Christmas is also known by different names like ‘Xmas’, ‘Nöel’, ‘Twelve Days’ etc.

(iii) In both the festivals, some beliefs are integral regarding good fortune and prosperity. During Bohag Bihu, Assamese people observe a magical rites. They write a Sanskrit prayer on leaves of nahar (ironwood) tree and place them under the rafter (one of the slopping beams supporting a roof). French people believe Mistletoe (Le Gui) as holy greenery. They believe that hanging mistletoe above the door protect the house from evil spirits, witches, and different diseases and bring good fortune for the
(iv) Exchanging gift, wearing new cloth, feasting, worshipping, etc. are the common features of Bihu and Christmas.

(v) Red is the particular colour conspicuous in both Bihu and Christmas.

(vi) Bihu is originally an agricultural festival. On the other hand, Christmas is a religious festival. But both the festivals are secular in nature. Bihu and Christmas are celebrated by people belongs to different caste, creed and religion.

(vii) Traditionally thirteen deserts are eaten during Christmas. It is believed that thirteen deserts of Christmas represent thirteen disciples of Jesus Christ with whom He took His last meal. In the Assamese society, it is customary to eat seven herbs during Bohag Bihu. These seven herbs are locally known as *sat sak*.

(viii) Christmas is believed as the festival of light. Candles are necessarily lighten in Christmas. Like this, earthen lamps are lighted during Bihu festival.

Besides the above mentioned similarities, Bihu and Christmas are similar to each other in another aspect also. Bihu and Christmas both are now commercialized. As stated earlier, religion is not so important for French people as for the Assamese.
According to the French tourists interviewed for the present study, most of the French people do not want to practice their religion. They do not like to visit church even in the religious occasions. Now, youths are even do not know why they celebrate Christmas. Christmas is only a festival of enjoyment for them. Bihu festival is also become commercialized. In this respect, media specially visual medias plays a vital role. Bihu is an agricultural festival and it was performed at paddy field and at a distance from the habitational areas for the fertility of the soil. But now, instead of paddy field, Bihu dances are performed at the stages, in front of large number of audience. Earlier, there were some restrictions in performance of Bihu like- Bihu dances could not performed in front of masses. High caste boys and girls, specially the Brahmins were not allowed to participate in Bihu dances. At present there is no such restriction in performance of Bihu.

Bihu and Christmas have also some dissimilarities. Some of these are:

(i) Christmas is a Winter time festival celebrated at the end of December.

   The most important form of Bihu, Bohag Bihu, is a Summer time festival observed at the mid of April.

(ii) Annually, Bihu is celebrated in three shades -Bohag Bihu or Rongali Bihu, Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu and Kati Bihu or Kangali Bihu. But Christmas is one time observed festival celebrated every year on 25th December.
(iii) Bihu represents three seasons, i.e., Bohag Bihu in Spring, Magh Bihu in Summer and Kati Bihu in Autumn. Christmas is celebrated only in mid-Winter season.

(iv) If we go back to the origin of Bihu, we will find that basically it is the festival of rural people integrally related to nature; but Christmas has indispensable relation to Christianity.

(v) Christmas is one of a mostly celebrated festival of the world. But the Bihu festival still has some limitations. It is principally observed in Assam and very few people outside Assam are acquainted with the nature of Bihu festival.

(vi) Though Christmas is the festival of joy, no traditional dance is performed during Christmas. Songs (carols) are sung during Christmas describing the life of Jesus. But dance and songs are indispensable part of Bohag Bihu festival. Though songs are related to agricultural activities, the mood of romance and sexual desire are conspicuous dimensions of the songs of Bohag Bihu.

(vii) Both Bihu and Christmas are the colourful festivals. However, decorations in Christmas are indispensable, while decorations of the place where the festival is observed is not essential in Bihu.

(viii) The date of Christmas celebration is fixed and it is always celebrated on 25th December. But the time of observance of Bihu
Above mentioned are some of the similarities and dissimilarities of Bihu and Christmas observed in the two areas of the present study. Besides Bihu and Christmas, some other festivals of both the places are also related to each other. After Christmas, Easter is the most important festival of France. Easter is celebrated in commemoration of Jesus Christ. It is one of the most important Spring festival of France. The French people believe that resurrection of Jesus Christ after three days of crucifixion is actually the indication of coming Spring season. Like fresh blooming of nature in Spring, Jesus also brings new hope for mankind with His resurrection. In this respect, Easter can relate with Assam’s Spring time festival Bohag Bihu. Use of egg is another interesting feature of Easter. Like the Assamese society, French people also believe egg as the symbol of fertility. During Easter, French people exchanged decorated eggs with kins and well-wishers.

Feasting and fasting are two important features followed by the French people during festive seasons. Orthodox Christians strictly keep them in fasting in some special occasions. They even do not take fish or meat during those days. In the Assamese society, fasting is specially observed during religious festivals, particularly during the worship of different deities. French people are fond of food. They like to eat. So, feasting is an essential aspect of French festival. Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian festivals celebrated on 6th January every year. This festival is similar to the Assamese Bhogali Bihu in respect of feasting. mah karai (dried fried black pulses, rice, sesame, ginger etc), pitha (rice cake), laru (sweet roll), chira (rice flicks) etc. are necessary food items of Bhogali Bihu. In the same
way, eating of the *gallette de rois* or cake of King is a popular tradition of Epiphany. Wearing mask in Mardi Gras is an integral feature of this festival. Like Mardi Gras, in the *Bhaona*, the one act Vaishnavite play, Assamese actors use mask as a part of performance. In Assam, the custom of appeasing ancestors is prevalent both in tribal and caste society. Like the Assamese, French people also remember their deceased forefathers by celebrating All Saints’ Day, which is locally termed as La Toussaint.

Besides these similarities and dissimilarities of festivals, another aspect of the study is to examine the preset of fertility cult in Bihu and Christmas. France is very advance in agricultural sector. The country fulfills a huge amount of agricultural demand in North Western Europe. Though agriculture is an important sector of France, the tradition of fertility cult is hardly seen in their society. Fertility cult has not played so much important role in that country. But in Southern France, the custom of burning Yule log is followed from Christmas Eve till to the New Year. They believe that burning Yule log protects the house from lightning, diseases and evil powers throughout the year. They also believe that if they throw the branches of Yule log into the soil, it keeps the corn healthy. They also use such unburned piece in making plough. It is said that, this practice make the seed prosper. It is a known fact that many of the traits of Bihu are integrally related to fertility cult.

The study revealed that, in both the situations festival is an important social aspect. The involvement of the masses in celebration creates a new way of communication and social exchange; people of the two different societies get an opportunity to exchange their culture in more innovative way creating an environment of peace and amity.