CHAPTER-II
PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

2.1 The Study Area

The area Dhakuakhana is situated in the plain area. According to the name of a historical canal, the place owned its name as Dhakuakhana. A legend has been prevailed that, during the time of Ahom king, Rajeshwar Singh, the canal was dug to connect the water road for the convenience of collecting tax and for business. People used the dry leaves of the tree of betel nut for carrying soil in digging area, which is locally called as dhokua. From the incident, the nearby village is known as Dhakuakhana. In course of time, the entire area thus called as Dhakuakhana. Ancient history of Dhakuakhana explored from the 12th century. Through the analysis of historical source, plates, discovered at Dhakuakhana, Lecham, Ghilamara and Konwargaon, the extended (entire) area between the river Brahmaputra and Subansiri is known as Dhakuakhana sub Division. Once upon a time, undivided Lakhimpur district was composed by todays Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Dhemaji district. From the year 1936 to 1942 Dhakuakhana was the head quarter of the entire district.

The present study has conducted about the area through investigation and secondary data. Data has been explain on two main following heads depending upon the nature of data.

I. Dhakuakhana- land, area and people

II. Ethnography of Tai-Ahom people
Map of Assam showing Lakhimpur District
Map of Dhakuakhana showing the study villages
Sericulture Map of India

- **Green**: Mulberry Silk
- **Orange**: Tasar Silk
- **Yellow**: Muga Silk
- **Blue**: Eri Silk

Countries and Sea:
- India
- Pakistan
- China
- Nepal
- Bangladesh
- Myanmar
- Arabian Sea
- Bay of Bengal
- Indian Ocean
- Sri Lanka
2.1.1. Dhakuakhana-Land, Area and People

(i) Physical Geography

Dhakuakhana is like a river island surrounded by the river Brahmaputra, Subansiri, Kherkata, Champara, Karha, Kumatia, Dhala etc. The area lies between 27.6° and 27.36° North latitudes and between 94.24° and 94.42° east longitude. The total geographical area of Dhakuakhana is 695.9 square kilometers. Taking Karha and Charikaria in the heart, Subansiri and Brahmaputra’s surrounding area is called present day Dhakuakhana sub-division (Kalita, 2009). The area is bounded by Gogamukh and Machkhowa of Dhemaji on the north and east while the southern part covered by Kherkata suti. Subansiri river and Lakhimpur sub-division bounded the western part of Dhakuakhana.

(ii) Geological Nature

Due to its location on the foothills of Himalaya the land of Dhakuakhana is gradually sloped from north to south. Therefore, the depth of river is very less and flow is very slow. Even during the summer season the rivers have been swollen and results flood which affects the people severely every year. Less slopped makes the terrace sedimentary. As a result, several high land formed by the deposit of sand and silt. According to the direction of Brahmaputra and Local River, it has noticed that the area is slightly slope from northeast to southwest.

(iii) Geological Structure

The geological structure of Dhakuakhana has influenced by the river Brahmaputra. The river system of Dhakuakhana is mainly Subansiri, Champara, Karha and Charikaria. Moreover, several villages with large number of communities, caste and tribe of Dhakuakhana were established on the fertile valleys of river Akaria, Dangdhara and several lakes etc. The number of river is more in comparison to its geographical area. Due to the meandered nature of the rivers, they suddenly changed their actual direction and formed some dead river. Accordingly, to a census, at present there are 37 number of this type of lake in the sub-division. Among them Bordoibam lake is one of the many, where the second Bird Sanctuary of Assam is established by centering on it.
(iv) Soil Type

The soil type of Dhakuakhana is formed by old Alluvium and younger Alluvium. The soil of this area is very productive. In flood plain Dhakuakhana, there are another type of soil has been found named Khadar formed by soft mud. Humus and phosphorus are less in this soil type but calcium is more. The major crops cultivated in this area are rice, mustered, various types of grams etc. Due to the fertile nature of soil, rice cultivation is very popular except effecting by flood. This, slightly sloppy, fertile, porous, loamy and sandy loam or clay loam soil of Dhakuakhan is also preferable for sericulture. Thus, it recognizes as a commercial crop of type area and people.

