CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Festival is a special occasion of celebration, particularly in regard to commemoration or thanks giving. It is a social institution as well as best unifiers of society and nation. By celebrating festival one can get the opportunity to introduce with his culture and tradition. It is the element of a culture which can bring the feelings of oneness and promote unity and solidarity among the people of a society. ‘The term ‘Festival’ comes from the Latin words Festivalis, Festum and Festivus. Festivalis is a Medieval Latin word, but the other two words Festum and Festivus are from classical Latin Language. When the word festival is used as adjective, it means lively, Joyous and Merry. Sometimes, it also pertains to a feast and becomes Festal. But when it is used as noun, it indicates a joyful celebration, a merry making, a commemoration day, a period appointed for celebration, a festival of the religious institution, a period gathering for important musical performance, etc. The Sanskrit term for festival is, utsava and a great festival is known as Mohotsava. The word utsava means Jubilee, a day of merriment’ (Baruah, 2013:17-18).

Festival is a time of merriment and enjoyment where people get the opportunity to spend the time with the family members, friends and community members. It has a particular human appeal which brings the whole society under a common umbrella irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Festivals are generally observed to meet a
specific purpose or theme. Propitiation of deities, welfare of the family, good harvest, welcoming new year, ancestor worship are some of purpose for which festivals are often served. Festivals have been celebrating since ancient time. The magio-rituals are believed to associate with the origin of festival. Primitive people were the worshipper of nature and they believed that these divine powers (sun, moon, river, sky, etc.) are responsible for different aspects of life. So, to appease the nature God, people observed some rituals which in the passage of time emerged in the modern form of festival. ‘According to Hendelson: festivals held by the primitive people consisted of collective magic or religious rites for propitiation of evil spirits and invocation of friendly supernatural powers and were held on such occasions as the admission of new members to a tribe, disposal of the dead and preparation of fishermen for the catch, hunters for the chase and warriors for battle. A communal meal was usually a part of the festival. The development of agriculture was accompanied by new festivals, also consisting of magical religious rituals in connection with the season. Specially unit with the vernal Equinox and the winter solstice’ (cited in Sarma, 1988:55).

‘Crooke (a sociologist) classified the most primitive Indian festivals into two main groups, first the festivals which are observed through some magical rites to increase the fertility of the soil, the rainfall, the sunshine and the growth and harvesting of the crops. Secondly, those celebrated to ward off the influence of the evil spirits and demons’ (Baruah, 2013:37). With the progress of time, festivals assumed many colours and accumulating many aspects of human civilization and become the inseparable part of society. Depending on nature, festivals can be
categorized as Seasonal, Calendric, Religious, Non-religious or Secular, Sacramental, Purposive, etc. Taking feast, following taboos, wearing new dress, gift giving, music and dance are some of the important features of modern festival.

1.1 Definitions of Festival

Different definitions of festivals are given by various writers and scholars. According to Kapoor (2000:471) 'Utsava- 'Festival', religious celebrations are holy days and their observance in home and temple. Utsava is one of the five constant duties, panchanity karmas' (five essential duties of a day). ‘Festivals are occasions for people to come together. The remembrance of some past event, religious or national, is the usual basis for common celebration. Some festivals have in the course of time become so deeply rooted in the consciousness of people, that they constitute essential and inseparable elements of culture’ (Shilananda, 2006:7).

According to the book Feast and Festivals (publishing year is not available: 58) ‘Feast and festivals are special time of celebration. Most of them take place once a year and may last for one or more days. Many feasts and festivals honour great leaders, saints or gods or spirits. Other celebrates a harvest, the beginning of a season or of a year, or the anniversary of a historical event. Most are joyous occasions, but some involve mourning and repentance’. ‘A festival is a symbol of identity; it is not specific, but general for all communities. In a festival the entire community feels emotionally involved. During the festivals the entire community gets an opportunity of coming together exclusive of others’ (Lyngdoh, 1991: 164).

In the view to Devi (2004:107-108), ‘Festival is the sign of culture of any society. Through the organized worship of deities, the individual shares in the unity and
harmony of social order. Festivals were originally evolved in the hunting stage of Paleolithic period. To hunt the animal, primitive people worshipped the 'god of forest. The same processes were practiced in food producing period of human civilization'. Festivals are the external expression of social behavior. Scholars like Jacob Grimm, Max Muller, Andrew Lang, Wilhelm Manhardt, James Frazer and so on made attempts to link belief, primitive and magical rituals with the modern festivals. We can assume that the tradition of modern festivals emanated from the beliefs and magical rituals of the ancient community' (Sarma, 2001: 55).

'Throughout the history of human culture, certain days or period of time have been set aside to commemorate, ritually celebrates or reenact or anticipate events or seasons agricultural, religious or socio-cultural that give meaning and cohesiveness to an individual and to his religious, political or socio economic community. Because such days or periods generally originated in religious celebrations or ritual commemoration that usually include sacred community meal, they are called feasts or festivals' (New Encyclopedia Britannica, 2007:835).

