

## CHAPTER 8

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of the research work is to understand the phenomenon of cultural revivalism among the Tai Khamyangs of Assam. In this process the researcher made an attempt at understanding the community. An attempt was also made to study in details the history and socio - cultural life of the community. After gaining an idea about the community the researcher made an attempt to study the factors leading to the assimilation of the Tai Khamyangs with the native populace and also the process of assimilation and change which led to the near extinction of many of the traditional customs and practices. This led to a sense of identity crisis among them which in turn led to the development of revivalist tendencies among them. Finally, efforts were made by the researcher to study about the efforts made by the Tai Khamyang people to revive many of their socio- cultural practices.

As discussed above one of the objectives of the research was to study about the history and socio - cultural life of the Tai Khamyangs of Assam. One of the obstacles in doing that was the paucity of secondary data. Since the community belongs to the greater Tai community, the researcher has discussed briefly the origin and history of the Tai community. The Tai Khamyangs are also referred to as *Nora* in the *Buranjis* and British records. The researcher has tried to explain the origin of the word *Nora* separately as it often creates confusion among scholars .Attempt is being made to chronologically write the history of the Tai Khamyangs of Assam from their original habitat up to their permanent settlement in Assam. The researcher has tried to bring in chronology while

writing their history with the help of the *Tai Khamyang Buranji* corroborating it with British records and *Ahom Buranjis*. It was found that their history is a history of migration. They constantly migrated from one place to another until they finally started settling permanently in Assam in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Some of their clan names can be traced back to their place of origin.

The socio- cultural life of the Tai Khamyangs of Assam which is also one of the objectives of the research has also been discussed in details. Their religion was specifically dealt with. They are *Theraveda* Buddhists .Before accepting Buddhism they practiced their own indigenous religion which was a mix of animism, nature worship and spirit worship. Different aspects of both the indigenous religion and Buddhism have been discussed in details. Material life of the community is also being studied in details. Tai Khamyang architecture, dress, ornaments, handicrafts are also being discussed properly. Different elements of social life of the Tai Khamyangs of Assam are also being dealt with. Women play a very important role in the society. The role of the women in the society has been discussed under separate heading.

The Tai Khamyangs of Assam follow clan system. The intricacies of the clan system have also been discussed. Rituals and traditions related to birth, marriage and death are also being addressed properly. The food habits of the community have also been discussed. They still relish many of their traditional dishes. While studying about the food habits of the community, the researcher also came to know about the prevalence of ethno-medicinal practices among them. It has been discussed under separate heading. They have assimilated to such an extent with the native Assamese population that Assamese has become their lingua-franca. The researcher has also discussed about the Tai Khamyang language, script and literature. Finally by giving brief idea about the economy of the community the researcher has tried to address almost all the aspects of the socio-cultural life of the Tai Khamyangs of Assam.

The researcher has selected two villages as micro field for the research. They are Chalapather Shyam Gaon and Rohon Shyam Gaon. Both the villages come under Charaideo district. The researcher has done door to door survey in both the villages and collected information with the help of a survey schedule. The information collected in the

survey schedule is tabulated under different headings. The survey schedule is designed in such a way so as to give a detailed account of the demographic profile of both the villages. There are in all thirteen tables regarding different aspects of demography of both the villages.

To understand the process of revivalism among the Tai Khamyangs of Assam, it becomes evident to understand about the process of assimilation and changes after the community started settling permanently in Assam. It is also one of the objectives of the research work. The Tai Khamyang language is affected the most due to assimilation with the native Assamese speaking population. Assamese language has become the lingua franca and there are only a few people left who can speak the Tai Khamyang language. The researcher came across only two fluent speakers of the language, one each in both the villages, and both above the age of seventy. Large scales inter community marriages is also one of the reasons responsible for the near extinction of the language. The two studied villages i.e. Chalapather and Rohon Shyam Gaon had 43.4 and 43.7 percentage of inter community marriages.

Changes are visible in the dressing pattern as well. Though the older generation still adheres to the traditional dresses, the younger generation dons it only on special occasions like religious occasion or community festival. In general occasions the younger generation is seen wearing modern dresses like skirts, denims etcetera, and north Indian dress like *Salwar Kurta* as well as traditional Assamese dresses like *Mekhela Sador* etcetera. The Tai Khamyangs are devout Buddhists. Though Buddhism has not seen much change over the years yet many indigenous rituals prevalent among the Tai Khamyangs of Assam are either extinct or continued with minor changes to suit Buddhism. For example, there were some sacrificial rituals prevalent among them to satisfy the spirits. These days in place of sacrificing animals, flowers and candles are presented to the spirits. Besides they also take part in many festivals like Durga Pooja, Deepawali, Holi, Vishwakarma Pooja etcetera which is celebrated by the native and neighboring Hindu populace. Changes are visible regarding the food habits as well. Traditional Khamyang dishes are cooked only on special occasions and they have adopted the food habits of the native population.