(v) Climate

The climate of Dhakuakhana is sub tropical monsoon type. Pre monsoon, monsoon, retreating monsoon, and dry winter etc. control the local climate. The area is influence by the southwestern monsoon. The monsoon blewed above the Bangladesh, directly strike the hills of Arunachal Pradesh and it results acute rainfall in the area. Due to the monsoon, rainfall is high between May / June to September/ October. The average rainfall of the area is 335cm. The winter starts from October and ends with March. Average temperature of the area is in between 15° – 33° Celsius. Flood also a recurring phenomenon of the area. The flood of 1962, 1988, 1996, 1998 and 2002 were affected the area seriously.

(vi) Flora

The flora of Dhakuakhana consists of a great variety of commercial precious trees, which has found in large number from the earlier period. The evergreen and deciduous forests are the main characteristic flora of the region. These are Azar, Arjun, Bahat, Bonsum, Bhatghila, Gandha karoi, Helos, Jutuli, Koroi, Nahar, Uau, Titachapa, Tejmui, Urium, Som, Xalakh, Xarpagandha, Ximalu, Xonaru, etc., which are used for making plywood as well as general purposes. Valuable spices of bamboo and cane along with orchid has also found here. Among the agricultural varieties of crops, rice is the principle crop. Besides it, mustered, different types of grams, sesame, potato, sugarcane, onion, garlic, turmeric, ginger, betelnut etc. are grown in large quantities. Fruit trees of different types like mango, banana, jackfruit, pineapple etc. are grows
well. For silk cultivation, plantation of host plant carried by almost all villagers in this area.

(vii) Fauna

Faunal wealth of Dhakuakhana consists of an indigenous variety of animals like, buffalo, cow, horse, ichneumon, jackal, marbled cat, monkey, other, porpoise rat, sheep, squirrel, tortoise, different types of reptiles, etc. The rivers of Dhakuakhana abound in a great variety of fine fish. Due to the existence of Bordoibum, Beelmukh Bird sanctuary in Bordoibum several transmigratory and local migratory birds are seen here. Adjutant storks, Fishing Eagle etc. are found here. Thousand varieties of local birds are available here such as, balimahi, batahi, chetchti, dheki, kausa, kechukhati, moupia, nalchiliki, nimati, shyama, tipachi, tokora, tuni etc.

(viii) Forest

The forest of the sub Dhakuakhana is like the forests of damp savanna area, which endow the region atmosphere the whole year round. Dhakuakhana has well known for its valuable trees from the earlier period. Government establishes a forest office to collect the tax during early period. Due to the purpose of cultivation or other reason the forest are clear every year and as a result, the forest become extinct. Now only 75% of the forest are is there in.

(ix) Agriculture

Agriculture is the principal means of livelihood and it also a way of life of the people of Dhakuakhana. They produce the rice as the staple food and so many other crops such as mustered, sugarcane, potato, onion, sea sum, garlic, small quantity of tea, almond, ginger, turmeric, pulse like tur (arahar), slack gram, green gram, pea etc. Its cultivation follows mainly the traditional farming practices winter rice viz. sali and bao and summer rice ahu has been practice by them. Pulses are important cereal crop grown in winter season. The area under pulses has been fluctuating annually. Mustered is also grown in the winter season especially in the bank of rivers. The soil pattern is very much suitable for production of mustered. The cash crop grown there, are sugarcane and mustered. Agricultural sector also includes animal husbandry, fishing etc. Cow, pig, goat, buffalo, ducks, hen, etc. livestock create occupation subsidiary of the people and they reared it for meat, fat, milk and egg as nutritious food, dung as manure, hides
the skin etc. Pisciculture has also a demand in Dhakuakhana because the entire area has well known for obtaining different rare species of fishes. Demand of fish is relatively inelastic to fish eaters of Dhakuakhana.