Festival is an occasion that reinforces the presence of God in the life of the individual and the family and binds them to the community. They are also moments for young people to absorb and be part of age old, still vibrant and living traditions. Festivals are also about fun and enjoyment, more so when they coincide with agricultural events such as harvest, a time to let go of the cares of daily life. According to Webster's dictionary the term festival means a day or time or religious or other celebration marked by fasting, ceremonies or their observances' (Tribhuwan, 2003:6).
1.2 Types of Festivals

There are different type of festivals which can be broadly classified into the following categories

(i) **Seasonal Festival**

Festivals those celebrate at different seasons like Autumn, Spring or the festivals related to different stages of harvest like ploughing, seed sowing planting, etc.

(ii) **Calendric Festival**

Every religious group like Hindu, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jain etc. have their annual festivals. Birth and death anniversaries of saints and national heroes and national events, Independence day, Republic day, etc., come under this category of festival.

(iii) **Limited Participation Festival**

The festivals which are limited to particular occupational groups like craftsmen, fishermen, potters, blacksmiths, etc. are called limited participation festivals.

(iv) **Sacramental Festival**

Sacramental festivals are associated with the life cycle of human being. At different stages of the life specially birth, marriage and death are celebrated by sacramental festivals.
(v) **Religious Festival**

Festivals those purely based on a particular religious faith and believe are religious festivals. Offering worship to deities, ancestor worship, etc., are generally practiced as religious festivals.

(vi) **Non-religious or Secular Festival**

Drama, dance and music festivals, Film festival, festivals related to art and industry and national events are the example of secular festivals.

(vii) **Purposive Festival**

Though most of the festivals have a purpose of celebration, some festivals are observed with a particular desire. It may be for the welfare of family members or for the welfare of the community. This type of festival comes under the category of purposive festivals.

(viii) **Festivals belong to Great and Little Tradition**

*Vrata* (fasting) based and the rituals related with the worship of deities belong to great tradition. On the other hand most of the non-voluntary (observe for the welfare of a group of people), regional festivals are belongs to little tradition.

Besides the above mentioned festivals, some other festivals are integral to eclipses, socio — religious festival, National festival, Compositive festival, i.e., festivals which are composed of various cultural aspects of different communities, are some of the festivals that are celebrated all over the world.
In India, festivals are celebrated from time immemorial. During the Vedic period, along with gods and goddesses, people were the worshipper of nature. After that, the Mughals invaded India and rule over for several centuries. During that time, the Mughal art and culture mixed with the Indian culture. As an impact of Mughal tradition, many Mughal festivals are become the part of Indian culture. After Mughal, the Britishers came and ruled India for almost 150 years. During this period, Britisher's converted many Hindu people to Christian and introduce the festivals like Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, etc. Today, most of these festivals are celebrates almost all over India. Impact of Buddhism, Jainism and other religious cult have bring multi ethnic fairs and festivals to India.

1.3 Tribal Festivals

In India, a good number of tribal communities use to live from the remote past. They are inhabited both on the plains and in the remote and inaccessible hilly areas. They are mainly agriculturist and therefore their most of the festivals are associated with agricultural rites. Following are some of the festivals of tribal people of India

1. ‘Festivals associated with agricultural cycle
   (i) Festivals associated with preparation of agriculture land
   (ii) Sowing festival
   (iii) Festivals to rejoice over growth of new leafy vegetables
   (iv) Weeding festival
   (v) Harvesting festival
1. Threshing and storage festival
2. Festivals associated with seasonal change
3. Hunting festivals
4. Festivals of tribal gods
5. Ancestral festivals
6. Preventive, promotive and curative health festival
7. Festivals associated with cattle welfare and health
8. Festivals of renewal
9. Festivals associated with cosmic movements and changes
10. Festivals of medical practitioners
11. War festival (Tribhuwan, 2003:9-10)

1.4 Functions of Festival

As a social institution, festivals have an unifying influence on social life. It serves both positive and negative functions for the society. Some of the positive functions of festivals are –

(i) Festival is the source of relaxation. By celebrating festival, people can get rid of their monotonous daily life.

(ii) Festival is an occasion of face to face interaction. In festival people get an opportunity to interact with family members, relatives, friends and other members of the community.
(iii) Interaction and conversation creates a bond among community members which help to promote the social and cultural unity to demonstrate and experience a particular identity.

(iv) Festivals have educational value. It informs people about their tradition and culture.

(v) Festivals have hygienic value also. Traditional believe of cleaning, help people to keep themselves hygiene and healthy.

(vi) Festivals may be the great source of income for poor people. At the time of festival, they get the change to earn more and more money.

(vii) Festivals carry positive message to the society. Most of the festivals are celebrated as a sign of victory of good over evil power. This positive message lead the society in a proper direction.

