CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

In the concluding part of the thesis an attempt has been made to give a summary of the discussion made already in the previous chapters and put forward a few suggestions on the basis of the materials available. The present study is based on the religious aspect of the impact of neo-vaishnavism on the Bodo society of Sonitpur district. This thesis contains seven chapters including this chapter. It is hoped that this material will enhance understanding about the impact of neo-vaishnavism and some aspects of the socio-cultural life of the Bodos. The finding of this study is summed up in the following lines:

In the first chapter, it is attempted to narrate the ethnographic profile of the Bodos, i.e. the origin of the Bodos and their migration, settlement, racial affinity, culture, economy, literature. Further, the chapter has presented in detail the aims and objectives of the study, scope of study and methodology. An attempt has been made to deal with the area, land and people of Sonitpur district. In order to study about folklore of the community, religion must be taken into consideration. Religion is a principal element of folklore by which a culture develops.
The ultimate and major aim of true religion is to facilitate welfare of the society and to bring social control over them.

After embracing neo-vaishnavism most of the Bodo people of Assam assimilated linguistically and culturally with the Assamese Society. The Bodo people of Sonitpur were converted to neo-vaishnavism and embraced Assamese culture and tradition discarding their language, culture and some oral traditions. As a result of conversion they assimilated linguistically and culturally with the Assamese society and helped in the formation of greater Assam nationality.

Under the influence of neo-vaishnavism there has been seen in the folklore of the district a tremendous change, especially among the Bodo people in particular. It would be noticed here that the coming of neo-vaishnavism brought about a change in their religious thought and practices. The study has been emphasized to explore the folklore materials of the neo-vaishnavite Bodos of Sonitpur district.

The second chapter deals with oral literature of the Bodos of Sonitpur district in folkloristics approach. Though some discussion is made on the oral literature of the Bodos, the emphasize is given on impact of neo-vaishnavism. Therefore the study has attempted to discuss
their ethnic terms and genres of oral literature. Accordingly, the study has been arranged under the sub-headings: 1. Prose narratives 2. Folksongs, 3. Proverbs, 4. Riddles and 5. Folk Speech

There are many myths in the Bodo society relating to the origin of the earth, human beings and even their musical instruments. The Bodos of Sonitpur district have the same myth as the main stream Bodos about the creation of earth, universe and human beings. But no such myth is found among the followers of Neo-vaishnavism. There are various legends, tales and songs found in the folklore of neo-vaishnavite Bodos related to different aspects of the religion.

Legend is another branch of prose narrative. There are some new legends associated with the namghar in the neo-vaishnavite Bodo villages. Some anecdotes associated with the conversion and performance of bhaona have been collected and discussed.

In respect of folk song, there are many songs connected with the religious ceremony, marriage ceremony and so on. Among the folk songs, there are some religious songs called as nam. Most of the nams are praise of lord Vishnu (Krishna or Rama) though there are some Nams related to praise of Lord Siva and Goddess Durga or Lakshmi too. Most probably the idea or theme of these songs is borrowed from the
early Assamese literature in general and neo-vaishnavite and Assamese literature in particular. These songs are very rich in poetic beauty. Moreover, there are some songs or hymns having ritualistic significance viz, *ainam* and so on, which are not directly associated with any *puja* or ritual, but have a philosophical overtone.

There are some songs of the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people related to the marriage ceremony. Among these songs *biyanam* (marriage Songs) is the most significant. These songs generally reflect the mind of the women folk. These songs are *Joran diya* or *tekelidiya, panitola, Dayandiya, Gathiyankhunda, Akhoi diya, Anguthi Khela* etc. Some songs are involved with the names of *Krishna, Rukmini, Rama Sita* or *Hargouri*; the ideal couples of our traditional society and the bride and bridegroom are compared with them. Besides these, there is prevalence of *Tolani Biya* (ceremony observed in the attainment of puberty of a virgin girl) and some songs connected with this *biya* among the Bodo people of Sonitpur District. Interestingly *Oi Ram* is common word in most of the songs. Moreover, there are some songs connected with the Bihu festival which is celebrated with merry making, song and dance by the Bodo people of Sonitpur. The impact of neo-vaishnavism has contributed a new dimension to some sections of the Bodos of Sonitpur.
In the third chapter, an attempt has been made to deal with the impact of Assamese material culture on the Bodo society. The chapter has focused on folk craft, folk architecture, folk art, folk costume and food habit. The Bodo women are expert in weaving and design. The artistic lives of the Bodos are seen in the field of their dresses and ornaments. Their extra ordinary qualities are reflected through their colour combination, styles and designs. There are verities of *dokhona* with different combination of colours and design. *Daothu Megon* (pigeon eye,*Hazo Agor* (Design of the hill scenery), *Mwider Agan Agor* (design of elephant foot print) are the remarkable design of the Bodo women. Their favorite colours are orange, red, green, yellow and sky colour. But the neo-vaishnavite Bodo women folk wear *chadar, riha, mekhela* And the men folk use *dhuti, kurta, gamocha* etc.

