CHAPTER-V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study is a genuine picture of the silk industry among the Tai-Ahom community of Dhakuakhana. It is clear from the study that they practice three types of silk in their locality, viz., muga, eri and mulberry. In muga cultivation, they comprise a major contribution to state estimate of muga production. Abundance of host plant in their locality and environmental support facilitate them to carry on such activities. In case of eri silk production the area shows also a tremendous functioning. Eri and mulberry culture are generally handle by female folk. In comparison to muga and eri, mulberry cultivation has less importance due to requirement of more caution in rearing and less income from it. Nevertheless, they are practicing this silk industry since a long period. Because, the craft is mostly hereditary and the qualities required of a true artisan are apprenticeship, devotion to duty and co-operation. Time is fading away but the vibrant colours and gorgeous designs of the silk still exist.

From the previous discussion, it is seen that the people of Dhakuakhana has greatly involved in the silk industry. They believe that it is a gift of god to them. The people of Dhakuakhana have an emotional attachment with the silk from very early period. Therefore, they engaged with the activity by coping with various critical conditions too. The study is an attempt to highlight the silk industry and the real background picture of producing these valuable threads. Here, it shows that silk rearing, reeling, weaving etc. are very time consuming and laborious process still new generation has also attracted to because of their affection with silk from childhood. From the early age, they saw it as an element of their daily life. The girls have informal education on silk cultivation and the industry from their elders in their early ages. They can thus understand how much effort is required for this and what the value of it is. Therefore, in any social occasion or function silk is obligatory. In the first puberty of the girl, there is a tradition to wear a silk cloth. In the marriage ceremony, the bridegroom’s family must present silk cloth to the bride and mother of bride. Bulky earner of silk and best weaver of silk fabric has a prestigious place in their society. The people who has not host plantation suffer inferiority complex. The reaers have a
competitive mind that who can cultivate and earn more cocoons in the breed. The girls or women who do not known the art of weaving are neglected from others. There are some jocular folk songs and proverbs exist regarding them. In traditional society, a girl’s skill of weaving has given more emphasis for marriage. Those women, who do not know weaving, are considered worthless, and are not preferred as useful brides. Various taboos and traditions related to silk proves that it is a sacred object from early period. Red, green, yellow, white, and black colour are traditionally used in the motifs of cloth which reflects strength, equality, beauty and others. In bihu dance red coloured design in muga dress is only considered because red colour symbolizes joy and energy.

In young ages, the boys and girls have come for bihu dance with much vigor and pleasure and muga dress of girls with red coloured design attract the boys toward them. Dancing bihu and singing songs wearing gorgeous muga silk cloth are the best way of entertainment and draw attention of other sex. It also created atmosphere which led to the choice of life partners. The motifs, designed in the silk fabric is associated with rural agrarian culture. The japi, which is the headgear of rural agrarian Assamese people, has designed in the silk cloth. The traditional ornaments have also designed in such dresses.

Besides all of these high profitability and unemployment solution, it is also popular among the new generations too. Quick return and comparatively low investment in silk culture and business the young generation show interest on them. People considered it as primary and secondary mode of occupation. People, who have another source of income, they also carry out it as tertiary occupation. Therefore, it is not only a product of Tai-Ahom people, but also a representative of culture, tradition, emotion, and sentiment of those people.

In the first chapter of the thesis, an introduction has made about the silk culture and its distribution along with historical background. Silk culture has mainly based on different type of host plant, which has also discussed here. Sericulture has a very long history in the context of world, India and Assam. Here, it has seen that historically China is the motherland of silk. Moreover, China placed in the topmost position in the production of reel able cocoons, raw silk and in the trend of production in the major silk producing countries of the world. India ranks next to China in the production of raw silk. In the context of India, producing of raw silk has an increasing trend from 1938 to 1992. From the chapter it has also seen in Assam that with the growing demand of silk, the area under host plant and production of silk becomes greater in present day.
than before also. Objectives of the study and review of various literature and methodology part has also discussed here. Primary and secondary source of material used to enhance the quality of thesis. Purposive sampling method has applied for data collection.