(viii) Festivals are the platform to show the hidden talent and promoter of traditional culture. Modern festivals like – Film festival, Music festival, Art festival, etc., provide an opportunity to people to show their talent. On the other hand Food festival, Craft festival helps to promote the indigenous food and material culture of different societies.

Though numerically the quantity of positiveness of festival is more than negative, we cannot deny its negative aspects on society –

(i) Festivals are the good source of income for poor people. However, at
the time of festival, most of the people taking away themselves from their respective work which harm the economy of the nation.

(ii) A large quantity of electricity have been consumed during festivals.

(iii) Use of plastic and other non-disposable materials used during festivals specially in urban areas polluted the soil as well as the environment.

1.5 Differences between Fair and Festival

Though the term ‘fair’ is rigidly connected with the festival, there are some differences between Fair and Festival. These are

(i) Fair is celebrated on grand scale by more than one religious sect, tribe, caste or a community.

Festival is celebrated by one religious or sub-group, group, a tribe community with exceptions to few festivals.

(ii) Fair consists of a place which has people from various walks of life such as artisans, musicians, traders, vendors, cattle traders, devotees, middle men, drama, artists, acrobats etc.

Festival celebrations are usually accompanied by only one or two ethnic groups.

(iii) Fairs are celebrated at a traditional, sacred and fixed place.

Festivals are not necessarily celebrated at a fixed place.
(iv) Rituals performed in fairs are common to various ethnic or tribal groups. Rituals performed during festivals are common to one social group, a religious sect or a community.

(v) Food, sweets, fruits, nuts, etc. in fairs are of large variety and there is no specificity.

Food, sweets fruits, nuts, etc. prepared during festivals are specific.

(vi) Number of participants in fair are generally in millions.

Festive Participants are less in number as compared to fair’

(Tribhuwan, 2003:7-8).

1.6 Festivals of India

India is a land of festivals, where a good number of festivals are celebrated with gaiety and traditional gaiety. As an agri based country, India still declares it as the only living pilgrims of the world through its colourful festival and tradition. ‘Indian concept of the festival or ‘utsava’ is evident in India’s traditional philosophy. It acknowledges truth that we keep neglecting in our day to day life. Festivals stand for reunion. No one here celebrates a festival all by himself. Festival, the truth in reunion, is total celebration. It is anand, it is rasa and it is love. It does not only satisfy the intellect, it also fulfills the heart. The strength in the union and the invincible truth in love and inherent in Indian festival’ (Tribhuwan, 2003: 128-129).

‘Thirteen festivals in twelve months’, is a popular Indian saying and Indians fulfill it practically by celebrating a number of festivals in almost every month. ‘Owing to its
chequered history and the tolerant spirit of the natives, all major religions of the world are fairly represented in India so much so that it can be called a variable land of religions. Following their own styles and worshiping their own Gods, the people of numerous indigenous and immigrant faiths live in close harmony’ (Tribhuwan, 2003: 133).

Fig.1: Graphic representation of Indian seasons and their corresponding Indian months

1.7 Hindu Festivals

Hinduism is one of the oldest of all living religion. But Hinduism has no founder or definite basic religious text. Indian traditional calendar based on the twelve months and six seasons. For Hindus, every season has its own significance and ceremonial activities and they observed special rites, rituals and festivals with the mantras (spells) and hymns of Veda. The seasons are – Grishma, Varsha,
Sharat, Hemanta, Seet/Shishira and Vasanta. ‘As Hinduism has no founder and no effective central authority to enforce uniformity of belief and practices, there are no festivals that are celebrated with equal fervor by all Hindus, like Christmas by the Christians and Id by the Muslims. Further there are certain regional festivals celebrated as the most important of the year in some parts of India, but in other regions they are hardly known’ (Tribhuwan, 2003:3). Following are some of the festivals celebrates in various regions of the country in different seasons.

Table 1.1: Important festivals and holidays of India (other than Muslims) arranged in the order of the months of the Gregorian calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Name of Festival</th>
<th>Sectional / National</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January-</td>
<td>New Year</td>
<td>Mainly Christian</td>
<td>1st January Fixed; 26th January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February-</td>
<td>Republic Day</td>
<td>National Hindu</td>
<td>Mainly in Tamil Nadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pongal</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Mainly in Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhogali Bihu</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Mainly in Northern India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vasanta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panchami</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February-March</td>
<td>Shivaratri or Mahashivaratri</td>
<td>Hindu Parsi (Fasli)</td>
<td>All India Vernal Equinox Practically all over India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jamshed Navaroz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Festival/Event</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March-April</td>
<td>Gudi Parva</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Mainly in Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ugadi</td>
<td>Telegu New Year</td>
<td>Mainly in Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mahavir Jayanti</td>
<td>Jain</td>
<td>Pragati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hanuman Jayanti</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Mainly in Northern India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rama Navami</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Passover</td>
<td>Jew</td>
<td>Practically all over India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Naba Barsha</td>
<td>Bengali New Year</td>
<td>Mainly in Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April-May</td>
<td>Buddha Jayanti</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>Mainly in Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baisakhi or Vaisakhi</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rangali Bihu</td>
<td>Hindu but more secular than religious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vishu</td>
<td>Kerala New Year</td>
<td>Mainly in Kerala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shivaji Jayanti</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Mainly in Maharashtra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-July</td>
<td>Teej</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Mainly in Rajasthan and Gujarat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-August</td>
<td>Naga Panchami</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>Practically all over India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August-September</td>
<td>Janmashtami or Gokulashtami</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>All India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Fixed; 15th August</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Tribhuwan, 2003: 101-102)