The change of socio religious practices among the Bodos is also evident in the material culture. It is also observable in building their houses. The *namghar* is the most important community prayer hall, for an Assamese village that follow neo vaishnavite religion. The village artisans render their utmost skill in decorating the *namghar* by all means. The manuscript painting, paintings on wood and paper mache, wooden figures and curving combined with painting, figures on wall and
parts of namghar and painting for theatrical performance have been discussed.

Sankardeva borrowed some materials from neighbouring tribes and non tribes. After embracing neo-vaishnavism how the converted Bodo people adopted these materials in day to day life are discussed. The Bodos are agriculturist and agriculture is the principal means of support for their families. They live in the village side by side with the Assamese people. In respect of materials used in the agricultural field no difference is seen dissimilarities between Assamese and Bodos. There are sarai, japi in every neo-vaishnavite Bodo family.

Rice is the staple food of the people of Assam. It is also the staple food of the Bodos. Some of the neo-vaishnavite Bodos don't take traditional foods such as pork, wine etc. They take various curries, such as acrid acids with their meals. They also take vegetables both boiled and smoked in fire. Fish and meat are sometimes taken by roasting. It is very difficult to identify the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people from the language, dress and ornaments used at home and outside home; but it is very easy to identify them through their food habit only. The neo-vaishnavite Bodos drink and brew rice beer and even they take pork individually at home but it is not seen offering pork in the marriage and
death ceremony etc. Mutton, Chicken and fish are offered in place of pork in these ceremonies. Wine or the rice beer is prepared very much and used in the Bodo families has totally been minimized in some families of the Bodos. Some of the followers of Sankar Sangha and Krishnaguru don’t take pork and anything from the non initiated members. Even they don’t take food cooked by his mother and sisters if they are not initiated. Besides these, the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people know the uses of the khol, dhol, Tal and other instruments of the vaishnavite society and culture, namely sarai (trays made of bamboo) daba, (a drum made of clad and leather) in addition to the making and uses of musk.

The fourth chapter deals with the impact of social folk custom. Here an attempt is made to explore the customs of the traditional and neo-Vaishnavite Bodos of the society. Though the study has emphasized in respect of rite of passages, festivals and celebration on the Bodos of Sonitpur district, it is attempted to narrate the impact of neo-vaishnavism of the Bodo society in respect of the marriage, death ceremony (sraddha) and other social ceremonies and functions with the rites and rituals of neo-vaishnavism.
The new rites like birth day celebration, death anniversary, marriage day ceremony, annaprasanna has been incorporated into the modern Bodo society. Now these customs are almost observed by the Bodos. Besides these they also observe the birthday of Srimanta Sankardeva, Madhavdeva, and Damodordeva etc. Even they don’t plough on the day of Purnima—the full moon and Amavasya, Ekadashi and the birth and death anniversary of the gurus and preachers of neo-vaishnavism.

The fifth chapter has made an attempt to study on the folk performing arts of the Bodos and neo-vaishnavism, but the emphasis is given on the impact of Assamese and neo-vaishnavite Bodo people of Sonitpur. Most of the folk performing arts of every society are closely associated with religion, festival and occasional ceremonies. Among the Bodos there are some folk theatre like ek thengiya, thakhri falla and the rituals and dance connected with the Kherai worship. In Sonitpur district except the Kherai dance, no folk theatre is found in the Bodo society. Due to impact of neo-vaishnavism, they stopped performing the traditional theatre and started performing Kirtana, Bhaona.

