Chapter -IV

a. The *Ambuvaci* and The *Raja* : A Comparative Study.

i. Beliefs, Rites and Rituals associated with the *Ambuvaci* and *Raja* festivals

Beliefs : Beliefs are inseparable elements of a culturally and traditionally bounded society. It refers to the socio-cultural norms of the society inferred through it. It gives a mark of distinctiveness to a community. In fact, it can be said that beliefs are unwritten laws, which keep the society intact. There are substantial numbers of beliefs prevalent among the Assamese and the Oriya people pertaining to the *Ambuvaci* and the *Raja* festival. A few of such beliefs found prevalent in both the regions are discussed below, e.g.,

It is the common belief of the people of Assam that Mother Earth undergoes through her menstrual period once in a year. During this time people forfeit themselves from regular activities like ploughing, plantation of seedlings, sowing of seeds, cutting trees, climbing in to it, digging land, even scratching on it also prohibited. Before the advent of the *Ambuvaci* all clothes and garments except those, which are absolutely necessary, are kept separately and nobody is allowed to touch these during the defilement period. If these are touched or come in contact with the Earth, they are treated to be impure. Men like saints, *Brahmachāris*, *Brahmins* and other
persons those who lost their parents in the year in which the Ambuvāci falls, are not allowed to take any boiled food during this period. They eat various fruits, uncooked rice (komal caul), curd, sweets, sāgu, rice powder and so on, which are procured before hand and preserved in such away so that there is no direct contact with the soil. Similarly the widow and the girls who attain puberty and the women in their period are also not allowed to take boiled food during the festival. In stead, they take various fruits, uncooked rice (komal caul), curd, sweets, sāgu, rice powder and so on.

The widows spend these days on the bed without coming in contact with the Earth. If incase they are to come down from bed, they use a kind of shoes made of areca nuts bark. At the end of the Ambuvāci, the clothes, utensils, furnitures are washed properly. Old brooms, earthen pots are disposed off. The twice born replace their sacred threads to new one, because these are now believed to be inauspicious.

Goddess Kāmākhyā is the presiding deity of the Kāmākhyā temple. During the period of the Ambuvāci the doors of the shrine are closed to everyone. It is believed that during this time the Goddess is unclean due to her period. On the twelfth day doors of the shrine are opened ceremonially. On this day a big melā, i.e., fair called Ambuvāci-melā takes place. The anāga-vastra, i.e., the clothes

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of the Devi's holy organ is an important unit of the festival complex of the Ambuvāci. Belief goes that if white clothes are kept in the holy kūṇḍa of the Goddess will be changed to red clothes. These clothes are known as aīga-vastra. Before the commencement of the Ambuvāci a heap of red clothes are hipped in the Yoni-Pitha. On the day of purification the clothes are taken back and are distributed among the pilgrims. The belief is that, if any one is able to put on such a piece of cloth, it is greatly beneficial and auspicious for the wearer. The Kāmākhya Tīrtha has quoted from the Prāṇa-Toshini Tantra regarding the red cloth and its importance, like this,

\[
kāmākhya-vastramādaya japa-pūjā samācaret / 
purnakāma labheddevi satyam satyam na samsāya.\]

i.e., Red colour is the symbol of Saktism. It symbolizes rajas and also sex creativity. Devī is said to be very pleased with red colour and red cloth for offering in Her worship. The Kālikā-Purāṇa mentions, e.g.,

\[
raktam kauseya vastranca / 
mahādevyaī prasasyate.\]

i.e., In Kāmākhya-Tantra also it is described that Kāmākhya is extremely beautiful, dressed with red garments.

\[2\] Prāṇa-Tashini Tīrtha 4/4.
\[3\] Kālikā-Purāṇa 69/8.
raktavastram varodayuktam sindūra tilakōṇvītam.\(^4\)

So the use of a piece of red cloth used in the *Devi-pitha* is definitely considered to be of immense value for a mortal devotee.