The land, area, and people of Dhakuakhana and ethnography of Tai–Ahom people is outlined in the second chapter. Etymology and physical structure of Dhakuakhana, demography, administrative and cultural set up of the area has discussed separately. Although, the area Dhakuakhana is subject to frequent flood, the area under host plant is flood resistant and gives more income in shorter intervals and low investment. Moreover, migration and distribution of Tai-Ahom population along with physical and socio-cultural circumstances are concerned in this chapter. Maps of Assam, Lakimpur district, Dhakuakhana area showing the location of five villages and sericultural map of India are included here.

The third chapter deals with the silk industry in the study area, along with the involvement of people required in various stages of silk culture. In this chapter, it has also shown that it combines both agriculture and industry, which has described here separately. Rearing of silkworm and producing of cocoons are a part of agricultural activity, but rearing, reeling, and weaving activities are industrial motion. In both of these commotions, requirement of labour is very necessary.

Sericulture has a traditional pursuit of rural folk belongs to Tai- Ahom community enabling them to supplement their agricultural incomes as well as meet their personal requirements of cloths. From the fourth chapter it has been illustrate that there are various social norms and values, tradition, importance, activity, rites and rituals, customs etc., those are also associated with it. Various folk songs related to silk, which reveal the history and culture of silk has elaborately stated in the study. How this female intensive industry provides a full and part time engagement to a large section of people, how they recognized it as a cultural heritage, all those aspects is also included in the study.

The fifth chapter consists of the summarization of the thesis and conclusion of the findings. Various problems associated with it and its solution are also discussed here. Many related prospects regarding sericulture also describe here.

However, during conduct of the fieldwork, the researcher have observed that along with its precious value of silk in the society and being as a subject of supplementary occupation, people sometimes hesitating to continue the same due to
facing so many problems by the industry in the operation of silk. Unless these problems are identified and necessary action taken, the programme of planned sericulture development may not succeed and the targeted growth cannot achieve. It will be thus handicapped with innumerable difficulties. Some of these difficulties and problems faced by the industry has enumerated below.

Firstly, scarcity of raw material is a major problem faced by the industry. They are facing the difficulty of availability of seeds in reasonable price and host plant; they are not getting supply of seeds from government regularly. They collect the seed of only mulberry silkworm from government departments of sericulture. These create a problem for smooth functioning of the industry. These retard the growth and expansion of this industry.

To overcome such situation, the government has to provide necessary achievement to grow seed cocoons in the government sericulture farm from which they can provide it to the farmers in low of cost. Moreover, they can collect the seed cocoons of all varieties from the rearers of certain localities and distribute such seeds among the rearers of other localities. They can also start a crucial work to introduce bivoltine laying for commercial rearing in case of mulberry silkworm.

Secondly, conservative attitudes of the people allied with the industry, is standing in the way of modernization and expansion of this industry. They still use outmoded tools and old methods of productions. They failed to adopt newer and scientific methods due to lack of information and cash. The practitioners are generally illiterate or less educated, who have no idea about scientific as well as commercial process of rearing silkworm. Moreover, due to lack of awareness they cannot avail the opportunities provided by the government time to time. Although, there are many new machines has invented for reeling purpose but no individual can afford it personally. even, some Self Help Groups collectively brings and uses the machine in-group.

This problem will solve, if the rearers give up their inferiority complex and go forward to obtain their opportunity. They should have the interest in learning the improved technology. The low yielding throw shuttle should replaced by the more productive fly shuttle. In addition, the hand operated loom should replace by semi-automatic loom because; it has the capacity for higher production with same amount of effort and time. The government engages Seri-demonstrator to encourage the rearers
and to provide necessary relevant information about government schemes and give technical guidance to them.

Thirdly, dearth of capital, fixed or working is one of the major problems of the industry. Fixed capital consists of plantation ground, plantation, and rearing equipments, rearing houses for eri and mulberry culture. On the other hand, working capital consists of cost of seeds, labour charge for reeling, charge for host plant and leaves of host plant etc. Rural artisans are very poor and someone have no plantation land of his own. Thus, they cannot afford the required money to bring the seeds also. Necessary funds have not made available to them from the commercial banks. Thus, for the wand of finance, this industry cannot modernize their production process.

