CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to portray and analyse the socio-cultural life of the Hajongs of Assam.

The Hajongs are one of the small tribal groups of Assam. They are regarded as a scheduled tribe in the two autonomous hill districts, viz., Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. Aside from the two hill districts, there are a good number of Hajongs scattered over the plains of Assam in the Brahmaputra valley. In the plain districts of Assam, their main concentration is, however, found in the Lakhipur area and the southern part bordering Meghalaya in the South Salmara subdivision of Goalpara district. Numerically the Hajong population in Assam is very small. Their population as per 1971 census, in the two autonomous hill district of Assam is 386 out of which there are 227 males and 159 females. This population figure does not, however, include the Hajongs residing in the plain districts of Assam. The Hajongs constitute 0.0026 per cent of the total population of Assam, 0.0240 per cent of the total tribal population of Assam and 0.146 per cent of the total Hill tribal population of Assam as per 1971 census. Their sex ratio is 700 females per 1000 males.

Opinions vary regarding their origin but it is a fact that the Hajongs belong to Boro - Kachari group of tribes of the Tibeto-Burman race. Colonel Dalton observes, "The Rabha and Hajongs of
Gowalparah district are branches of the Kachari race and connected with the Garos. L.A. Wadel also supports this view. Like other tribes of North-East India, the Hajong tribe belongs to the Indo-Mongloid group. With the successive hordes of the different ethnic groups, the Hajongs perhaps entered into Assam in the unknown time.

Majority of the scholars are of the opinion that the word Hajong originates from the Garo word Ḥā-Jong. In Garo Ḥā means land and Jong means ants or worms. Therefore it means the land - ants or worms. Here the term Jong, meaning ants or worms refers to people who are expert in ploughing.

The 2nd chapter has devoted to the discussion of the Hajong family. Their family is based on patriarchal pattern and the line of descent is traced through the father only. The father is the head of the family and in all important matters concerning the family his decisions are final. At the death of the father the sons inherit property. Consequently there can be two types of family- (a) nuclear family and (b) joint family that prevalent amongst the Hajong society. Property inheritance and reckoning take place alone the male line.

The Hajong society, though monogamous, is based on patrilineal and patrilocal. The nearest ancestors of the father are known as Dāidibhāgi. There are more than 7 (seven) clans extant among the Hajong society. No marriage can take place between a boy and a girl

2. Waddel, L.A. : *The Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley*, Delhi, P. 4
belonging to the same clan as they are considered to be brother and sister. In the Hajong society there is no prevalence of child marriage, dowry system and purdah system. Widow remarriage is allowed.

The women folk enjoy status and freedom among in their society in various aspects of social life, as, for example, in the choice of husband, seeking of divorce, participation of festivals.

The economic and educational life of the Hajongs, of late, is in developing condition. Agriculture is the primary occupation. Landless labourers, irrespective of sex, work as agricultural labourers. So the economic system of them is not sound but merely at a subsistence level.

The Hajong language originates from the Indo - Aryan root. They have their own language which appears to be mixture of Assamese and Bengali. With the influence of the neighbouring other non-tribal people of Assam, the Hajongs have abandoned their original language in favour of Assamese language. Now a days steps are being taken to acquaint the younger sections with their traditional language.

The 3rd chapter deals with the oral literature of the Hajongs. They have a rich heritage in the sphere of oral literature, viz, songs, prose-narratives, proverbs and riddles. A good number of the folk songs of the Hajongs are ranging from the ritualistic association to secular contexts. Folk songs associated with Padmā puja, bās puja, Kārtika gan, Chorkhel etc., deliver pedagogic implications to musical score. Being by nature musically inclined, the Hajongs are rich in the sphere of songs as well as rhymes.
The folk tales of the Hajongs are generally called *Kirāchhau* or *Kāhini*. These are one of the oral tradition that have been handed down from generation to generation. These fictitious tales diffuse cultural features besides their entertaining aspects. The various legends of entangled and multi-episodic narratives such as deeds of chivalrous kings and generals like *Jannetri Rāsmani, Someswar* are being handed down verbally which are still extant among the Hajong society. These legendary persons are the relics of their past history. The Hajongs have deep faith on supernatural powers. Most of the rites and rituals as well as festivals and ceremonies which are prevalent among their society always associated with myths, legends and tales. The proverbs and riddles are also essential components of the oral tradition of the Hajongs. Generally the proverbs are employed by the aged persons whereas riddles used by the children. Again excellence of the use of recurrence rhymes, rhymes similitude assonances, etc., are found in the proverbs and riddles of the Hajongs. Though they have their own language but at present they have no their own written inscription. They have been writing books, magazines, weekly newspaper and so on in their own language through the inscription of Assamese.