Muslims follow pure lunar reckoning and their holidays do not correspond to the months of the Gregorian calendar. Hindu festivals are celebrated according to Indian calendars, most of which are lunar with intercalations; hence while Hindu festal days
do not recur exactly on the same dates of the Gregorian calendar, the difference is seldom more than a month.

Besides above mentioned festivals, Vata Savitri, Jaishtha Ashtomi, Ganga Dussehra, Nirjala Ekadashi, Snan yatra, Rath yatra, Teej, Guru Vyasa Purnima, Bhairava Shattami, Gita Jayanti, Dattatreya Jayanti, Rukmani Astani, Swarupa Dwadashi, Valmiki Jayanti, Dussehra, Sharad Purnima, Narak Chaturdashi, Kartika Snan, Surya Shasthi, Skanda Shasti, Karwa Chauth, Mauni Amavasya, Sakata Chauth, Maghi Purnima, Dol Punima, Hariyali Teej, Tulshi Jayanti, Narili Purnima, Jhulan Yatra, Shravani Mela, Tiruputi Festival, Rishi Panchami, Gangaur, Makar Sankranti, Nag Panchami, Chath, Dhan Terash, Raksha Bandhan, Onam, etc. are some of the festivals celebrated in different parts of India.

1.8 The Problem under Study

The present study deals with the ‘Festivals of Assam and France with Particular Reference to Bihu and Christmas’. The topic of the research is very new and no works have been done in this direction. It would be a torch bearer for the research scholars of next generation who intend to make an anthropological study on festivals. Since the topic is of two planets in geographical sense, the relative materials are hardly available which may be a doccelerate for research scholar in the domain of this type of comparative studies. As Assam is the local area for the researcher, both primary and secondary data was easily available. Compare to that, the secondary data on France was hardly available. Therefore the researcher had to depend on internet data, specially data collected from the official websites of France.
Assam is a state and France is a country. Though the researcher tried her best to specify the festivals studied, it become very difficult to choose the festivals from France. So, the researcher gathered the knowledge on widely and nationally celebrates festivals. Sometimes language came as a factor of obstacle at the time of collection of data, particularly on the festivals of France.

1.9 Literature Review

A number of works has been done by different writers and scholars on festival. In the year 1956, Baruah and Baveja meticulously examined some of the important fairs and festivals of the different communities of undivided Assam. Goswami has a couple of works integral to Bihu festival of Assam. In 1966, he has written on the Rongali Bihu in relation to the Spring time and the Assamese society. In the year 1995, he delineated on the festivals of Assam and in 1996 he has examined the different aspects of Bohag Bihu, the prime festival of Assam, and its relation to various ecological, social and cultural dimensions of Assam and the Assamese society. In the year 2003, Goswami evaluates the principal festival of Assam, i.e., Bohag Bihu, and its related songs, where the readers get clear cut picture of the multidimensional festival and its indispensible relation to the songs and dance. Here, Goswami shows *bihu* songs as the mirror of the Assamese society and examined how different dimensions of the Assamese society are reflected nicely in innumerable *bihu* songs. Bhattacharya in his book *Asamar Loka Utsava* (1969) has described about some folk festivals of Assam. Here the author specially focused on the festivals of the Aryan Hindu society of plains of lower Assam. The book describes the village level community festivals rather than traditional religious
festivals. Bihu as a folk festival, rites and rituals associated with the celebration of Bihu by both caste and tribal communities are also discussed by the author. The book written by Thomas and Taraporevala, viz., *Festival and Holidays of India* (1971) deals in details with the principal festivals of India, both secular and religious, their folklore and legends, which enshrine accounts of many historical events. Inseparable from religious festivals and holidays is the interest in pilgrimage and so the important centers of pilgrimage and shrines of all Indian communities are described in full of the secular festivals, Republic day, Gandhi Jayanti and New year celebrations are the more important. Besides as a background to their festal life, the history of the origin and development of each community is given at length. Das (1972) evaluates the folklore of Assam where he has described the land and people, tradition, folk music and folk dance, fairs and festivals, etc. of the state in an intricate manner. He has elaborately described Bihu festivals in this endeavor.