There are some rich silk practitioners who offer their plantation ground to the landless rearer, who have make available charge to the rearer but the rearer have to give one third of the profit. The rich one bought the seeds. Government also provides the plants of sericulture farm to some landless rearer to rear the muga silkworm. Self Help Groups of this area also plays an important role to lend the cash for the same with interest.

Another problem faced by the industry may be industrial pollutants. Unbridle urbanization, and rapid industrialization etc. takes initiative and increase pollution in the area. Pollutants such as sewage, industrial effluences, flood, air pollution etc. are causing damage to the worms. As muga culture is an outdoor rearing, the harmful effects mostly influence it because it depends on some ecological factors like, temperature, wind direction, sunshine etc. Therefore, ecological imbalance is also a factor for the decline of muga industry. Increasing rate of vehicles, use of plastic, brick marketing etc. are major threat to the silk industry.

To avoid the predicament, the feeding leaves for eri and mulberry silkworm have to clean thoroughly to avoid the pollutant article and the environment should keep less pollutant as much as possible. Rearing site should far from industrial complex in case of muga silkworm.

Fifthly, lack of proper marketing facility stands in a way of expansion of the industry. Due to the absence of accurate marketing arrangements this industry sometimes go for distress sell of their products to the private dealers at a poor price.
Sometimes, the traders of Sualkuchi of Kamrup district collect and purchase the cocoon to weave there. Non-availability of a standalone or stable market for silk product the rearer cannot trade locally or local people cannot find the indigenous item.

Appropriate infrastructure has to build up with the creation of marketing facilities so that the local farmers have not sold them to the outsiders. Increased number of local market may stimulate the desire for reeling and weaving activities and thus the rearers can earn more from finished product than the cocoon or yarn. However, a cooperative society for sericulture has established in 2010 at Ghilamara, 18 km away from Dhakuakhana center, as Serifed Primary Cooperative Society Limited. There, 50 electronic reeling machine has established, 7 re-reeling machine and 35 scientific steel wardrobe to preserve the unripe cocoons are also set up. 4.47 lakhs jethua muga cocoon has brought to reel it, and 160 and 126 numbers of female has trained to reel and weave respectively. Moreover, 35 numbers of reelers and 10 numbers of weavers are daily engaged in Serifed.

Sixthly, this industry of the state is facing increasing competition from the large-scale organized industries. Machinery products from outside have dominated the handloom industry. Recently, some Benarashi silk has opened in the market by some seller with traditional Assamese silk designs in low cost. Due to high cost structure, common designs, they cannot stand in the competition with the organized industries, and their very existence has threatened.

Regarding the problem of Benarashi silk, the rest traders spontaneously came to road against the selling of such silk attire in comparatively low price and burnt it collectively at Sualkuchi (incident occurred in March, 2013). At last, government has strictly control the situation and restrictions imposed on distribution of such silk dresses in entire Assam.

Another related major problem is duplication of silk fabric and being sold it as real silk. In reality, there is a growing demand for all the varieties of Assam silk in the domestic, national, and international market. Therefore, some dishonest traders mixing the valuable Assam silk with cheap silk for more profit.

Hence, the customer should be aware that the businessperson could not cheat with them. Here, the Geographical Indications (GI) mark for the golden muga silk has
helped them. It means that, it has its origin in Assam only. The GI for muga has covers muga cocoons, raw silk yarns, and threads, various finished textile products including dress materials and will go to long way in boosting export and checking duplicity. The registration of the right is only for ten years since July 20, 2007. There is a formal announcement by the Chief Minister of Assam that the state move for the GI rights of eri and mulberry silk too. Muga is the first product of the state to gain the status.