(x) Sericulture

Assam holds the monopoly position in respect of sericulture activity and Dhakuakahan is one of the regions where the credit has gone. In the field of silk culture, the area specialized for three verities of silk, viz. eri, muga and mulberry. A large area covered for silk production in Dhakuakhana. Sericulture contributes significantly to rural income, employment and to exports besides internal consumption. It is a prestigious traditional industry from time immemorial, which is highly labour intensive. Sericulture is a common practice of the inhabitants of Dhakuakhana irrespective of caste and creed. The common sericulture products are shawl, scarf, wrapper, riha, mekhela, chadar, headdress, ties, curtain, cushion cover, jackets, shirt, etc. The villagers are still intending in it as primary as well as side occupation. Thus, it is now most dynamic profitable and progressive industry of this area.

(xi) Demography

According to the census of 2011, the total population of Dhakuakhana is 114095 where 57791 are male and 56304 are female. In the rural area, 100587 people are lived and the male member is 50843 and number of female is 49744. Population density is 237.62 per sq. km. 13508 number of people are lived in urban area where the number of male and female are 6848 and 6560 respectively. In the rural area, sex ratio is 978 female per 1000 male and in urban area the number is 944 of female. The growth rate of population from 2001 census to 2011 census is 1.11%, where total populations in 2001 are 101891. Among them number of male was 51507 and 50384 are females. Number of total household during the year 2001 are 17442.
Table 2.1

Numerical Strength of Dhakuakhana (2001 & 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>101891</td>
<td>51507</td>
<td>50384</td>
<td>101891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>114095</td>
<td>57791</td>
<td>56304</td>
<td>114095</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Assam, 2011

Table 2.1 depicts the total scenario of numerical strength of Dhakuakhana the year 2001 to 2011, where total population is 101891 and 114095 respectively. In the year 2001 number of male is 51507 and female is 50384. In 2011 number of male increased to 57791 and number of female also increase to 56304. During 2001 urban body was not established there.

Figure 2.1

Numerical Strength of Dhakuakhana (2001)
The literacy rate in 2011, 81425 people are literate where 44365 are male and 37060 are the females. 81.92% of total population are literate where there rate of male and female are 88.31% and 75.40% and the gap between the two are 12.91%. In rural area, 80.92% are literate. Among them, 87.70 and 74.02% male and female literate person are there respectively. The gap between them is 16.68. In the urban area, 89.25% are total literacy rate where 92.67% male and 85.65% are female. The gap between the two is 7.02. Literacy rate among them are shown in the below table

**Table 2.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total literacy rate (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Gap (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81.92</td>
<td>88.31</td>
<td>75.40</td>
<td>12.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>80.92</td>
<td>87.70</td>
<td>74.02</td>
<td>13.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>89.25</td>
<td>92.67</td>
<td>85.65</td>
<td>7.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of Assam, 2011
According to the census of 2001, the literacy rate among them was 75. There, the percentage of male was 84.78 and female was 65.86. An encouraging growth rate has been observed there.

Figure:2.3 Literacy rate by sex and residence (2011)

(xii) Population Cluster

Dhakuakhana has well known for the reconciliation of various numbers of caste and tribes. The inhabitants of this area are Tai-Ahom, Deuri, Chutia, Konch, Kalita, Brahmin, Goswami, Sonowal Kachari, Boro Kachari, Sut, Mishing, Nepali, Koibarta, Marwari, Muslim, Matak etc. Dhakuakhana therefore, may be recognizing as small edition of Assam (Kalita 2009).