*The Folk Element in Hindu Culture* (1981) of Sarkar is a study of folk arts, folk tradition, folk songs and folk festivals of India in general and Eastern India in particular. The book is mainly a study of the relations between Shaiva-cum-Saktism and Buddhism, both descriptive and historical. *Chomangkan: The Death Ceremony Performed by the Karbis* (1982) is a book written by Bordoloi. Here the author depict about the most important socio-religious festival of the Kabi. Though Chomangkan is a death ceremony, literally it means Khasi dance. Bordoloi made an attempt to show whether there is any justification to name this ceremony Chomangkan. The author tries an effort to present a scenario of this four days celebration with proper rituals. Baruah’s (1989) monograph on Lalung is a praiseworthy work on the Tiwa tribe where he religiously described the different
dimensions of the tribe. *Hill Lalung* (1993) of Gohain is a monograph of hill Lalung community. Lalungs are at present known as Tiwa. Here the author made an attempt to focus on almost every aspect of the hill Lalungs including their festivals also.

*The Sonowal Kacharis of Assam* (1998) is a monograph written by Barooah. The author meticulously delineates their festivals along with the rites and rituals associated with birth, death, marriage, folksongs, agriculture, economy, etc. of the Sonowal Kacharis. Sinha’s book *Cultural Heritage of North East India* (1999) describes folk culture of North East including Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. Bihu, a ‘Spring time festival of Assam’ celebrated by Assamese cast and some tribal groups Boro, Mishing, Dimasa, Tiwa with different rites and rituals are elaborated by the author. Along with Bihu, some other Spring festivals observed by various tribal people are stated in the book. *Folkloric Foragings in India's North East* (1999) is a collection of articles and edited seminar papers by Datta. This state wart scholar has apparently passes on diverse and interesting folkloric information to the lay readers on India’s North East where the varied elements have a basic commonality forming a mosaic of little cultures. This mosaic may be labeled Indian in its coming together which is significant in that the distinctive outlines and contours still persist. He then gradually leads the readers to the basic theories underlying the folkways of all cultures and prepares the reader’s mind to accept the term ‘folkloristic’ posited as a complete science of folklore.

The endeavour entitled *Tribal Folk Songs of Upper Assam* (2000) is based on the folk songs of upper Assam especially of the Dibrugarh and Tinisukia district of the
state. Dutta tries here to give a vivid picture of tribal and non-tribal folk songs of this part of Assam. In a systematic and analytical manner, the author analyses the folk songs of various mood and nuance. Dutta also elaborate the musical aspects of the folk songs related to Bihu and other folk dance, locally performed ceremonies and rituals. *Asamar Magh Bihu: Rupa-Barna-Susama* (2000) is a valuable book of the Winter time festival celebrated by both tribal and non-tribal people of Assam. The book is edited by Sarma. From time immemorial, festival plays an important role to bring unity in diversity in Assam. Magh Bihu is an important festival performed by both the tribal and non-tribal, though the celebration is different from place to place and this difference becomes the identical features for every community. The impact of modernization abolishes lots of indigenous features from the festivals. The book is a collection of essays written by different scholars and through their writings, they tried to preserve those unwritten traditions. *Mipun’s book The Mishings(Miris) of Assam, Development of A New Lifestyle* (2000) is an attempt to analyses the inter relationship between acculturation, communication and development with special reference to the Mishings of Assam. Under the impact of modernization and socio-cultural as well as biological interaction with different ethnic groups bring markable change among the Mishings. In this book, the author tries to demonstrate how these factors are interacting to bring changes in the Mishing society. Sarma(2001) edited the book *Janakristir Ruprekha* where different articles provide a transparent view of the folklore and folk life of the different communities of Darrang district of Assam. Sarma's edited book *Traditional Customs and Rituals of Northeast India* (Vol I, 2002) is also a collection of articles on the culture and tradition of North East India. The writings are basically on the cultural heritage of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh,
Meghalaya and Manipur. The book *The Rabhas* (2002) is a monograph of the Rabha community. It consists of seven chapters where the author Rabha focused on almost all the aspects of Rabha society. The festivals generally celebrated by this community is also discussed in this endeavour.