Pests and diseases of silkworm cause a major problem for sericulture farmers. Grassarie, Flacheric, pebrine and uzyfly are the adversaries of silkworm and silkworm rearer, which decrease the quality and quantity of cocoons. Once the silkworms are attacked by these or infected silkworm it may be destroyed. Pebrine is a most common disease, locally called _phutukia_, i.e. spotted disease. Flacheric is locally call _mukhlaga_, caused by an ultra virus. Because of short life span of the insects, no cure is possible. The uzyfly, wasp, ant etc. are the enemies of silk larvae.

To overcome this situation the rearer should always maintain hygiene in case of rearing room or using equipment. Regarding muga silkworms, the tree should well clean before rearing. Removing and discarding any infected worms are necessary, so that they cannot ooze on the leaves or other worms. Feeding of good quality leaves avoiding over or under feeding is also a preventive measure. Moreover, rearer should net the worms up daily and wash hands before every handling.

Shortage of skilled work force or labour creates a problem for silk industry. In present day society, the families are generally nuclear family instead of joint family where availability of manpower is absent. The children also go to school or colleges far and wide for which some of the families compelled to give up the culture without aspiration. Moreover, during agricultural cycle, the wage labour is busy with such activities. Therefore, it creates a problem to handle it for labour shortage.

Here, interest as well as awareness all should necessary. Now, in the studying area, various steps has taken to enhance the number of skilled workers such as providing trainings, providing regular engagement, establishing Serifed in nearby area etc. Even, the interested one is traditionally learn the culture from his or her elders.

Another noteworthy problem for sericulture is climate disturbance. It influences the production of cocoon. Natural calamities like thunder, storm, lightning etc. effect the outdoor rearing. Cool climate throughout the year is a prerequisite for silkworm
rearing and cocoon production. Adverse effect of hot summer may be destroying the worms.

Optimum environmental condition ensures good growth and healthy development of the larvae. During summer, sericulturists are advised to use air cooler, drip water on the rearing shed arrange the rearing room under the shade of big trees etc. For rearing of muga silkworm, a conducive environment can be created by planting leguminous shade trees so that they reduce the temperature of the plantation area, control high wind, reduce intensity of sunlight etc. The trees should plant at a reasonable distance to form a good canopy over the entire plantation area.

Hence, these problems faced by sericulturists hinder in the progress of sericulture. In recent years, government introduced various schemes, which include providing avenues for the production of quality fabrics, modernization of looms, and motivation of weavers for taking up the industry on commercial lines, intention of training facilities to artisans etc. In order to augment the production and supply of muga disease free laying a scheme for muga seed development was implemented involving financial outlay to the estimate of 3.5 crores. The Central Silk Board has put a lot of efforts to promote muga industry in the north eastern region. Government has provided financial assistance to the silk rearers in the 10th plan under Catalytic Development Project (CDP), where some beneficiaries have selected to help them. Financial help has given to those, for plantation of host plant to rear the silk worm until completion. Here, half amount has provided by Central Silk Board and half given by the state government. Another scheme is there to help the silk cultivator, i.e. Rastriya Sram Bikash Yojana (RSVY). Under this scheme, several trainings have given to the beneficiaries such as plantation, training, training on pudding and polaring, on manuring, on rearing, on spinning etc.

As it is a cottage industry, there is no need it gives tax to the government. The silk earns foreign exchange from many countries also. The increasing price and demand in the market for golden thread of muga and its fabric called for fresh marketing strategies for the indigenous silk item. Making some options the muga apparels can marketed by opening outlets in the main cities of the world, particularly in important fashion capital. Whatever little has seen exported so far has paid good dividend and the performance of ARTFED, (Assam weavers and artisans co-operative federation limited) a state government undertaking in this regard, has been particularly laudable. During the 2002-2003 fiscal the organization invested as much as Rs. 6, 67, 4000 lakhs
for an output of 2500 lakhs square meters of textile including muga and mulberry. The company also export handloom verities made from the golden thread muga of this region to outward. It is also milestone in promoting sales of each cloth. ARTFED has 54 sales outlets called ‘Jagaran’ operating in different parts of Assam. Apart from Assam, ARTFED is also engaged in selling eri cloth in Kolkata, Indor, Jaipur, Kanpur, and New Delhi. There is a purchase committee, who has the responsibility to purchase each fabric from the weavers, organized under co-operatives. However, the committee does not purchase any product from unorganized weavers are deprived of better marketing facilities.

