CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters we have addressed to the structure of family and kinship and the integral features of the Assamese society into two contexts-urban and rural of Assam. The urban area taken for the study is Guwahati, the only city of North East India to collect the required data. The rural area was selected at a distance of 60 km from Guwahati where, along with the Assamese Hindu population there are also a few Assamese Muslim families in the village which are excluded from the purview of the present study. In the first chapter of this endeavour, the problem under the study was delineated. In the same chapter the objectives of the study, methodology, etc. were also presented.

Chapter II deals with the detail description of the Assamese society and the study areas. The history of the growth of the Assamese society is tried to describe there with special reference to the Assamese Hindus. An attempt has also been made to provide the picture of the Assamese Hindu family and kinship in chapter II.

In Chapter III, an effort has been made to uphold the socio-economic profile of the people of both the study areas. It is revealed from the study that the Assamese Hindu population is much higher in Dobok than that in Guwahati. The total population of Dobok is 986 distributed in 200 households while the total population of the study area of Guwahati is 538 distributed in 200 households. Regarding the higher education level in Guwahati, it is observed that the percentage of male (4.32%) and the
percentage of female (10.49%) in MA / MSc level is higher than in Dobok,(0.54%) and ((0.27%) respectively. As far the occupation of the people is concerned, maximum (12.77%) males in Dobok are engaged in agricultural activities while in Guwahati maximum (15.42%) males are engaged in business. Out of the total (5.5%) people belonging to Bania (goldsmiths) caste group in Dobok only (.3%) are goldsmiths. The service holder females are more in Guwahati (8.73%) than that in Dobok (1.11%). The data are gathered mostly from the heads of the households, as such certain indicators as age, sex, education and occupation of the heads of the households are presented in a tabular form.

Chapter IV deals with the comparative analysis of the family structure in both the study areas. It includes the size, composition and the types of the families. The other aspects as the family recruitment, authority structure of the family in terms of decision making power of women and inter personal relationship within the family are also tried to cover in the chapter. According to Keane (2003), family structure can be conceptualized by the way it is organized in accordance with roles, rules, power and hierarchies. All families have a particular structure composed of members + role (who performs what) + rules (how each person is supposed to act) + power rankings (who enforces power) + communication dynamics + alliances + sub systems. In India the traditional family system was the joint family characterized by its large size, patriarchal in nature and the decision making power lies exclusively in the hands of the eldest male member of the family. But the system has drastically changed under the impact of urbanisation and industrialisation ushering an economic and social change in the Indian context. Writh (1938), Weber (1950), Nimkoff (1959) Ross (op-cit) also were of opinion that economic changes leads to the change in the family structure. Urbanisation and industrialisation creates new economic opportunities which is resultant into geographical mobility and ultimately changes the family composition. Urbanisation inculcates the value of individualism that results into the creation of the nuclear families. (Lal 1990, p .32). The percentage of the nuclear families has gradually increased in India. There is an increase by one percent in 1989-99 as compared to that of 1981 and 3 per cent relative increase as compared to 1992-93 in urban areas. In rural areas the proportion of nuclear families increased relatively by 12 and 4 per cent as compared to that in 1981 and 1992-1993. Therefore in rural areas there is a faster
growth of nuclear families than in the urban areas (Niranjan, 2005). The findings of Desai (1955, 1964; Gore 1965; Khetri 1975; Laksminarayana 1982; Singh, 1988) have shown that the joint family system continues even though urbanisation and industrialisation have paved the way for a new trend. But the percentage of joint families is lower in comparison to the nuclear families in India.

Chapter v deals with the pattern of kinship network in both the study areas in order to unearth the differences that exist in between rural and urban contexts. Therefore this chapter tries to highlight the aspects as composition of neighbourhood, kin knowledge, significant kins and geographical proximity. The roles of kinsmen in different crisis rites in both the areas have also been tried to investigate in this chapter. The other aspects are the matrilateral asymmetry and the kin interaction pattern.

It has already been stated that the pedestal of the study is the family and the kinship network. It is a known fact that the family is the nucleus of the kinship system and also the pivotal organization for existence and acceleration of each society. It is revealed from the study that the size of the family, the maximum families in Dobok (72%) and in Guwahati (60.5%) are of medium size (4-7) members. There is a meager presence of big size families in both the settings, while the very big size family is not present in Guwahati. This trend reveals a contrast picture from the traditional Indian family which was basically a large one. Regarding the compositional structure of the families, maximum families in Dobok (59.5%) and Guwahati (76%) are composed of husband, wife and unmarried children. The percentage of families composed of married brothers and their children is very low in both the settings. It is (4%) in Dobok and (1%) in Guwahati. Here Cantlie’s observation can be put forward that in Assam the development cycle of the family is based on two limiting factors: firstly the rule that sons should not separate during the father’s lifetime, and secondly, the fact that brothers with married children are never found together in the same household (Cantlie 1984, p 49). The Assamese Hindus believe that joint family is the ideal form of family type but in practice in both the situations the nuclear families have outnumbered the joint families. However the existence of joint families is higher in Dobok (30.55%) than in Guwahati (18.50%). From the presence of joint families it can also be proved that
though urbanisation have taken place, yet it cannot completely eliminate the joint family system.

Analysing the modes of recruitment of the families, it is found that in case of birth, boy or a girl child does not matter much. But those who prefer girl child (15%) in Guwahati and (12%) in Dobok uphold a changing attitude for whom there is no difference between a boy or a girl. The respondents (16%) in Guwahati and (20.55) in Dobok who prefer boy child is due to the traditional concept attached to a boy child in a patriarchal society where he is considered as the heirer of the family. The descent, inheritance and succession is transmitted through the male line. Besides it is the son who performs the last rites of the parents in a patriarchal society. A study carried out in Assam under National Family Health Survey, 1999 revealed that most of the parents preferred boy child.