*Asamar Utsava Prvana Butali* (2003) is an extensive study of Das on the colourful festivals and cultural ceremonies of different ethnic and linguistic groups of Assam. Along with the folk festivals, some nationally celebrated fairs and festivals also included in this book. Kuli in the book *Mishing Sanskriti* (2003) emphasized on socio-cultural aspects of the Mishings. It consists of sixteen articles related to the culture, folk literature and language of the Mishings. Through these articles, author Kuli focused on the real picture of the traditional and prevalent Mishing socio-cultural life. The Spring festival Ali-Ai-Ligang of the tribe, and its performing rituals are thoroughly discussed in the book. *Mishing Samaj aru Sanskritii* (2003) of Pegu is an ethnographic book on Mishing tribe of Assam. Delineating history of the community, their physical structure, household structure, social life, food habit, festivals, dance, folk literature etc., author Pegu tries here to present an overall view of the Mishing community. The book also provides a systematic picture of the socio-cultural life of the Mishings. *Axamar Bibhinna Janagosthir Loka-Utsava* (2004) of Talukdar is a book written on the folk festivals of Assam. The author chooses the Springtime agricultural festivals of Assam as the nucleus of the book. Besides Assamese Hindu, Bihu is celebrated by the Muslims, different tribal group of people. Spring time festivals observed by the Tai-Buddhist people are meticulously described in this endeavour. According to author, almost all
the people of Assam are agriculturist and Assam’s culture is Agri centered. Therefore the author tries to introduce this multi-dimensional Assamese culture through this book.

*Asamar Loka Sanskriti* (2004) by Bordoloi is an illustrated book on folk culture of Assam. Various aspects of Bihu festival like Bihu as a cultural symbol, as art, the picture of social life and social discrimination are very beautifully portrayed here. Along with these, marriage, religious rites, religious beliefs in folk culture etc. are also discussed in this endeavour. As another book of same title written by Baruah is already exist, the author Bordoloi wants to say, these books are alternative to each other. The book *Axamar Janajatiya Sanskriti* (2005) is written by Hakacham. The articles in the book focused on various aspects on the folk culture of the different tribes of North East India centering the tribes of the state. Almost all aspects of the locale tribal culture especially the material culture integral to Bihu performed by the Karbi, Dimasa, Tiwa, Hajong, Bodo, Rabha, etc. are also elaborated here with traditional rites and rituals. *Bihu festival of Assam: Music, Dance and Performance* (2005) is an important book on Bihu festival. In this endeavour, the author Borah tries to give an overall view of Bihu festival in both historical and present contexts. She put special emphasis on the Bihu songs and their characteristics. Musical instruments like *dhol*, *toka*, *pepa*, *tal*, *sutuli*, *gagana* etc. are also described with relevant sketch. Here Borah attempts to establish a chastisement of academic significance of Bihu songs from an ethno-musiological angle. Changma and Phukan’s *Bhaiyamar Karbi Loka Sanskriti Part I* (2006) is a valuable book on Karbi tribe. It is based on the empirical data collected from different Karbi habitations of
Assam. *Oral Songs of Tribal Communities of Assam* (2006), written by Sarma is an analytical study on the various oral songs of the tribal communities of Assam. This work attempted to give for the first time a connected and a systematic study on the oral songs of the tribals associated with their various festivals. Shilananda’s book *A Rainbow of Feasts (An Inter-religious Appreciation)* (2006) is an approach to understand all religious feasts. From every religion those feasts have been chosen which may be of interest to people of other religions. The festivals of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh and Parsi are explain in this book. The majority of the population of India being Hindu, their feasts enjoys a larger degree of popularity, hence the prominence given to them in this book. Barman’s (2007) works on custom and festivals of different tribal and non-tribal communities of Assam is a useful book to have initial knowledge on the beliefs and rituals of some of the communities of Assam. Baruah’s book *Ahom sakolor Utsava Anusthan* (2007) is an important document of Ahom culture. This field based endeavour deals with the traditional Ahom rites and festivals, their meaning, significance, relation of these festival with eco-social and cultural aspects, etc. In this study writer tries to provide detailed information about the origin of Ahom, their migration and establishment in Assam, cultural exchange with local and Vedic culture, acceptance of neo-Vaishnavism, etc. *Hajong Loka Sanskriti* (2007) of Hajong is a collection of articles written on some aspects especially on folk life of the Hajongs of Assam. Bas puja, Manasa puja, Lawa Tana Bihu, folk songs, marriage songs, riddles, etc. are presented here. Sharma (2007) has examined the festivals of India where he meticulously provides information on some the lesser known fairs and festivals of India.
Aspects of Social Customs of the Bodos (2008) of Brahma attempted to dive in to the depth of the social customs and tradition of the Bodos of the North East region specially Assam. Another book written on the folklore of Assam is Asamar Loka Sanskritir Ruprekha (2008). Chaliha’s (2008) systematic effort provides an idea about the origin, history and evolution of Bihu festival of Assam. Another book written on folklore of Assam is Asamar Loka Sanskritir Ruprekha (2008). In this book, the author Chetia has done a critical study on folklore of Assam. Bar Asamar Barnil Sanskriti (2008) of Hakacham deals with the folklorkache and folk culture of greater Assam. Author Hakacham put special emphasis on Bihu festival of Assam and integral traditional customs, folk beliefs, food, etc. in his work. Changing milieu of Bihu is also discussed here. Traditional sports, folk songs of the greater Assam are also taken as the subject matter by the author. The book Essays on Tribe and Caste of Assam, Part II (2008) of Sarma Thakur deals with profiles and problems of the tribes and schedule castes especially some lesser known small non-schedule ethnic groups like Tai Phake, Tai Aitonias, Tai Turungs, Tai Khamyangs, Banias, etc. Social life and cultures including festivals are also elaborated here. The author put emphasis on Rongali Bihu celebrated by the different tribal groups of Assam. As the name implies, in the book Bihu as Eco-Culture of Assam, Das (2009) described the socio-ecological relations of the Bihu festival elaborately in five chapters. Ahmed’s book The Muslims of Assam (2010) has highlighted different aspects of the cultural life of the Muslims of Assam including historical and socio- economic aspects. This book is an attempt to portray the socio -cultural life of the Muslims of Assam in the folk level beginning with their advent into Assam. The book aims at imparting an understanding and creating awareness among the people regarding the
identity of the Assamese Muslims, where in the peaceful co-existence, mutual understanding, communal harmony, assimilation, cohesion and integration.

