CHAPTER XI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made through out the preceding chapters to throw light on some folk deities of Lower Assam. The first chapter, being the introductory one, we have tried to discuss the spheres of social life and religion of the people of Assam as a whole and our area of study in particular. The points noted below have been discussed in the said chapter :

(A) Folk culture and position of the folk Deities, (B) Lower Assam as a cultural zone, (C) Geographical Location and Topography, (D) Demographic Composition, (E) Aryan Settlement and Aryanization, (F) A Few Anthropological Concepts : their relevance in the present study, (G) Different Hindu sects, (H) Some Minor sects, (I) The Kirata oriented Religion of this area (J) Tribal Religion (K) Religious tolerance etc. We have made an attempt to identify Lower Assam as a cultural zone which again has been divided into two Regions i.e. Kamrup-Darrang or the east Region and Goalpara or the West Region.

In this connection we have made a survey of the past history and culture of Assam as a whole and lower Assam in particular. We have put emphasis on Goalpara region which is the meeting ground of different culture and which has experienced many changes in political field. We have also tried to justify the
variations in the culture between upper and Lower Assam though both are the parts of the great Assamese culture. Although our area of study chiefly inhabited by the Indo-Mongoloids, the Aryan penetration and Aryanization cannot be ruled out. Aryan influence on the life and religion of the autochthons which had led to the process of tribe-caste continuum has also been discussed. Some anthropological aspects, such as universalization and parochialization, great and little traditions and sanskritization which are some of the common factors in the study of folk culture, have been explained. How Saivism, Saktism, Vaishnavism and some other minor sects of the Hinduism had flourished in Assam and their impact on the folk deities, have been discussed. In the same chapter we have tried to justify the choice of the topic and the methodology used for the work.

In chapter II, we have accepted nine deities who are common to the two regions. Some of these deities are within the fold of pan-Indian, but their methods of worship, offerings, sacrifices etc. differ from the sastric rites and as such, these deities have been discussed in local perspectives. Of course, in tracing their origin, we have to take help of the vedic and post vedic literatures. Manasa is a powerful and popular deity of Lower Assam and its adjoining areas of West Bengal and Bihar. In tracing her cult, we have discussed the snake cult which is
related to that of Manasa. We have also tried to establish
that the original homeland of Manasa cult was within Assam.
The variations in the method of worship of the deity in the
two regions and the worship performed by the tribes in their
traditional methods have been described. In the same chapter
we have tried to trace the existence of Dharma cult in Assam.
Dharma is worshipped in conjunction with Manasa in our regions.
We have tried to find Dharma's relation with other deities of
the Hindu pantheon and have come to the conclusion that the
said cult originated from the sun cult. Suvarani is a local
deity of Lower Assam and north Bengal. Women participation in
her worship is noteworthy and the Vrata Katha narrated in the
Puja is interesting one. Through Madan-Kam or Bas Puja an
attempt has been made to trace the prevalence of Madan-cult in
Assam. Trinath is perhaps, an amalgamated deity of Brahma Visnu
and Maheswara.

Chapter III contains a discussion on the deities
peculiar to the Kamrup-Darrang Region. The deities of the
region have been described in two sub-heads: (A) deities
peculiar to Kamrup and (B) deities peculiar to Darrang. In
Kamrup region it is discerned that the influence of neo-vaishnavism
is dominant and such some local deities are worshipped in
vaishnava manner female deities such as, ukni Budhi, Apacari
etc. are propitiated by the women vaitaris. Mal Gosein is a peculiar deity of the Khetri area who has been represented by a stick. Darrang district was ruled by the descendants of Koo kings who adhered to the Sakta faith. Moreover, a good number of tribals, particularly, the Kacharis, are living there. It is observed in the method of worship of some deities of Darrang, that Saktaism as well as tribal faiths have been juxtaposed. Manasa is the dominant deity of the region. Some minor deities are propitiated on different occasions by the local people and those deities have been dealt with.

Chapter IV and V have been devoted to the Goalpara region which is very rich in the aspect of folk culture. In Chapter IV some deities common to the whole region and its adjoining areas of north Bengal have been described. These deities are namely, Kati, Sonaray, Gorkhnath, Hudum and Cadak. We have tried to describe the worship of sonaray and his probable identity with other gods and some relevant functions which have been performed in other parts of the region and in Kamrup-Darrang region. The god Kati or Kati Kai is worshipped by the women folk for the purpose of getting a child or a good husband. Hudum is a popular deity of the western part of Goalpara. He is worshipped at dead of night by the women when there is constant drought. In this connection we have described
some allied functions such as, marriage of frogs, installation of dhenki etc., which are performed for rain in Kamrup and Darrang region. We have tried to identify Mudum with Dharma Thakur. Gomath or Saraswatham has been identified with Gorakesa Nath of the Nath cult. The deity is connected with the welfare of the cow and the calf. Cadak is a socio-religious festival of the western part of Goalpara. The method of worship, swinging, inserting iron hooks in the body of votaries etc. have been described. It has been attempted to trace the identity of the deity and to conclude that cadak is at present identified with Siva of the Puranas. In Chapter V some minor deities and their worship in the Goalpara region have been discussed. They have been termed 'minor' in the sense that they are confined to particular locality or localities. About thirty village gods of this nature have been taken for discussion.