(xiii) Administrative and Institutional Set Up

The British government established Dhakuakhana as the head quarter of undevided Lakhimpur District from 1839 to 1842. Present day Dhakuakhana sub division is consisted with some parts of Dhakuakhana, Gohain and Machkowa Mouza. Dhakuakahan sub division has 11 numbers of Village Panchayat depending upon ecological condition, level of development in production activities, infrastructure and service and population pressure. Moreover, 2 numbers of anchalic panchayat are there also. There are 3 tribal blocks viz. Subansiri, Charikoria and Luhit. There is single number of town committee. Dhakuakhana and Subansiri is the two-revenue circle. Legislative assembly constituency no. 112 of Dhakuakhana is reserves for SC/ST.
There of one town committee with 4 numbers of wards. Total 522 number of village are there with 195-revenue village and 77 number of NC villages. There are three numbers of sub divisional police station viz. Dhakuakhana, Baginadi and Ghilamara and one outpost in Sonari Chapari. In 1857, the British establish the police station of Dhakuakhana.

Dhakuakhana is a place of hit flood and poor road condition but not retarded in the field of education. According to the report of E.T. Dalton (1872), and the report on the province of Assam of Mills the primary school was started in Dhakuakhana in 1853. Dhakuakhana is eminent for its educational institution. There are many degree colleges, Junior Colleges, Higher Secondary Schools, High Schools, MV School and Primary Schools. There is BE College also and a Normal School for the spread of primary training education. Some technical institutions are now rising with the private concern of people own.

Like education, Dhakuanakhana is also forward in the field of drama. For the development of drama, Dhakuakhana Natya Mandir was established in 1921, but officially, it was registered on 1985. From its inspiration, several other institution viz. Amakotia Gaon Natya Samaj, Chetiagaon Natya Samaj, Jalvari Natya Manidr, Navarupa Yubak Sangha (Hiloidary), Bamungaon Yubak Sangha, Harhi Yuvak Sangha, Gobindapur Natya Samaj etc. were established for the progress of drama. An institution for art and cultural practice ware also formed named as Dipti Kala Kristi Sangha. Moreover, another institution for the development of drama was also established by the females at Dhakuakhana in 1999.

(xiv) Cultural Set Up

Dhakuakhana has well known for its pilgrimage centre. These are as follows

(a) Basudev Satra: It is one of the most distinguished religious centres situated 12km west of Dhakuakana town. In the epic Thakur Charit and Kalika Puran there mentioned about the Basudev Than. Ahom king Jayaddhaj Singh established the Basudev statue on the northern part of sampora river. During the invasion of Maan of Myanmar, the temple was greatly devastated. Ultimately, with the help of Archut Chandra Goswami, Rangai Aldhara had reestablished the Satra. Great Ahom king Shiva Singh patronized this temple and his copper slate insertion about donating 25 acres of land to the temple
is still preserve in Basudev Temple. Religionist of different localities are visited the temple and especially during the time of Dol Yatra.

(b) Gobindapur Satra: Gobindapur Satra is in 5km distance from Dhakuakhana centre. During the region of Ahom King Siva Singh, Niranjana Bapu established the Gobindapur Satra.

(c) Gopalpur Satra: Another place of worship is Gopalpur Satra, where Banamari Gosai has established a statue of Goapaldeva. It is said that once a boat with valuable books of Gosai (The priest) and his Medhi (assistant) was drowned in that place, from that incident the place was named as Puthi-Khati (eater of books).

(d) Harhi Devalaya is eminent as a Sakti-Pith, worship of Durga has been concentrated here. Besides it, several other stone statues of Shiva, Kali, Durga, Ganga, Manasha, Chamuda etc. are also there. During the time of Durga Puja, a number of buffalo, got, duck, pigeon etc are scarified to fulfill the desire of the devotees.

(e) Sankha-Para-Ghantapara: According to a legend, the saint Basistha meditated in any riverbank of this area. In the summer season the flood flatted his article of worship like sankha, ghanta etc. The place of lost of material has known as Sankha and Ghantapara. Now the place has known as Ghatapara.