Assam Khadi and Village Industries Board (AKVIB) constituted in 1953 have a separate marketing section for marketing of items of khadi and village industries including silk fabrics and supplies those to 58 sales outlets called Khadi Gramodyog Bhandars (KGB) though out Assam. A Khadi Gramodyog Bhawan located in Kolkata. The AKVIB also holder’s exhibition to promote its sales in different parts of Assam from time to time and participates in the exhibition held outside Assam.

Assam Government Marketing Corporation Limited (AGMC) established in 1969 also looks after marketing and development of handloom handicraft and cottage industries product. The AGMC provide marketing facilities to the artisans and weaver through six sales emporia called ‘Pragjyotika’- Assam Emporium. There are other three emporia outside the state.

North Eastern Handicraft and Handloom Development Corporation Limited (NEHHDC) set up in 1977 with the objective to promote and develop the handicraft and handloom of the entire Northeastern region. Its task is to promote marketing of handcraft and handloom products through different emporium named ‘Purbashree’ located in Shillong, Kolkata, Guwahati, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bangalore. The corporation has a policy of outright purchase of marketable finished items from artisans, weavers, SHGs and co-operatives etc.

Another individual effort is setting up of Fabric Plus Factory in the Chaygaon Industrial Growth Center of Kamrup District. It is an eri-spinning industry established by Dilip Barooah, a textile engineer in 2009 with four machines with a capacity of spinning 250kg of yarn a day, containing 420 spindle by investing 11 crore rupees. He got help from various financial institutions including the NEDFi and the Central Silk Board. Though eri-spinning by women is a hand spindle in our region, even some silk
spinning machinery are available in China. From his contact with different experts, when he was working in Guwahati, Mumbai, Germany, and South Africa, he came to know about the machinery in China and had gone there several times to study them, and imported the machinery for his factory. There are several sections in the factory that processes about 12 lakhs eri cocoons daily. The yarn produced by the factory have also helped around 600 weavers for its 35 fly shuttle looms in the neighbouring villages to make eri cloth with divergent designs and one third of these are exported to European countries (The Assam Tribune, 2012).

According to news of The Assam Tribune, February 2012, a group of Tazikistan made a treaty with Assam Chamber of Commerce regarding the export of silk product along with Assam tea to Tazikistan. Assam Chamber of Commerce also takes responsibility to prepare the dresses of Tazikistan with their own design by Assam silk. Bangladesh is also interested to use these silk.

Another news on The Assam tribune on December 2012, that a mechanical engineer Dulal Chowdhury invented mechanized process of weaving muga cloth under the project Technology development and Production Center for Muga Silk. Governor of the state has desired that such center should be set up in the ‘significantly more’ muga producing areas to facilitate transfer of technology to the entrepreneurs so that commercial ventures based on the technology could come up and obviously Lakhimpur is a place that have been identified initially for the purpose with Boko and Jorhat.

The Northeastern region of India has proved them, the major silk producing region of India. Though the region contributed 16.44 percent to total silk production of India in 1951-52, its contribution continuously decline and reached to 9.17 percent in 2005-06, in spite of increase in absolute production in the region. It has been due to the faster growth in the production of silk in other parts of India. Muga and eri are the two major varieties of silk, produced in northeast India especially in Assam. Though mulberry is the major silk item of India still it is not popular and that also has been declining since 1951-52. Assam ranked first in the production of muga and eri raw silk among all the northeastern states. In case of mulberry raw silk, although Assam stood first in the earlier years, it has relegated to the second position by Manipur in the year 1985-86 and since then has remained in the same position. In the year 2008-09, Assam produce 812 metric tons of eri silk and 101 metric tons muga silk.