In Chapter VI an attempt has been made to throw light on socio-religious aspects of the tribal groups inhabiting the area under our study. Within a broad frame work all these groups have been identified as Mongoloids or Indo-Mongoloids. The major groups in this category are the Bodo-Kacharis, the Rabhas, the Garos, the Karbis, the Hajangs etc. These groups, though they belong to the same ethnic composition, have their traditional religious faiths and dialects which have given them self identity. Opinions of different scholars have
been cited in support of the homeland of this group of people and their migration to north-east region of India. That the Mongoloids were known as Kiratas which have been mentioned in the Hindu scriptures have also been emphasised. It is observed that these Kiratas had not remained isolated or cut off from the rest of the society. A good number of them have been absorbed into Assamese Hindu fold while others have moved towards Assamese Hindu norms through various ways. We have made a general discussion about tribe, casta and the Hindu society. Acculturation, assimilation and integration which are the major factors of tribe-casta continuum have also been explained. In the same Chapter, we have discussed the general position of the tribal religion and some common characteristics of tribal deities.

Chapter VII contains a survey of the deities of Bodo-Kacharies. The popular name for a deity in Bodo dialect is _modai_. There are four categories of modai, such as, _nani modai_ (household deity), _jāmini modai_ (village deity), _hārārāni modai_ (forest deity) and _dāini modai_ (water deity). Garja is the annual function of the Kacharies of North Bank of the river Brahmaputra. Another festival connected with the agriculture and welfare of the villagers is _Kherāi_. Bethau is their chief deity who is identified with Siva of the Hindu pantheon. The
Deity is represented by a Shiva tree. Of course, he is not worshipped singularly, other gods and goddesses are also propitiated along with him. Besides, Bhetau there are many gods and godlings among the Kasharis who have also been brought into light.

Chapter VIII has been devoted to the deities of the Rabhas. The Rabhas are concentrated in the south Bank of the river Brahmaputra in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup. Very few Rabhas are living in the Darrang district. They have about eight sub-class which have been mentioned. The Rangdania, the Matoria, the Dahuri have their own dialect, but the Pati and other sub-class speak local Assamese dialect. The religious faith of the Rabhas is animistic. They believe in gods and godlings and supernaturals. Their deities benevolent and malevolent in nature but they are all equally propitiated. In most cases the deities are represented by stones. While Khokoi or Baikho is the presiding deity of the Rangdania, Matia's and Dahuri, Lange is of the pati Rabhas. Some Hindu gods and Muslim pirs who have been deified are also propitiated. About thirty four deities including some supernaturals have been discussed in the chapter.

In Chapter IX we have discussed the deities of the Karbis, the Garos and the Hajangs who are living mainly in the
south bank of the Brahmaputra. There is a hill district by the name of Karbi-Anglong where majority of the inhabitants belong to this tribe, but they are not included in our study as they are outside the scope. There are a few Karbis who are living in the district of Kamrup. They have their own dialect and traditions which they have retained inspite of the influence of their Hindu counterpart in surrounding areas. Some of the Karbi deities, their methods of worship, offerings etc. have been discussed.

The Garos who have been brought under our study are popularly known as Sanarak. They are living in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup. Their number is very negligible. However, an attempt has been made to keep in record some of their traditional deities who have been dying fast due to the pressure of Christianiity.

The Hajongs are also very few in number. They are more acculturated than any other tribes. They speak an Assamese-Bengali mixed dialect. Now they have been reinforced by the refugees of Bangladesh. During our field work we have been able to collect only a few deities whom they are still propitiating.

Chapter X contains myths, legends, Vrata Kathās and songs. Myths and legends are helpful in determining the
evolution of some deities. Vrata Kathas are narrated and songs are sung in time of worship of some deities. And as such, some Vrata Kathas and songs have been collected from the resource persons and have been narrated in this chapter.

An investigation has been made to highlight the evolution, performance of worship, popularity of some folk deities of Lower Assam. These deities are sources of hope in time of adversity, of joy in time of prosperity, of strength in time of danger, and of solace in time of distress of the masses. In the process of their propitiation the people give expression to their creative art, such as, songs and dances, tales and legends, dramas and pantomimes as well as various kinds of arts and crafts which are always found to be integral part of the rituals associated with the deities. As such, micro-level studies of these deities has been recognised as capable of highlighting the peculiarities of local religious phenomenon. It is to emphasise the truth of the fact that an almost uniform process of contact and fusion have been at work through out India. In fact, this is a world wide phenomenon.