The 4th chapter has devoted to the discussion of the social folk custom of the Hajongs. They propitiate the supernatural powers for the acquisition of the things or objects they desire. Religion plays a vital role in their daily life. The religious beliefs of the Hajongs are largely influenced by Hinduism to a great extent. To appease the supernatural forces they sacrifice domestic animals and birds in the various rituals as most of their deities are regarded non-vegetarian. The worship of these traditional Hajong deities is performed in two ways. One category of deities are worshipped by local priest for the well
being of the society. The other category of deities are worshipped to get rid of various diseases believed to have been caused by them. The Hajongs believe that Lord Vishnu is the Superme God who has created this universe and Lakshmi Thākur is regarded as the deity of wealth and resource. The folk religion of the Hajongs is now strengthened by some other enlighten religion like the neo-Vaisnavite religion of Chaitanya Deva. Owing to the influence of new cult, the Hajongs now seem to be flexible in their socio-religious outlook.

Both belief and religion are also closely associated with rites and rituals. Most of the festivals are always connected with various performing artforms such as bakāsuragan, māraigān, chormāgā dance and so forth. Now it is also observed that the grandeur of celebration of the festivals has been declining to some extent.

The traditional folk games of the Hajongs may disclose its ethic features. The most of the folk games have reflected their life struggle with nature for their existence. These folk games have contributed generally to physical, social and psychological growth and development of the Hajongs. Due to the appearance of the modern games, the folk games have been disappearing in the Hajong society by leaps and bounds.

Folk medicine has been playing a vital role in the Hajong society from unknown time. There are a few professional magicians called Kavirāj. Both malevolent and benevolent spirits are worshipped. Like other primitive people, they try to trace out the cause of diseases in the provocation of a deity or an evil spirit which is detached by the Kavirāj. Animals, birds and fishes are sacrificed to appease the deities or evil spirits. They apply variety of medicinal plants for domestic treatment.
The 5th chapter deals with the analysis of the material culture of the Hajongs. The simple material cultural experiences of the Hajongs as well as their rich tradition of living in the lap of nature find collective and spontaneous expression in their arts and crafts of both aesthetics utilitarian character. They have rich heritage of arts and crafts. They use raw materials which are locally available like bamboo, cane, wood, metal for their decorative functional and other domestic business. The artistic craftsmanship of the Hajongs is prevalent in the folk paintings which are associated with rituals and festivals. The mode of their paintings is simple and themes are always connected with Gods and Goddesses and birds as well as animals. The Hajongs consider the art as a secondary occupation. They do not spend their time for productive purpose through the paintings.

The artistic taste of the Hajongs is chiefly reflected through their textile and landloom. Most of the household dresses are prepared on their looms. The colour and design of their weaving clothes are decorative. They are well-up in skill of preparing various indigenous colours for their clothes from herbs. They make various traditional musical instruments for using both the religious and secular contents.

As regards architecture the Hajongs collect the materials which are locally available. While going to build a new house, they maintain the old traditional customs. The residential houses face either easterward or southward direction having varandhah. Of late, due to the influence of modernisation the pattern of architecture has been changed. The young generations now a day have a tendency to build their houses
with bricks and cement as well as iron sheet in the roof. At present they use sanitary latrine and well for pure drinking water and so forth. They take more care on cooking and attach great value to food. The Hajongs inherit the food habits and the system of cooking from their forefathers. Owing to the influence of neighbouring non-tribal people, the traditional food habits have been changed by leaps and bounds. They also prepare their own unique cuisines.