The description of the area has been incomplete without the allusion of Phat Bihu . Long before the colonial rule started; there was a market in the bank of river Charikoria, in present days Mahghuli Chapari. People coming from everywhere make their business there for a short period and enjoyed the bihu collectively at this place and later it become famous as Phat Bihu. It is a festival that all caste and creed celebrated with gaiety and happiness. Now, Peoples of different areas of Assam and abroad are attracted to the festival and comes to take pleasure in it.

II. Ethnography of Tai- Ahom People

The Tai Ahoms an offshoot of the great Tai race of the Mongolians founded a kingdom of their own in the southeastern corner of the Brahmaputra valley early in the thirteenth century A.D. In course of the centuries that followed, they established their sway over the whole of the valley until their kingdom was occupied by the British in the wake of the Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26. They were thus the ruling people in
the Brahmaputra Valley for six hundred years. In their own language, they called their kingdom *Mung-Dum-Chum-Kham* or the land of golden seed (Chetia, 2005). J.N. Phukan asserts that the Ahom were the Tai who occupied a part of Yunan which bulges westward towards the Irrawaddy river. They ruled Assam from 1228 to 1818 A.D. covering a period of about six hundred years. Eventually they acquired the local name Ahom. Now, they are distributes in all over Assam particularly in the districts of Upper Assam viz. Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, Golaghat, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Tinsukia etc.

An independents study on the Ahom population in Assam has shown that their total population in the year 1991 was 1012765 (Buragohain, 1997). The unofficial estimated population of the Ahom elite should be about fifteen lakhs in 2001. They account for nearly a third of the Assamese caste-Hindu population in the two Upper districts of Assam, Lakhimpur and Sibsagar – where the main Ahom concentration is to be found. Table 2.3 shows the Ahom population of Upper Assam.

Table 2.3

Tai-Ahom population in different districts of assam(officially computed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Population (approximate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dibrugarh</td>
<td>4,03,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dhemaji</td>
<td>1,90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Golaghat</td>
<td>1,46,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jorhat</td>
<td>1,08,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>1,99,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>6,31,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tinsukia</td>
<td>1,14,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>17,93,299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the table 2.3 total Ahom populations in Assam have been shown. Sibsagar is the habitat of highest Tai-Ahom population followed by Dibrugarh. Data has been collected from various sources i.e. voter list of 2005, census of 2011, from Deputy Commissioner, Ahom Sabha etc.(Phukan,2010).
(i) Migration and Distribution of Tai Ahoms

Tai Ahom is the modern representatives of the great Tai race of the Mongolians. Southwestern China has generally accepted to be the original home of these Tais, at least until about two thousand years ago. Later, they migrated to the valley in Upper Burma from where a section of them had moved southward towards the Gulf of Siam and settled down in the plains there. Another and a less numerous but perhaps more virile section of these Tais in Upper Burma took a northwestern direction crossed the river Irrawaddy (Gogoi, 1994). Siu-Ka-Pha, the leader of that troop and founder of the Ahom kingdom arrived at Patkai, and then come to the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra valley. According to Deudhai Assam Buranji, nine thousand people accompanied him. Sui-ka-pha on his arrival examined the soil and water at several places as their nature of intimate knowledge of the same. He stayed at Tipam, then proceeded downstream of the river Lohit and arrived at Habung, near present day Dhakuakhana and covering some areas in the modern districts of Lakhimpur and Dhemaji. That is the first entry of Tai-Ahom to Dhakuakhana. They arrived there at 1242 and stayed for 3 years but due to severe flood, they left the place though abundance of cultivation. From then 280 years, but the Ahoms not permanently settled there, but in the year 1412, the Ahom king Chu-hung-mung conquered the Chutia king
Nitipal of that area and from that period, the Tai-Ahoms permanently settled there. Afterwards he arrived at Dikhowmukh, Dihingmukh, Sangtak and ultimately built the capital city at Charaideo and ruled the kingdom. In course of time, they conquered the whole of Kamrupa, present day Assam – an area much bigger than the present Assam valley division. The Tais who thus entered Kamrupa came to be call by the indigenous people Asom a vernacular meaning pear less or unequal from which the present word Ahom originated. The entire country under their sway according came to be call as Asom, which is now anglicizing into Assam (Phukon, 2010).