Now the Bhaona is the most important performing art form of the neo-vaishnavite Bodos. The performing art form is performed on the
occasion of the birth and death anniversary of Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Damodordeva and disciples of a particular Satra. Nam kirtona is performed in the village namghar by woman folk.

Another important celebration of the neo-vaishnavite Bodo people is ras jatra. This is observed yearly on the occasion of Krishna janmastami in some villages in the Sonitpur district. It is noteworthy to mention here that the Assamese speaking Hindus and Bodo people have been celebrating this bhaona jointly since earliest times in the area of Sirajuli, Borgaon, Ulubari, Roumari. In fact, it can be considered as a symbol of unity and integration which help and increase brotherhood. The relationship between both these two communities during the time of Ras yatra is wonderful, memorable and nostalgic.

The sixth chapter attempts to analyse the trend of revivalist tendencies among the Bodos of Sonitpur district. Due to acceptance of neo-vaishnavism, they lost their rich language, culture and some oral traditions. In neo-vaishnavism, there was a provision for the lower caste people or tribes to upgrade themselves into Hindu fold by taking initiation under a Guru (prophet) and by reciting his holy name given by him. Consequently a tribe-caste continuum was formed. In the neo-vaishnavism, there was also a prevalence of castes like Bar-Koch and
The Koch of Sonitpur was all converts from the Bodos. Still the largest sections of the Bodo people speak Assamese language at and outside home. It is worthy of mention here that still the Koch people have relatives with the Bodo people and they have close relationship and maintaining cordial relationship with the Bodos. In fact, this is a clear impact of neo-vaishnavite movement. The movement spread all over Assam and touched the tribal people of the area to some extent for which most tribal people choose to mingle with the mainstream Assamese nation. In the beginning of the second decade of 20th century the Bodo nationalist organization took necessary initiative to make them culturally, politically aware among the tribal communities in Assam. The adverse political situations and movements helped to bring revivalist attitude among some tribal people and it tended to question and even dishearten the ongoing process of Assamese nation. Among the tribal people of Assam, the Bodos tried to bring consciousness in the field of language, culture etc.

In this chapter, the emphasis has been highlighted to the role and contribution of Bodo nationalist organization among the Bodo people of Sonitpur district with the example of Assam as a whole. The Bodos of Sonitpur were on the way of complete assimilation with the Assamese society after embracing neo-vaishnavism. To bring a sense of awareness
among the Bodo communities, the organisations organised conference and workshop in different places of Sonitpur district. In fact the self-identity or ethnic movement also created nationalist sentiment to give up other cultural elements and urged them to embrace and develop their own tradition and folklore materials.

The language, literary, political movement launched by the Brahma Dharma movement, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, All Bodo Students Union, Plain Tribal council of Assam created an identity consciousness and intellectual environment in the Bodo society. The present achievement of the Bodo society in the field of language, literature, education, culture, economics and politics is the result of relentless efforts of the said organizations. The establishment of Bodo medium schools was started in Sonitpur district just after the formation of a branch of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1971 and started taking education through Bodo medium school in the district.

There is a revival of the worship of Bathou religion in the Bodo society. The wave of this movement is spread all over and outside Assam. In Sonitpur district, most of the educated Bodos and neo-vaishnavite Bodos have returned to that practice. The courtyard of many educated Bodo families has an altar of Bathou.
Dress has specific role in the maintenance of the cultural and ethnic identity of a community. Until a few decades ago, the converted Bodo people used to dress like Assamese people. Women folk used to weave and wear Chador mekhela (Muga pat) and men folk used to wear dhuti and gamocha. Due to revivalist movement the Bodo people of Sonitpur district have started wearing the traditional dress called Dokhona. But that is not true that the Bodo of Sonitpur have completely discarded the Assamese dress. People still use the Assamese costume at home and social functions. But on some specific occasions and public gatherings called by the Bodo organization, they wear Bodo dress like Dokhona and aronai.

Bhaona and Kirtana are the part and parcel of neo-vaishnavism. Though the neo-vaishnavite Bodo villages perform these, some of Bodo village have given up the performance of bhaona and nam in Sonitpur district. The young educated Bodos started learning as well as performing traditional dances. The Bodo Bwisagu dance is now organized in community pandels in place of Assamese Bihu dance. Moreover, the Bodo folk dances such as Bagrumba, Bardwi Sikhla, Rumbang dances are being accepted as the main dance of the Bodos of the district for entertainment. On the other hand they are still performing bihu and bhaona at the community level.
After conversion the neo-vaishnavite Bodos stopped using their traditional musical instruments like *kham* (big drum), *siphung* (flute with five hole) and *zotha* (cymbal). Being a part and parcel of the traditional Bathou religion, the converted Bodo people had discarded these instruments. Now it is seen that these instruments are being accepted and used as a symbol of identity.