The other temples and local *Nāmghar* also remain closed during the *Ambuvāci* period. These are believed to be unclean due to the menstruation of Mother Earth. Because of the tremendous influence of *śakti* cult, observation of *Ambuvāci* came to the *Vaisnavite* cult. Though the main *Manikut* and *Nāmghar* remain closed, but regular *Nōma-prasanga* continues in the *Sankarite* Satras. This is nothing but modern phenomena. However, in the *Satras* of the Damodarite school the act of *Nōma-prasanga* is not allowed.

The *Hajongs* and the *Chutiyas* of Assam believe that during the *Ambuvāci*, the shrines become unholy. So, towards the end of the month of *Āhāra* they organize a ceremony to purify their shrines. They also believe that if anyone takes *bukni bhāt* and raw milk during the period of defilement of Mother Earth, there is no fear of snake biting for the whole year. This belief, particularly one who

\(^4\) *Kāmākhyā-Tantra* 3/10.
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Homa and Puja of the deities, offering of libation to them are carried out as usual. In fact, on the day of samkrānti special offerings to deities are made. On this day there are some restrictions on feasting, the non-vegetarian items are prohibited to all. The unmarried girls observe certain restrictions prescribed for married women. They avoid troubling the Earth, so they use the traditional shoes made of areca nut trees. It is the common belief of the Oriya people, that if a girl menstruates during Raja period, she is considered to be inauspicious, her future becomes dark. She is not allowed to expose herself to any male person. She spends those days in an isolated room.9

Rites and Rituals: The rites and rituals are generally connected with religions. It consist in the observance, according to a prescribed manner, of certain actions designed to establish liaison between the performing individual and supernatural power or powers. In connection with Ambuvāci and Raja festivals some similarities are found in the observance of certain rites by the people of both the states which are shown below.

In Assam before the advent of Ambuvāci all clothes and garments except those, which are absolutely necessary, are kept separately and no body is allowed to touch them during the period. At the end of the Ambuvāci, people wash their clothes, garments,

utensils, furniture and other household materials. They clean their floors and courtyards, plastered them with clay and cow dung. The old boons and earthen utensils are disposed off. The doors of the shrines closed for last four days are re-opened ceremonially after purification. People after taking purified bath go to shrines, local Nāmghar and sing hymns. In the evening, seasonal fruits like mango, jackfruit, pear, pineapple and other seasonal fruits are taken.

In connection with the Ambuvāci, certain rites are observed at the Kāmākhyā temple and the rites culminate in a festival. Just before the commencement of the Ambuvāci, red silken cloths are piled on the Yoni-pitha of the Goddess Kāmākhyā. During the defilement period, the worship to the Goddess by the devotee is prohibited. On the expiry of the period, the doors of the shrines are ceremonially re-opened and the clothes are taken back. It is believed that such pieces of clothes possess magic power. People use them as amulets for keeping off the evils and receiving other beneficial effects.

In Orissa, prior to the first day of Raja, the houses, courtyard, surrounding are purified with clay and cow dung. Even the utensils are also washed properly for the occasion. A special cake is prepared out of recipes like rice powder, molasses, coconut, camphor, ghee etc. This cake is called poda-pithā. The young boys and girls are given new dresses for the occasion. The newly brides,
especially after first year of her marriage are sent lot of articles from her parents’ home. The young girls observe certain restrictions during the time of *Raja*. They do not walk bare footed, use a kind of traditional shoe made of areca nut in order to avoid troubling the Earth. This restriction is also observed by the widow Brahmin of Assam. On the fourth day early in the morning, Mother Earth is given a ritual bath, which is locally known as *Basumati snāna* or bathing of Mother Earth. It is generally done by the elderly lady of the family. After this only, the Earth is considered to be fit for cultivation.

ii. Myths, Legends and Tales associated with the festivals.