Rituals such as *Aang* or tattoo making have become extinct. Changes are also visible with regards to rituals related to birth to suit modern times. In earlier times the infant was made to touch bow arrow or sickle, needle depending upon the gender of the child. These days these items are replaced with books, pen and pencil for both the genders. The early Khamyangs had traditional Tai names. However as a result of assimilation with the Hindu population the traditional Tai names gave way to Hindu names such as Rudra, Sabitri etcetera. The practice of integrating an outsider into their clan known as *Tun Chap* is also not prevalent these days mainly due to economic constraints. Changes are visible in marriages as well. Practice like putting *mehendi* (henna) and designer ornaments on the marriage day have almost become a necessity for any Khamyang bride. The practice of bride price and feast in grooms place for brides relatives before marriage along with many other traditions related to marriage are going into oblivion. Many practices associated traditionally with the Tai Khamyang people such as ethno medicine, astrology, bamboo and cane work, dye making, pottery and weaving are also going into oblivion. The traditional practice of elephant rearing is also not prevalent these days. Changes are witnessed in the housing pattern as well. The traditional house types are replaced by mud baked (kutch), semi concrete houses, concrete Assam type houses and even the RCC buildings. In the past they preferred to live in a joint family. There are still many joint families among them but the trend is changing and nuclear families are increasing day by day. Changes are visible with regards to the occupational structure of the community. Traditionally agriculture was their main occupation. However due to the spread of education and increase in literacy rate they are now engaged in government and semi government jobs. Many of them own small tea plantations as well.

The main objective of the research work is to study the cultural revivalism among the Tai Khamyangs of Assam. As a result of assimilation and changes due to modernization many traits customs and practices of the community started going into oblivion. This led to identity issues and ethnic consciousness among them. Attempts were being made to revive the old customs and practices since the later part of the twentieth century and early twenty first century A.D. due to the efforts of few socio - cultural organizations and individual efforts. The researcher has tried to study the identity issues and ethnic consciousness amongst the population with the help of observation, interviews and case studies. Efforts are being made to revive the Tai Khamyang language and script

by organizing language workshops in different Khamyang villages of Assam. Most of the young generation children address their relatives in their native tongue i.e. *Mei* -Mother, *Pou*-Father, *Luk Chai*-Son, *Chai*- Elder Brother, *Luk Sao* -Daughter, *Pi* - Elder Sister Etcetera. Certain festivals like ‘Poi Pee Mau’ or the Tai New Year is being celebrated as a community festival in a grand manner where members of other communities are also invited.

The Tai Khamyang language, dresses, dance, music food etcetera are highlighted by means of extempore speech, traditional dance and food shows as well as traditional fashion shows. Changes are visible in the naming of the Tai Khamyang children as well. It was noticed that most of the middle aged people have Hindu names like Rudra, Sabitri etcetera. However, most of the children born in the twenty first century are given traditional Tai Khamyang names like ‘Pyoseng’, ‘Munseng’ etcetera. Like other Tai communities of Assam, the Tai Khamyangs also prefix Chao before a male name and ‘Nang’ before a female name. Earlier Shyam was the common surname among the Tai Khamyangs of Assam. These days they have started using clan names like ‘Chowlu’, ‘Tunkhang’, ‘Pangyok’ etcetera. The Tai Khamyang elderly people were seen wearing traditional dresses. When asked about it, many informants gave the same answer that this trend has started since the last fifteen, twenty years. Earlier they used to wear traditional Assamese dresses like *Mekhela Sador* and *Dhotis* at home. The younger generation too wears the traditional dresses but mostly on specific occasions like religious ceremony or community festival.

As the revivalist movement gained momentum, contacts and cultural exchanges between the Tais of South East Asian countries like Myanmar, Thailand etcetera and the Tai Khamyangs of Assam has also increased. Conferences on Tai history and culture are held in countries like Thailand and Myanmar where scholars and participants of both the countries share their views. The researcher himself attended one such conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 2017. On October 25, 2019 the Royal *Kathina* ceremony (Royal Kathina Civara Dana) on the aegis of His Excellency the king of Thailand was held in the Chalapather Buddhist Vihar.