Das (2010) has meticulously described about the different social, economic, cultural, religious and political dimensions of the Karbi tribe on the basis of gathered primary data. Pathak in his book *Tiwa Janajatir Loka-Sanskriti: Jonbil Melar Para Tiwa Sahaitya Sabhaloi* (2010) describes about the cultural and social life of the Tiwa tribe of Assam. Here the author highlighted on several aspects of the tribe likes folk culture, rites and rituals, songs, dance and festivals, etc. The author intricate some folk festivals like Barat, Sagra Miswa, Bat Bheta, etc. and puts special attention on Jon Beel Mela, the age old fair where till today exchange is taken place between the tribes and the Assamese Hindus. *Rabha Samaj aru Sanskriti* (2010) written on Rabha culture and society where the author Hakacham attempted to introduce the socio-cultural life of the Rabhas through different articles. Spring time festival Bakhyo, worship of Lakshmi and other traditional rituals of the Rabhas get special emphasis in this endeavour.

Senapati’s book *Tiwa Samaj aru Sanskriti* (2010) is a study on the Tiwa tribe and culture. Tiwas are mainly concentrated various places of Assam like Nagaon, Marigaon, and Dhemaji etc. Though the Tiwas of different areas belong to same group, their customs vary from place to place. In this endeavour the author has made an attempt to elaborate the traditional customs of Tiwas with regional variations. In the year 2011, Bharadwaj and Goswami published the book *Fairs and Festivals of India*, where a good number of festival of the different religious communities of
India has been systematically delineated. Mehta (2011) tries to examine some tribal dances of India and described how these dances are intrically related to their values, customs and traditions. *The Holi Festival of India: origin, Development and Practice (With special references to the festival as celebrated in Assam)* (2013) by Baruah is a meticulous study with reference to the origin of the festival based on Puranic scriptures, anthropological works and popular myths. Further the book provides description of the development of the festival and its practice across different states in India, a comprehensive narrative of the festival as celebrated in Assam and a comparison with other festivals of the world. The book is of great literary value and an invaluable repository of information both for research purposes and to acquire knowledge about the festival. *Dumrali Karbi Loka-Sanskriti* (2014) of Kathar is a handbook on language, culture, festival and tradition of the Dumrali Karbi. Here, Kathar describes the customary and changing socio-cultural features of the Dumarali Karbis. The book also presented a conspicuous picture of the festivals observed by the population throughout the year.

Some works has also been done by different scholars on Christmas. ‘*Christmas in Ritual and the Tradition, Christian and Pagan*’ (1912), is an important book on Christmas written by Miles. In this book author tries to cover all aspects of Christmas. Along with general description of Christmas, Christmas poetry, Christmas Drama, Christmas feasting and sacrificial survivals etc. are also focused. *Old Christmas* of Irving is another book of Christmas. Longchar in her ‘Special Days’ (2002) focuses on some Christian festivals specially celebrated in the churches. Important Christian festivals like Christmas, Easter, Good Friday, and
Palm Sunday are briefly discussed with origin, development, and rites and rituals. Besides these, some other festivals are also described in this book.

1.10 The Locale

Assam and France are the areas of present study. Assam is known as the ethnographer’s museum. The state has around eighty socio cultural groups in the form of tribe, caste and religious sect. This mostly vibrant state of North East bounded by its six sister states and two foreign countries. Brahmaputra, Barak and Karbi Anglong are three physiographic unit of plain and hill. Assam was early known as Pragjityotispura. Different kingdoms, dynasties ruled over Assam for a long time. Ahom ruled Assam for long six hundred years. Then from 1826 the land was ruled by the Britishers till India got independence in 1947. From early ages, Assam is the meeting point of different racial groups. Assamese is the official language of Assam. Agriculture is the main source of Assam’s economy. Bihu is the mostly celebrated agricultural, seasonal as well as Spring time festival of the state.