(ii) Period of Ahom Reign

The Tai Ahom established their sway over from the year 1228 A.D. until their kingdom was occupied by the British in the wake of the Anglo Burmese war of 1824-26. A succession of thirty-eight Ahom kings reigned over Assam for a period extending over exactly six hundred years. There was no written constitution; the administration was run as per customs and codes, which were in vague among the Tais for a long time. Changes were however, made time to time to the unwritten constitution benefit the entire administration. The kings were address as Chao-pha, which meant the heavenly king, and thus he was Swargadeo in Assam. The council of ministers comprised Buragohain (Thas-Phrong-Mung), Borgohain (Thao-Mung-Xung) and Barpatragohain (Thao-Cheng-Lung). The Borborua was similar to that of a chief secretary of a modern state. The position of Borphukan was like that of the viceroy. Other officers were Phukan, Rajkhowa, Barua. All general able build people were call as Paik. The Paik system was the most prominent part of the administration.

(iii) Physical features

The Ahoms are belongs to the Tai Shan group of Indo Mongoloid race. They are characterized by yellow or light brown skin colour, medium height, epicanthic fold in eyes, and medium to broad nose, straight hair, and prominent cheekbones, medium to broad face. They have the similarities with the Southeast Asian people in physical features (Gogoi, 1996).

(iv) Religion

Tai Ahoms were originally Hinayana Buddhists and they had their precious royal deity Chumdeo. The later centuries of their rule in Assam, they took up the
religion but a section of the Ahom population is still adherents of Buddhism (Phukan 2010). The vast majority of the Ahoms become fully fledged Hindus. The Deodhai, Mohan, and Bailung, the priestly clans followed their own traditional religious practices. A few numbers of people now follow Phra-lung cult prayer to the almighty for prosperity and protection and they call themselves followers of Taoism. A section of the Ahoms follows Vaishnavism of Sankardeva. A very small section was followers of Rati-khowa sampradaya and Tantric and some are Sakti worshippers (Chetia, 2005). However, all the Ahoms of today observed their time honoured Me-dam-me-phi literary Me means worship, dam means dead, and phi means gods, a ritualistic ceremony making obeisance to the ancestors including Siu-Ka-pha.

(v) Terms of Address

The Ahoms had a traditional system of addressing persons according to their status. Persons belong to the elder family is addressed as elder even though he/she might be younger in age. There, the male is called as Kakaideo (elder brother), and female as Baideo (elder sister). The elder sister and her husband of mother and father are address as Epadeo and Nichadeo respectively. The elder maternal uncle and his wife also called as Nichadeo and Epadeo respectively. The maternal grandfather and grandmother is addressed as Puthadeo and Enaideo respectively. All the elder cousin of father and mother recognized as elder and younger cousins of father and mother recognized as younger irrespective of age. Thus, the clan seniority has maintained all along.