The dawn of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty first century saw the formation of few Tai Khamyang socio-cultural organizations as well. Among them, the *Phung Lai Khamyang* (2012), *Pub Bharat Tai Khamyang Jatiya Parishad* (2003) and All Assam Man (Tai speaking) Students Union (1986) are mention worthy. The ‘Phung Lai Khamyang’ is organizing traditional language, dance and music workshops in different Tai Khamyang villages of Assam at regular intervals. Individual efforts are being made by some Tai Khamyang youths to revive their traditional music. Mention needs to be made of individuals like Pyoseng Chowlu of Chalapather Shyam Gaon and Shamet Wailoung of Rohon Shyam Gaon in this regard. They have recorded traditional Khamyang songs and uploaded them in social media platforms like You Tube and Facebook to create awareness about the music and language among the masses. Some of the informants are of the opinion that education has played a major role in creating awareness about preservation and propagation of traditional customs and practices as the literacy rate is pretty high among the Tai Khamyangs of Assam. The field data also suggests the same. The literacy rate in Chalapather Shyam Gaon and Rohon Shyam Gaon is 93 percent and 91.3 percent respectively. There has been a new trend with regards to the housing pattern as well and few semi traditional houses are being constructed in the studied villages.

Though the Tai Khamyang people are devout Buddhists yet attempts are being made to keep the essence of their indigenous religion intact. They believe that the natural phenomena like earth, hills, rivers, forests as well as cities, villages, house, paddy fields etcetera also have spirits and they used to worship them. This respect for nature led them to establish a forest reserve of their own. The Chala village sanctuary came into being on 13/01/2019. The researcher was also present on that occasion. The above mentioned efforts made by the community are mainly due to the growth of ethnic consciousness among them and it may be considered as an effort to assert their identity.

## **8.1 SUGGESTIONS**

From the above discussion, it becomes evident that the Tai Khamyangs of Assam are trying to the best of their ability to revive their culture. However, they still have a long way to go. On the basis of the research work done by the researcher, the suggestions given

below can help in addressing the issue of revivalism and bring such a microscopic minority into highlight -

- i. The government should adopt adequate measures for the preservation of the Tai Khamyang language and script. Qualified linguists should be given the responsibility for the preservation of the language in collaboration with the few remaining Khamyang language speakers. Regular language workshops should be organized in all the Khamyang villages of Assam.
- ii. There is also a need of a modern museum to preserve the objects and materials of cultural, religious and historical importance related to the Tai Khamyangs.
- iii. Traditional skills and practices like cane, bamboo work, weaving, pottery and ethno medicine should be promoted and encouraged. Youths should be provided with proper training in the above mentioned ethnic skills and practices. These items should be marketed and sold commercially as it can create employment opportunities.
- iv. Tourism can help in a great way to preserve and promote the Tai Khamyang culture. The architecture of the Buddhist Vihars, unique life style of the villagers, traditional food and dresses can easily attract national and international tourists. They have already started celebrating the *Poi Pee Mau* (Tai New Year) and *Sangken* as community festivals. If these festivals are showcased like the Hornbill Festival of Nagaland and *Songkran* festival of Thailand then there is a great chance that it will attract tourists in ample numbers.
- v. There is ample scope of research on the Tai Khamyang population. Very less research work has been done on the community. Along with the social scientists and researchers from outside the community, it would be better if the members from within their community look to do research on them. This will help them to address the real issues faced by them as nobody can understand their issues better than themselves. Research on such microscopic community will

encourage research and studies on other smaller communities of Assam and North East India.

- vi. For a community to develop and prosper, it should be recognized as a separate community first. The Tai Khamyangs of Assam are not enumerated as a separate community in the Census of India. They are included in the Man Tai speaking population and are enumerated along with other microscopic Tai Buddhist communities like, Tai Aiton, Tai Phake, and Tai Turung etcetera. In the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Orders (Amendment) Act 1956 too they are accorded Scheduled tribe status and included in the Man Tai speaking population of Assam. A list prepared by UNESCO has mentioned about forty two languages and dialects in India that are endangered and that are heading towards extinction. Tai Khamyang language is also mentioned in that list (The Hindu, Feb 18, 2018). However it is listed as *Tai Nora* language as the Tai Khamyangs were also known as *Nora* in the past. It is high time that they are recognized as a separate community by the government and their problems should be addressed separately.

From the above discussion it could thus be concluded that this research work would prove beneficial if the authorities concerned take due consideration of the suggestions and implement them accordingly for the greater interest of the Tai Khamyang community in particular and society at large. The collective effort of the community is also needed in this regard.