France is multiethnic and culturally rich country. This North Western European country officially named as French Republic or Re’publique Francais. France is the geo-economical and linguistic bridge to Northern and Southern Europe. It is bounded by Belgium and Luxembourg on the Northeast, Germany, Switzerland and Italy on the East, Mediterranean Sea, Spain, Andorra on the South and West by Bay of Biscay. France is a secular country. But Roman Catholic is the dominant religion. Though, French is the official language of the country, some other regional language and dialects like Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Basque, Alsatian, and Flemish are widely used for communication. French economy is mixed economy. Agriculture
and industry are equally important for livelihood. Christmas (Nöel) is the most famous festival of the country. Besides this, New Year's Day (Jour de l'an), Labour Day (Fête du premier Mai), Victory Day (Fête de la Victoire), Bastille Day (Fête Nationale), Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Assomption), All Saints Day (La Toussaint), Armistic Day (Jour d'armistic), Good Friday, Easter (Pâques), Ascension (l'ascencion), Epiphany (Fête de Rois), Feast of St. John (Fête de la Saint jean) are some of the major festivals of France.

1.11 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

(i) To enumerate the festivals of Assam and France,

(ii) To examine, if there is any similarity or dissimilarity of festivals of both the study areas,

(iii) It is a fact that most of the festivals of Assam are attached to the fertility cult, This study will examine whether in the festivals of France fertility cult plays an important role or not,

(iv) The involvement of both societies to their respective festivals will be examined.

1.12 Methodology

The study is concentrated on the festivals of Assam and France with special emphasis on Bihu and Christmas. For the present study both the primary and secondary data are collected. For the general information of Assam and France,
intensive library work has been done. Relevant information was collected from various sources like books, documents, report, dissertation, research journals, published and unpublished documents, newspapers, etc. from various institutions and libraries of Guwahati. Intensive library works was undertaken in the Krishna Kanta Handique Library of Gauhati University, Assam Institute of Research for Tribal and Schedule Caste, Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Library, Guwahati, Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, (Guwahati), District Library, (Guwahati), Cotton College Library, (Guwahati), Anundoram Borooah Institute of Language, Art and Culture (North Guwahati), Department of Folklore, Gauhati University, (Guwahati).

A research design for the present study was prepared after the completion of the library work. Thus on the basis of the library work conducted, interview guides, questioner and observational check list have been prepared. The questioner was composed of fifteen various types of questions regarding personal information of the interviewee and the questions relating to the festivals of Assam and France, specially Bihu and Christmas. Data for the study have been collected by using various research methods like interview method, observation method, case studies, group discussions, etc. Besides the various methods mentioned above, informal chats with people were also made in order to gather information about the festivals of the proposed area. The researcher did her field work in some village areas of Nalbari district. The villages named Khatabari, Janigog, Chandakuchi, Banekuchi were selected for the field area for collecting data on Bihu festival. On the other hand field work was also done at Majuli. There the researcher interviewed with some French tourists and collected the information about their festival and culture. Some
French tourists were also interviewed at Guwahati. Moreover the researcher has collected data in some areas of Mongoldoi, Nagoan, Titabar and Duliajan of Assam.

1.13 Organization of the Thesis

The materials collected for the present study has been organized into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction part of festival, the problem under study, the works done so far on the festival by different scholars are discussed. The area of the study, aim and objectives of the study and the methodology that applied for the study is also put in the introductory chapter.

In chapter II, a brief description about different aspects like historical, geographical and socio cultural life of Assam and France has been presented.

Chapter III present the scenario of festivals celebrated by the different castes, tribe and religious communities like Ahom, Christians, Hindus, Muslim, Sikh, Tea Garden Worker, and some major tribals like Boro, Dimasa, Karbi, Mishing, Rabha, Tiwa, etc. of Assam.

Chapter IV elucidates some of the major festivals of France.

Chapter V attempts to focus on the Bihu and Christmas festival. The primary data collected from various sources are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter VI is the concluding chapter which contains the discussion on the findings of the proceeding chapters. In this chapter the study has been summarized and conclusions have also been drawn.
References

Baruah, Chandradhar, 2013, The Holi Festival of India: Origin, Development and Practice (with special reference to the festival as celebrated in Assam), Delaware, USA.


Feast and Festival, World Book, Vol VI


Lyngdoh, Mary Pristilla Rin., 1991, The Festival In the History and Culture of the Khasi, Shillong, Har Anand Publication.


Sarma, Nabin Chandra., 1988, Essays on the Folklore of Northeastern India, Guwahati, Bani Prakash.

______________, 2001, Janajatir Ruprekha (Outline of the tribes), Guwahati, Chandra Prakash.


Tribhuwan, Robin David., 2003, Fairs and Festivals of Indian Tribe, New Delhi, Discovery Publishing House.