Hence, there is no doubt that the silk is an integral part of the state’s heritage. Another tremendous prospect for silk can establish in tourism segment too. The silk
industry may be a motivator of travel and tourism. Tourist generating influence the patterns and designs on the silk fabric and items on the silk and they got several changes in their forms and features. Such changes have not confined to those emanating from cultural tourism. Silk of Dhakuakhana is such an object that attracts the people visiting there for any purpose. People must have to give a look to the natural manufacturing process of silk and silk cloth along with several other items. The silk producing area is unique one. Visiting foreign tourists to observe the silk culture, activities, process, and technique may be a common tourist motivation. Tourism in the silk industry may change the silk culture, occurred acculturation, and cultural drift, and inter-cultural communication and the marketing of silk material.

Thus, silk industry may be a factor of tourism motivation and tourism may be a factor for the changes of silk culture and practice along with silk products. Another silk center of Assam, Sualkuchi may be compared with Manchester, the wealthy village of middle ages and a manufacturing center of wooden linen and cotton goods of every kind with ‘no more than nine or ten thousand inhabitants’ without a municipal corporation during the first quarter of the 18th century. Like the artisans of Manchester, a section of the inhabitants of Sualkuchi had remained engaged since antiquity of the production and distribution of mulberry silk commonly known as pat and muga fabrics of various artistic designs and patterns. Nearly 92% of the workers were engaged in non-agricultural activities and among these 95% are engaged in handloom and muga silk reeling activities. By collecting the muga cocoons from Dhakuakhana or upper Assam, Sualkuchi made an industry of textile. Sualkuchi has situated in only 32 km west from Guwahati and link with PWD road and feasible communication. Therefore, it becomes a favoured destination for that tourist from any region having interest. Thus, the weavers of Sualkuchi make dresses and designs according to the demand of tourists. Their traditional pattern and design thus may take a new form and manipulation occurred there. However, Dhakuakhana may be a second Sualkuchi in creation of silk fabric. It may also generate forms of tourism, such as mass tourism, ethnic tourism etc. and offer, incidental opportunities to learn about the silk culture of the destination. Of course, variation in interaction will occur according to tourist travel, arrangement and their motivation, tasks, preferences and experiences. Tourists from different background may come to here; if somebody may be a designer, other may be a student. One may be interested in ethnic tourism or other may professional. Thus, host
must also play a role in the communication process and a cultural broker may take this part. He or she acts as a mediator between tourists and host society normally as translator and guide. He or she also stands in a position to manipulate a local culture for tourist purpose, without affecting the cultural identity of the host society in a detrimental manner.

Tourism has accelerated the promotion of art of silk production. It has provide employment in the fabrication and art of silk material. Some studies have concluded that tourism may contribute to the renaissance of traditional art but some other have indicated that tourism has resulted in a decline in the quality of art forms and traditional meaning of production has been debased with production for tourist consumption. However, positive manner should keep in mind.

With an intention to popular, the silk, famous fashion desiner Maghna Raimedhi has arrange a fashion show at Delhi, in the year 2010 with fabrics made by Assam silk. A mixture of dresses made by muga and mulberry silk and wear by different national and international model have achieved praise from the audience (Amar Asom, 2010).

An important feature of the muga silk is that, dust cannot permanently adhere on there because, the electrons based on the fibers of muga thread is placed on special electron configuration for which, when the sunrays fall on it, it creates a magnetic field by polarization effect and it is divergent. Due to such quality the dust has floated there and remove when shake. Therefore, magnetic field has repulsed the ultra violate rays of sun and hence it has a capacity to protect for the same (Agradut, 2007)

Several aspects of silk industry has analyzed in the study. Quite a lot of rich businesspersons export the silk material to outside state from their own venture, but the rural reares has a long way to reach to that point. It is individual farmers oriented; hence, a comprehensive programme should draw up to grow the industry. Subsidies, incentives, and awards from government and non-government organization encourages the present along with new generation to take it as an occupational pattern. It is obvious from the foregoing study that silk industry of Dhakuakhana would play a pivotal role in shaping the economic destiny of downtrodden, by providing lucrative income and employment. Sericulture is a vital need for the Tai-Ahom population because; it is hereditary in their blood, essential part of society and profitable income source to earn their livelihood.