Most of the Bodos of Sonitpur gave up their surname under the influence of other religions, specially, Hinduism and Christianity and accepted surnames like Saikia, Hazarika, Bora, Das. Moreover, they used to keep Hindu names, like *Ganesh, Bijoy, Durga* and the impact of Christianity ushered in names like *John, Abraham, Michel, Entina* etc. Now, they have accepted their traditional surnames such as Basumatari or Bwisumuthiary, Swargiyari, Daimari, Goyari, Khakhlari etc. And even they have started taking Bodo names in place of the Assamese or Aryanised names mostly during the ethnic movement launched by ABSU and other nationalist organisations.

It is true to say that the Bodos of Assam gave up their language, culture and tradition after embracing neo-vaishnavism preached by Sankardeva. Thereafter they were assimilated linguistically
and culturally with the Assamese society. Consequently the most of Bodos became Koch. Due to introduction of Bodo language in the schools, colleges, universities and other developmental works changed the traditional mindset of the people of the Bodos and they came to know about their rich language, culture action, on the other hand, through the initiation of Brahma religion, Kalicharan Brahma tried to establish a cordial atmosphere in the Bodo society after removing the bad habits of drinking rice beer and rearing pig. Under the advice of Kalicharan Brahma the Bodo students formed Bodo Satrasanmilani and later on some Bodo thinkers formed Tribal league, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, All Bodo Students Union, Plain Tribal council of Assam to make aware the Bodo people in Assam. The movement launched by the organization for language and political rights created an identity consciousness and intellectual environment in the Bodo society. It is absolutely true that the present achievement of the Bodo society in the field of language, literature, education, culture, economics and politics is the result of relentless efforts of the said organizations.

Though the trend of revivalist tendencies occurred towards language, culture and religion in the Bodo people of Sonitpur district it is seen that there are many Bodos who are still following neo-vaishnavism and using Assamese language, tradition and culture in their
day to day affairs. Frankly speaking they have accepted Assamese language and heritage in such way that they have forgotten all their language, dances and songs.

In Sonitpur district, just after the formation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha, the Bodo medium school started from 1971. The neo-vaishnavite Assamese speaking people started taking education through Bodo medium schools from the very beginning and there were lots of students in the Bodo medium schools; but there are no students and schools in some villages of Assamese speaking vaishnavite Bodo villages in the Sonitpur district. These schools are on the verge of complete extinction. They are unwilling to learn in Bodo medium schools and put on ethnic dress. This, however, beliefs the trends of revivalism and going back to ethnic roots.

There is a revival of the worship of Bathou religion in the Bodo society. Though few neo-vaishnavite Bodos also have come back into their Bathou religion, but majority of the pure neo-vaishnavite Bodos are still following neo-vaishnavism. They never want to follow Bathouism. They have close relation with the Satradhikar of Dakhinpat Satra and Auiniat Satra and the Assamese society. For example, Kanak Chandra Boro, Ex-president, Tezpur District Bodo Sahitya Sabha is one
of ardent follower of neo-vaishnavism. Like him, Bhogaram Boro, ex-ABSU worker and ex-president of Tezpur District Bodo Sahitya Sabha and Jogen Ch.Boro are the main devotees and preachers of Krishnaguru in Sonitpur district. Though they are the follower of neo-vaishnavism and other sects like Krishnaguru they are trying to develop the Bodo language and on the other hand they are establish themselves as sincere devotees and follower of Neo-vaishnavism.

This clearly shows that the neo-vaishnavite Bodos of Sonitpur still have some love and respect for their language and culture; but they do not want to give up their neo-vaishnavite religion. The ambivalence of the neo-vaishnavite Bodos of Sonitpur is an interesting research problem that need to be studied further. It needs further to be investigated the ambivalence of the neo-vaishnavite Bodos of Sonitpur springs from their allegiance to neo-vaishnavism and the pull of their traditional language and culture.