The Hajong have their traditional dresses and ornaments. A unique feature is always seen in their dress and make up. They give special importance on the uses of the handloom products. Adorning cloth with designs is a part of weaving. The women folk are skilled in forming designs on cloth. Various kinds of flower designs are woven on cotton and silk cloths used by the womenfolk. Handloom is an important part of domestic life in the Hajong society. There is not a single household, rich or poor that has not a loom. The girls are so keen to learn weaving that even in the ritualistic songs recited on various female rites, their interest to learn the art is expressed.

In the 6th chapter an attempt has made to present a general introduction about performing artforms of song, dance and drama in the Hajong community. The Hajongs can exhibit a high artistic skill in the performing artforms to some extent. Most of the dramatic and semi-dramatic performances are based on rituals and they may fulfil demand of folk dramatic performances. Dramatic performances are prevalent in the Hajong society may show meaningful coordination between individual players and players, between players and audience. While the performing artform is an audio-visual one, it plays an important role in the socio-cultural scene. Such artforms may play vital part in
imparting social knowledge to the village people. The mythological stories and some creative stories perform through these performances which move round ethical knowledge and give moral lesson, as the youths find great pleasure from them. In this way, the folk performances act as a medium of education and a source of amusement.

Their dances more or less are ritualistic in both content and context. The dances are simple but impressive and stimulant. They contain amazing melody of music rhythm and folk elements. At the time of dance performance as well as dramatic performance the performers dress themselves with traditional and colourful clothes.

The Hajong culture is rich in the field of folk songs, verse and music go hand to hand and the musical aspect is clearly reflected in practice. These songs are merely a vehicle for the folk-tune. The Hajongs refresh themselves by singing as well as dancing with for the accompaniment of various musical instruments. The combination of the songs and music is confined to selected ones who are in great demand at weddings, festivals and other similar occasions. The simple catchy folk tunes conveying the feelings and sentiments of their ancestors, their lives and thought, their activities and achievements, their morals and discipline are great value. Of late, such songs are of very great value in teaching the younger generation of the Hajongs who are the active force of change as well as progress of the society by adopting incentive to bring unity among the entire community through performing their traditional artforms.

The process of continuity and transition have been actively moulding on the impact of tradition. The Hajong community is too tradition oriented tribe, as such their tradition cannot escape from the
influence of both continuity and transition. They have been once migrated from one place to another and scattered over the various districts of Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. While the major portion of the Hajong population live in the district of Goalpara, a small portion of them live in remaining districts of Assam. At the risk as well as uncomfortable ways of life they have been residing in accessible full track with the various types of cruel animals and poisonous snakes is no longer found now. As change is law of life, the Hajongs have faced and are facing changes. In the changing context, they have come forward for the development to their society and the country as whole. Of late, new avenues of life have been free for them. They have gradually developed in the field of agriculture. Very few of them engage themselves in trades. A large number of shops have come up in and around Bonda (Guwahati), Dudhnoi, Lakhipur, Salmara, and Dhamar which are run by the Hajongs. In addition to these, a few of the Hajongs are engaged themselves in different business as, for example, drivers, timber operation, government supplies, cotton, endi, silk supplies and so forth. Most of the Hajong youths engage themselves in the easy livelihood of agriculture. They are expert in agricultural works and still continue to use their traditional methods of irrigated terrace cultivation on plain land. Now a days a few of them introduce fishery, poultry farm, animal husbandry and horticulture gardens. Some of them are seen managing petty shops like pineapple, banana, jackfruits, orange, flowers and different kinds of silk, cotton, endi and goods, etc. Moreover weaving of textile plays a vital role for the development of household economy in the Hajong society. Of late the womenfolk weave and knit beautiful textile carrying traditional designs in seductive colour with the modern colourful
yarns. In respect of the construction of houses, changes have taken place even in spite of utmost efforts to maintain their traditional characteristics. Small houses are replacing the traditional big ones. Some of them possess Assam Type houses in modern design. A transition is noticed in respect of modern amenities. Many a household now a days possess modern amenities like electricity, safety drinking water, modern medical facilities and so on, are available in the town as well as rural areas. After Independence considerable improvement has been made for the construction of roads and bridges for which the people are able to visit the markets as well as rural areas. Now the Government has been setting up primary and secondary schools as well as colleges from where the Hajong society too get profits. The efforts made by the government to grant scholarship under the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes scheme to increase the standard of education among the children of Hajongs is gradually improving. As a result a good number of graduates, post graduates, engineers, teachers and other government and semi-government officers have come from the Hajong society. The impact of modern education has transformed their society to a considerable extent. At present majority of younger section generally know the three R's. In the literature context, it is worthwhile to mention that there is practically no written inscription but they have own language used to talk amongst them. Today a tendency has been grown among the younger generation, specially the educated ones to restore their original language. Their organisations like Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, Hajong Sanskritik Sangathan, etc., have been doing very useful attempts for the development of the Hajong language.