(vi) Language

Ahoms had originally their own language, which was belonged to the Tai-Kadai family. Although due to the adoption of Hinduism the language was become forgotten and adopt Assamese language, but books and scriptures written in Tai language are still in use among a section of the Ahom population, the priestly classes like the Deodhai, Mohan, Bailung continued the use of Ahom language for religions and other ritualistic ceremonies. For many years now, the demand is growing among them for the revival of the facilities for the study of the Tai language and literate as a classic. An eminent scholar Sir George Abraham Grierson made the systematic study on Tai- Ahom language on 1904. The Ahom languages have taught now as a diploma course in the Dibrugarh University, Assam (Chetia, 2005).
(vii) Belief System

The Tai Ahoms worship their dead, as they are the guardian duties of the householder, who keeps eyes on their descendents. Hence, veneration is give to them by offering the articles, which they like in their life, such as the first seasonal crops, vegetable etc. They first offered to them and worshipped on the eve of any occasion whether it is a marriage ceremony, birth ceremony, before planting of paddy, after harvesting, annual feast of first crops, social festivals like Bihu etc. They have the belief that without worshipped properly on time this could bring misfortune to the family. They believed satisfaction of the departed one may bring wellbeing for the family otherwise could harm if not satisfied (Gogoi, 1994).

(vii) Clan

The clan is very basic to the Tai-Ahom society, they have maintained their clan system, and clan exogamy in marriage is prevalent. They have patrilineal kin group. A person of a family is primarily recognized and enjoys his place at all levels of social functions in relation to his clan called *phoid* or *khel*. A branch of the clan has called *ghar*. In their *Buranji* or chronicles, an officer is usually mentioned by his family or clan and not by his first name. Many titles of the Ahom people are simply clan names such as, Rajkhowa, Konwar, Borgohain, Buragohain and Barpatragohain, Chetia, Handique, Mohan, Lahan, Changmai etc. or their sub branches (Gogoi, 1994). Villages had been founded clan wise and even today many such villages as chetia gaon, Handique gaon, Gohaingaon, Konwargaon etc. are founded all over upper Assam.

(viii) Marriage and Family

The traditional marriage system has known as *Chak-Long*. This ceremony is an old traditional way of marriage of pre-Hindu and pre Buddhist days of Tais, originated in original abode of Mung Mao. The monogamous form of marriage is dominantly prevalent amongst the Ahom society, while the polygamy is limited to certain section of the society. Polyandry is uncommon among them. A person may marry from his own village but the bride is selects from outside the clan. Marriage between own clan or family is a taboo. Cousin marriage or cross cousin marriage is prohibits in the Ahom society. If somebody gets married, they are declares as *out caste* and boycotts from the village or from the society. Now a days, such couple registering their names in the civil
court register under the marriage act. Thus, in the modern society the traditional is somehow extinct. In the traditional society, divorce is rare and widow remarriage is prevalent. A widow is never treating as outcaste and never has to observe the austerity measures in food, dress or in associating herself in society functions. Again, they are partilocal in nature. The Tai Ahoms do not recognized the bride price as a sale of daughter and not dowry is prevalent in the society.

They have patriarchal family system. The father is the head of the family. He has the right to use and dispose of the property of the family and expect obedience from all family members. When the father become old and does, the oldest son takes this place (Chetia, 2005).

(ix) Women in Tai-Ahom Society

The women in Ahom society help their men folk in a variety of way. They go for fishing which is a very common sight in the Ahom villages during the rainy season, take the hoe, rear silkworm, duck and chickens, weave cloths, plant paddy, cut paddy when ripe, raise kitchen garden, tether cows and goat etc. In very earlier, Ahom women moved about without having any covering on their head, but in the interior villages of today Ahom women go bare head. Ahom women are free from some disabilities, which the Hindu women suffer greatly from certain customs and institution in other parts of India.

(x) Dress Habits

The dress of Assamese women consists of mainly three parts like blouse, mekhal & chador. Mekhala is the lower garment, where chadar is upper garment. Below the chadar another garment called riha is wrapped in special occasion. The mekhala chadar of the noble woman is made of silk. These are decorates with attractive artistic design. The ornaments of them are jangphai keru, bakharpatowa keru, thrira, jun-biri, dholbiri, gamkharu, dugdugi, galpata etc., which are makes from gold & silver. The Tai Ahom women use orani (veil) in front form of the elders. The traditional dress habit of male is shirt, that is upper garment and dhoti, which is use as lowest garment.
(xi) Food Habits