The traditional pattern of Hindu marriage is characterised by limitation of choice by exogamous and endogamous prohibitions, marriage by arrange, lack of marital freedom, etc. These factors of the traditional marriage system had significantly contribute towards maintenance of caste system and the joint family pattern, which in turn were responsible for “continuance of cultural traditions” in India (Kapadia, 1959). Love between husband and wife was the result of marriage and not a prelude to it. (Tagore, 1920). The present study also reveals that most of the new members recruited to families through marriage are based upon negotiation. But the marriages that occur through individual choice is much higher among the younger generation and it is higher in Dobok (28.5%) than in Guwahati (26.7%). Though individual choice marriages are found, the inter caste marriages are not easily welcomed in the families in both the study areas. Therefore it can be said that people still prefer caste endogamy. The legislative measures and the modern social environment have not been found to be conducive enough to witness a radical change in this area. But according to Govt. of Assam official website 2013, the numbers of intercaste marriages are increasing among the Assamese Hindus.

In the analysis of the authority structure of the family in terms of decision making of the married women in the family, it is revealed that the decision making power of women in certain spheres as household savings, construction of house, buying
and selling of land, etc, to some extent are related to the factors like age, education and occupation. In Dobok it is found that the participation of women in decision making is very low in certain areas as movements (3.5%) and dressing pattern (2.5%) where they have to follow the dictates of the society. Regarding the dressing pattern though they can make their own choice, the choice is however limited only to saree or a nighty. In Guwahati a quite opposite trend is observed where women (58.3%) can make their own decision regarding their movements and (50%) women can dress according to their own choice. Another feature that has come light is that women living in nuclear family involves in decision making than those living in the joint families in both the study areas.

The interpersonal roles in the family have also shown a shift from a traditional to a equalititarian one in both the study areas. The husband wife relationships have become friendlier especially in nuclear families in Guwahati which is proved by taking into consideration of certain indices as, dinning together, going out for marketing together, and paying social visits together. It is found in Guwahati that (90%) women dine together with their husband, (83%) go out for marketing together and (86.6%) couple pay social visits together which is much higher than in Dobok. In Dobok those couples involve jointly in the above mentioned spheres are those who live in nuclear families. The traditional father dominated concept where the father had the sole authority in the family has changed and the fathers are seemed to be more consulting in both the study areas with their children in the matters like education and marriage. In Guwahati the fathers those who are younger or middle aged are more free with their children. Siblings relationship have also turned to be more friendly in both the settings. The traditional avoidance rules with the in laws are not strictly maintained in the Assamese society in the present context.

The analysis of kinship network focuses on some interesting features in both the study areas. The composition of a neighbourhood in Dobok is made up of all the lineage members. The members of the same lineage builds up a chupa (hamlet). Therefore the lineage solidarity still exists in the village and it becomes vivid in times of any rituals, festivals or during the time of crisis rites. As a particular hamlet is composed of all the patrilineal kins therefore, marriages do not occur inside the same hamlet and
thus they maintain *chupa* exogamy. But this characteristic is not generally found except in few older localities in Guwahati where the patrilineal kins settle together. A particular locality in Guwahati is generally composed of many heterogeneous groups of people where the group solidarity does not exist. It is found that the kin knowledge of the people of Dobok is more than those of Guwahati. Age is an important factor for effective kin knowledge. From the age of 55 years, a person have enough kin knowledge. A list of significant kins is noted from both the study areas. Among these significant kins some receive the first preference while the others receive the second preference. The first preferred kins are those who belong to the family of orientation and the family of procreation. The second preferred kins are the other family members or the extended kins. In Dobok it is found that the kin network is maintained on the ground of geographical proximity and cultural obligation. Living in a common geographical area forces the kins to oblige to the cultural norms. On the other hand in Guwahati, it is found that people like to maintain the kinship network with those belonging to equal status. On the other hand it is observed that the people visit their near kins in times bihu or any household rituals. Therefore the kinship network in Guwahati is not only based on geographical proximity but status also plays an important role rather than the cultural obligation.

In the Assamese society the kinship relation is traced upto 7 to 9 generations and the members within these generations are regarded as blood relatives, belonging to the same *bamsa* (lineage). The *bamsa* members in Dobok are maintaining the traditional rule of ritual impurity in case of birth or death of the *bamsa* members while in Guwahati the ritual impurity is maintained only in case of the close relatives generally within the three generations. But in Guwahati marriages are not conducted within this period of impurity. Special kin roles are found in times crisis rites with certain variations among the Brahmins and the non Brahmins in both the study areas.

The trend of matrilateral asymmetry was observed by Sweetser (1963) which indicates the increasing interaction of wife with her parental house. The present study also proves that in Guwahati the interaction is more with the wife’s parental house than in Dobok that is measured in form of number of visits, and help received from the
wife’ parental house. In Dobok it is not easy to maintain such links as all the patrilineal kins stay together in the same locality.

The analysis of the kin interaction pattern reveals that all the families in both the study areas receive help from their consanguinal kins in terms of advice. Maximum families in both the study areas receive physical help from their kins than the monetary help. A large number of families (93.3%) families have received physical help in Guwahati while (95.5%) families have received physical help in Dobok. Visits to certain significant kins are more than the others in both the study areas. It is revealed that the affinal relationship are mostly established within the city in Guwahati (65%) and within the same subdivision in Dobok (86.5%).

Through this study an effort has been made to provide a picture of the present structure of family and kinship network in the concerned study areas. The family structure and the kinship network are not static in its form and are subject to change under different factors of urbanization and industrialization. Therefore the study opens up the scope for its further investigation.