CHAPTER-VII

SUMMARY
The present work on "The Ethnobotany of the Deoris of Assam" is divided into seven chapters.

CHAPTER - I : Ethnobotany deals with the direct, traditional and natural relationship between human societies and plants. Ethnobotany came into existence since the time the earliest man observed animals eating certain plants, and when the primitive man started gathering plants for his food and for healing wounds or when he sought cover from rain and hailstrom. Part of the knowledge got greater credibility with wider use and success in experiments on human and over period, it led to our recognised foods and medicines. It got widely documented. A considerable part of the indigenous knowledge, however, continued to survive among certain ethnic groups through folklore.

The science of ethnobotany has recently received much attention in certain parts of the world for utilisation of plant resources for the benefit of mankind through collection of information on flora and proper evaluation of earlier experiences. Such studies have brought to light valuable information on uses of plants that were otherwise obsolete or confined to certain group(s) of people or narrow region.

Unfortunately, very little organised ethnobotanical work has been done in northeastern India despite of the diversified ethnic cultures and plant wealth of the region. This prompted the present study among the Deoris of Assam. The part of Assam inhabited by the Deoris is also botanically less known till today.

CHAPTER - II : The Deori inhabited areas of Assam, comprising the districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sonitpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Tinsukia and Jorhat was considered for the present study. Physiography, geology and minerals, soil, climate and vegetation of the area are briefly dealt with.
The Deoris belong to Indo-Mongoloid group of Tibeto-Burman linguistic stock and considered to be one of the original inhabitant of Assam. They represent the priestly group of the Chutiya community. The culture of these people and the degree of acculturation are also discuss in brief. There is a strong belief among the Deoris that there exists a link between diseases and supernatural powers. The first phase of diagnosis involves some short of magical performance to indentify the causative spirit or deity and little of actual examination of patients. Likewise, the first phase of treatment is primarily by propitiation of the sprits or gods, exocism and animal sacrifice. It is only after the completion of the first phase, when it failed to cure the ailments, the second phase of treatment, i.e. the application of herbal remedies and other prescriptions followed.

CHAPTER-III : A short review of existing literature on vegetation and floristics of the Deori inhabited areas of Upper Assam and on ethnobotany of Assam in general. The method followed in this study comprised of on the spot study among the Deoris in different parts of Upper Assam.

The general procedure for gathering the data comprised of either interviewing the informants and subsequent verification of information or by witnessing the actual uses. Voucher specimens were collected for all the plants used by the Deoris and were properly determined in the herbaria of Botanical Survey of India at Shillong or in Howrah. These specimens were preserved or in according to the conventional herbarium techniques and were deposited in the herbarium of the Botany Department, Gauhati University for future reference.

The data were scrutinised with all earlier important publications in order to bring out the significant findings.
CHAPTER-IV: The main content of the thesis with detail ethnobotanical account of 406 species known to be used by the Deoris.

The informations are provided under each species arranged in alphabetical order.

This is the first account of ethnobotany of the Deoris and includes uses of 317 species of dicot, 79 species of monocots and 10 species of pteridophytes.

CHAPTER-V: Deals with botanical aspect of the plants used by the Deoris.

The plants have been arranged in alphabetical order according to their scientific names. On botanical side the accepted names valid in current literature for the plants alongwith important synonym(s) and families. This is followed by local names. Distribution of the plants in India have provided from literature and their accurance have been provided from observation during filed work.

CHAPTER VI: Significant contribution to ethnobotany of the Deoris with salient findings of this study is discussed. A conspectus of plants utilisation by the Deoris for different purposes viz., Food and drinks, Medicine, Material culture and Socio-religious aspects is provided in graphics. These provided at a glance a picture of the utilisation of plants by the Deoris.

The 259 species, known be used for food and drink by the Deoris include 25 species, which are little known or unknown in literature.

The 165 species recorded for therapeutic practice of the Deoris include a total of 279 prescriptions. Of the 279 prescriptions, 40 prescriptions seem to be either little known or unknown in literature.

In the absence of fuller knowledge about uses of our plant wealth in other parts of the Country or in literature it is not considered proper to draw any comparisons
about the known or unknown uses of plants for general uses like material culture and socio-religious practices. Nevertheless, certain uses in these categories among the Deoris seem to be quite significant.

The role played by the Deoris through beliefs and practices in conservation of the flora of their habitats are also discuss in brief.

CHAPTER - VII : is the present summary.