The Tai Ahom food habit is somehow akin to Southeast Asian people. Staple food of them is rice; along with they are fond of eating duck, pork, fowl, young bamboo shoots, ground and fermented, dried fish powder *hukati*, rice beer that is call *xajpani* by them. It is still favorites to many Ahom villages in upper Assam. In many families no ritual is complete without rice wine and offering the rice wine to the ancestors is customary and obligatory for those Ahom who still perform the traditional rites. Besides it, they prepare *chira, aakhoi* (luncheon prepared from rice plant), *komal chowl* as a luncheon. *Hu-rum* is a special kind of luncheon prepared only by Ahom people traditionally.

(xii) Agriculture – Wet Rice Cultivation

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the Tai-Ahom people of Assam. Wet rice culture came with the Tai Ahoms to this part of the country. Prof. Amalendu Guha writes ‘The Ahoms were an advanced plough using tribe’ (Guha, 1991). At present time also, they are the good practitioner of wet rice cultivation usually engaging bullocks for ploughing. They are also fond of glutinous variety of rice and prefer steamed method of preparing some type of rice in special occasion. Besides it, they now produce potato, mustered, jute, corn, ginger, turmeric, as well as modern technique for cultivation. The implements and tools include wooden plough with a small iron share, yoke, rake, harrow, hoe, sickle etc. Cultivation of silk is a unique character of the Tai Ahoms of Assam. They had the monopoly in the muga culture. Along with, they practice the cultivation of eri and mulberry cultivation.

(xiii) Economy

In the traditional Ahom society, agriculture has the prime importance in their economy. Many families in upper Assam like in Dhakuakhana and Dhemaji bring their earnings from sericulture practices. Weaving and trade of silk cocoon, silk products are an integral part of their economy. Sale of products of traditional silk cloths like *riha, mekhala, chadar*, shirt piece, *kurta* (long shirt) shawl, craft etc. are very profitable business. Some of the poor villagers earn their livelihood through working as a wage labourer in the paddy field or in homestead land. Rearing of animals like fowl, pig, cow, duck etc. and trade of local items like crops, betel nut and betel leaf, vegetables,
pineapple and banana etc. are important subsidiary occupation of the those people. In the present day, a lot of service holder both male and female and businessperson contribute economically to their family.

(xiv) Festivals

As the Tai Ahoms are rice cultivators, therefore some special occasions relating to seasonal agricultural cycle are observe by them. Main festival of them is Bihu. Three types of Bihu have observed by the Tai Ahom people, as like the other Assamese people. The festival associated with beginning of the season is the Bohag Bihu or Rangali Bihu. It is the festival of cheer and joys, the boys, and girls dance and sing cheerful songs. Another important aspect of this bihu is worshipping of cows. Next to Bohag Bihu, Kati Bihu has been observing which is recognizes as the poor bihu as there is no feasting in it. It is a one-day affair, associated with the worship of the tulsi plant, Devi Lakhsmi, and certain rituals performed for the well being of the paddy field.

Another bihu along with these two is Magh or Bhagali bihu. After harvesting the crop they enjoys with food and drink. In this bihu a fire ceremony observed, where the arrangement of wood is call as Meji. Previous day of the bihu has known as Uruga, which has a particular importance. They take feast with new crops. In three types of bihu, womenfolk prepare verities of rice cake, chira, aakhoi, Hu-rum (type of luncheon prepared from rice plant), deferent types of larru (ball of confection) etc.

Moreover, the Tai-Ahom of Assam worshipped several gods and goddesses and performed it as a festival like Durga Puja, Laksmi Puja, Sarawati Puja, etc.

The Tai-Ahom, however, have long been in Assam, and Assam is their homeland. They identify themselves as son of the soil. However, they have not forgets their historical past and feel proud to introduce themselves as Tai in the ethnic sense.