CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The traditional picture of Nepali community was that of multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and an agricultural community, with patrilocal household patterns, where a male controlled all the social institutions and affairs outside the domestic limits. The afore-going chapters have presented an account of the adaptation pattern of the Nepalis of Kanglatongbi village (who are the descendants of the Nepali migrants basically from Nepal and various habitats of Indian Union). As presented in chapter II, migration from their native country of Nepal is a regular phenomenon since long time. Search for a better means of livelihood by way of taking their traditional occupations in the new habitats acted as an inducement for emigration out of Nepal. Emigration out of Nepal are mostly from hills areas. Ecological, economic, kinship- ties, historical, cultural factors etc. have been accounted for emigration out of Nepal.

The descendants of those Nepali migrants, who are at present settling at Kanglatongbi in Manipur, offer an interesting case of cultural adjustment and adaptation to a new habitat. When we look at the Nepalis inhabitants of
Kanglatongbi, we notice mainly two distinct strategies. Firstly, the geographic (habitational) and economic adaptation; secondly, the socio-cultural adaptation.

Taking into account of the geographic cum economic adaptation, we may note that, the Nepalis were initially experimenting with a technique of interaction with their habitat, in their traditional ways of livelihood. Thus, they tried to respond to the demands of their physical environment and fulfill their economic needs by taking recourse of traditional occupational pattern of animal and plant husbandry. Thus, there was a fair emphasis on the dairy farming and cultivation of traditional crops. The organization of their works was also in traditional patterns. As time went on, we notice that there was an increasing alignment of these activities with the local ecological situations. In fact, today, except for a few individuals who still maintain dairy farms, the Nepali mode of economic adaptation to the present habitat is not significantly different from those of the neighboring population, especially the Meiteis. It would really be hard to draw a line of distinction between the Meiteis-mode of land utilization, technologies used and the organization of works etc., in the surrounding. Not merely in agriculture, but in other spheres of economy too, there is an increasing similarities between the Nepalis and the Meiteis. Thus, salaried-jobs for the educated once have become as important feature for the Nepalis as they are for the Meiteis. There is a clear proximity of the Nepalis to the local economic ideas in this regard. Still, there is an preferences on jobs in the armed services among the people which happens to be a legacy of the past. But, with greater attainment of education, it is doubtful whether this specialized occupation in the armed services will remain still. There is, thus, a clear tendency of adapting to the local patterns in the economic life.

With regard to socio-cultural adaptation, it may be observed that the Nepalis offer a vivid example of integration in the local milieu as a cultural entity and not assimilation or complete merger into the dominant Meitei culture. The
Nepalis have retained distinctive aspects of their culture, such as language, lineage organization, kinship-terminologies and caste orientations, festivals and typical recreations, all of which help to present themselves as a community and cultural block in the context of various communities of the State. At the same time the Kanglatongbi-Nepalis have not remained isolated or aloof from the Meiteis or other surrounding communities. They have established many linkages in social-cultural, economic and political life with the surrounding populations and have also adopted many aspects of local culture patterns of social relations. For instance, all the Nepali people speak Meitei are convergent with the local cultural practices and readily participate in the local festivals, dances like 'thabalchongba', etc.

There is also political interaction by participating in panchayat and legislative assembly elections. In school, colleges and market places young people freely mix with non-Nepalis. In this way, there are effective linkages with the dominant communities and has deliberate attempts at maintaining harmonious relations. But, the Nepalis have not merged completely in the Meitei community. Hence, it is not a case of adaptation through 'assimilation' but adaptation to the local situation through 'integration'. For, integration implies a socio-cultural situation in which the constituent groups maintain their identities but at the same time work out a harmonious inter-group relation. 'Socio-cultural integration' is one of the important concepts of Julian Steward as an operational tool in analyzing complex communities.

However, the pattern of inter-community relations involving the Nepalis and other groups of the State has, in the recent years, experienced some qualitative changes. For, Manipur has been marked by the raise of strong identity-based movements among the communities mainly among the Meiteis, the Nagas and the Kukis. Inter-community clashes that took place between the Kukis and the Nagas, the socio-political tension between the Nagas and the Meiteis etc., have produced certain percussions to the neutral Nepali community
and other communities of the State. Consequently, many Nepali households of various ecological niches are found to be migrated from Manipur to various places of India and Nepal in one hand. On the other hand, many Nepali households of Manipur are being migrated to various convenient places within Manipur as a part of their survival strategies, particularly to the habitat of Kanglatongbi, the present field site. Thus, Kanglatongbi is undoubtedly becoming the cultural centre for whole of the Nepali community in the State of Manipur.

Consequently, the emerging problems in terms of cultural adaptation among the Nepalis of Manipur may be owed to the recent trends of intra-state and inter-states as well as inter-country level migrations and the problems of re-adjustments and adaptations.

An another emerging problem may be because of the change of ecological and demographic patterns. The basic adaptation through agricultural and animal husbandry practices and using simple agricultural technologies have got greater degree of disintegration in cultural patterns so as to meet the modern needs in the changed situation.

However, the Nepalis of the State of Manipur at present made themselves survive through the level of cultural integration and adaptation to their respective immediate bio-physical and socio-cultural environments of Manipur.

Thus, the foregoing analysis has shown that the 'culture-core' (the constellation of features which are most closely related to livelihood activities and economic arrangements or economic sectors) of the Nepalis of Kanglatongbi, has functional significant to the environmental adaptation of the population. Adaptation of one economic and livelihood activities in a new ecological setting does not support the community for their livelihood. Therefore, the community studied is found to practice a myriad economic and livelihood activities as part of strategies for survival. In the other words, a strong inter-relationship between
environment and exploitative or productive technology (i.e. material culture), was observed. Stated in other words, the material culture used to generate the resources for the livelihood was adapted by the community by considering its suitability in the immediate environment. Similarly, the inter-relationship between cultural behaviour of the community and exploitative technology they use was also observed. More specifically, they used local productive or exploitative technology in the changed ecological situation with the full knowledge sole indispensability in the given environment. The ‘behaviour’ patterns of the people to exploit the environment by using the available local productive technology had also affected other sectors of culture such as relatively compact settlements instead of disperse settlements, changing pattern of family composition from joint to nuclear, pulling resources from the environment, pattern of community organizations etc.

However, the present researcher has not been able to provide the most dynamic picture of the cultural adaptation of the Nepalis under study to the environment. Similarly, the researcher has not been able to analyze the functions of the rituals and ideology with the environmental regulation. In fact, both the lacunae seem to be the weakness of cultural ecological framework. Therefore, a truly cultural ecological interpretation of human–nature relationship may owed to the consideration and weight age of dimensions such as: ecological, economic, technological, demographic and socio–religious etc. Cultural ecology can indeed provide anthropologists the multi–directional interactions in terms of the relationship between culture and environment.

Think nothing of it but, notably, the mounting trends in adaptive researches indicate that anthropology may be considered as the science which explains the processes and mechanisms of ‘Bio-cultural Adaptation’ of humans in terms of their environments.