Like other tribal societies of Assam, the Hajong society has also
been subject to social change and transformation. They are coming in contact more and more with outsiders, who work among them either as government servants or as traders voluntarily. There is a change in their family structure and other social institutions. The joint family system has been affected seriously among the Hajong society. The couples do not prefer to live in a large family which is regarded a source of perpetual quarrel.

Long and continuous contacts are there between the Hajongs and the Assamese Hindus. As a result the Hajong society has long been assimilated to a greater or lesser extent. Now they have undergone selective acculturation and have added selected traits or features of the Hinduism to their respective traditional cultures. They accept the culture of the neighbouring Assamese Hindu as superior to their own and adopt the Hindu concept of the Doctrine of Karma, of pollution and purity, the Hindu way of observing rites - de- passage.

Some of the Hajongs have been influenced by the Bhakti cult. Most of them have now begun to loose faith in their traditional worship. They have adopted the Assamese Hindu "style of life" and a Brahmin is invited for marriage ceremonies or death rites.

The Hajongs attempt to know the oral tradition of both sacred as well as secular genres from their local Adhikāris or priests and elders since unknown time. Apart from this, they too know traditional arts, crafts, games and recreation which are handed down traditionally. In the changing context, all these provide them a moral knowledge and education. Today with amenity of modern media viz., T.V., Radio, Cinema has passed away the ethical values of their traditional culture. Now the educated section of the Hajong community has to think that
their traditional culture is gradually declined. So they pay proper attention towards the development of traditional cultures. A vast change in festivals and celebrations of the Hajong society has taken place now a days due acculteration. As a result they embrace the neighbouring Assamese Hindu festivals i.e., Durgā puja, Kāli puja, Sivarāti, Janmastāmi, Dol Jātrā and so forth.

In the old time the folk medicine played a dominant role amongst the Hajong society. Most of the diseases were cured by the village doctors called Kavirāj by using herbal medicine or by imploring benevolent deities. Now the health programme along with the introduction of modern medicines the faiths on folk medicines have been declining by leaps and bounds. The government has set up hospitals and dispensaries in the remote places. As a result the Hajongs use to modern medicines for their treatment. But in the sphere of some diseases such as snake bite, Ai, etc., at present they also depend on the Kavirāj. In this way the treatments of Kavirāj and doctor go hand to hand.

Concern for the performing artforms amongst the Hajong society is mere means of recreation as well as amusement in the past time, when there were no other media of entertainment. At present with initiation of education for the society at large the younger section of the Hajong community has grown apathetic towards such artforms and these traditions have become lesser extent ineffected.

In conclusion it may be said that the social and cultural life of the Hajongs is being constantly influenced by the neighbouring Assamese Hindus due to the process of acculturation and assimilation. From observation it is seen that this community has been maintaining
still most of their traditional distinctiveness notwithstanding changes in their socio-cultural fabric, which have been incorporated into the culture in its natural process. They are too lesser known owing to the lack of comprehensive literature as well as studies on them. Through the present study an attempt has been highlighted to understand the general and inclusive picture of the socio-cultural aspects of the Hajongs of Assam. At present due to the impact of modern education they are found to be conscious about their own place in the welfare and development field amongst the different ethnic groups of Assam. Their own conscious efforts together with the efforts of the government would surely bring them at par with the others.

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