Myths: Myths are prose narratives, there is a sanction of belief behind it. These narratives are considered to be true and it is also believed that these were happened in the remotest past. The principal characters of this sub-genre of prose-narrative are non-human beings. Rightly does observe William R. Bacom:

<snip>

To Sir G.L. Comme, myths explain matters in “the science a pre-scientific age”. Thus myths tells of the creation of men,

10 Bacom, William, R. : *Contributions To Folkloristics*, Folklore Institute, Meerut, 1960, P. 98.
of animals, of landmarks; they tell why a certain animal has its characteristics; (e.g., why the bat is blind or why it flies only at night), why or how certain natural phenomena’s come to be (e.g., why rainbow got into the sky), how and why rituals and ceremonies began and why they continue. Not all origin stories are myths, however; the myth must have a religious background in that its principal actor or actors are deities; the stories are thus systematized at least to the extent that they all related to a corpus of other stories in which the given god is a member of a pantheon. Where such interrelation does not occur, and where the gods or demy-gods do not appear, such stories are properly classified as folktale. A myth remains properly myth only as long as the divinity of its actor or actors is recognized; when the hero is a man rather than a god.

A well-known myth is also associated with the Ambuvaci which is given below:

The concept of Mother Earth being subject to menstruation is reflected in Indian myth and mythologies. In the Kalika-purana it is mentioned that Lord Viṣṇu in his Boar incarnation rescued the Earth from beneath the Samudra i.e., ocean who was being hidden there by Hiranakṣya. At that time the Earth was in her period. Being tempted, Lord Viṣṇu had sexual intercourse with her.

As a result of which their son *Narākasura* was born. The myth also reveals that the Earth is the mother of *Śīpā*, the heroine of the *Rāmāyana*.

The concept of the cult of Mother Earth has been in its process of gradual evolution and elevation merged in *Upanisadic* and mythological ages with the concept of *Śrī Devī*, *Mahā Lakṣmī* and ultimately identified with *Mahā Devī Durgā*. The *Nārāyaṇa Upanisada* mentions that Mother Earth is religiously worshipped and adored as *Devī Vasundhārī*. So Goddess Earth being identified with śākta form of Devī like *Śrī Mahāmāyā* or *Mahālakṣmī* symbolizing the concept of fertility, sex and procreation. *Kāmākhya* temple is the sacred abode of Mother Goddess in the form of Pudendum in the *garbha* of the temple located at Nilachal hill. *Devī Mahāmāyā* or *Devī Durgā* is said to manifest here in various forms such as a virgin, a spouse of Lord Śiva.

\[mahāmāyā sarirantu kāmarthang samupasthitam / \\
louhitoi kunkumoi pitang kāmarthamupayojitoi\]

Another myth associated with the Kamakhya temple is found in the *Kālikā-purāṇa*. According to this myth Lord Śiva being wild with rage and grief carried the dead body of Śatī and wandered

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12 *Kālikā-Purāṇa*, 3 55/56.
aimlessly throughout the world. Lord Viṣṇu with his Sudarśana Cakra (discus) cut her into several pieces and her genital organ fell at the Nilachal hill. That genital portion turned to a stone, and the Devī Kāmākhyā abodes on that stone.

satyasta gati tam tatra visinōm yo'ṁmaṇḍalam /
silatvamagam saile kāmākhyā tatra samsthitā.\(^{13}\) \(11\)

Again the Kālikā-Purāṇa says that Devī comes to Nilachal hill with Śiva for satisfying her lust.

kāmarthanāgatā yasmāṁnaya sardham mahāgirau /
kāmākhyā presvye devī nilakute rahogata.\(^{14}\) \(11\)

So, against this background it is clear that Goddess Earth or Goddess Kāmākhyā is a female who menstruates annually. Her menstruation period is being observed by the devotees as Ambuvāci.

**Legend:** Legend is a prose narrative. It is also regarded as true by the people, in which society this genre of prose narrative is current. The time of occurrence of legend is considered as recent past. The legend tells about the world of today. Legend may be regarded as

\(^{13}\) Kālikā-Pūrāṇa, 62/77.
\(^{14}\) ibid, 62/1.
either secular or sacred. In many respects myth and legend are considered as one and same category. Says W.R. Bacom:

*Legend are prose narratives which, like myths, are regarded as true by the narrator and his audience, but they are set in a period considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today.*

Legend has come to be used for a narrative supposedly based on fact, with an intermixture & traditional materials, told about a person, place or incident. The line between myth and legend is often vogue. The legend is told as true; the myth's voracity is based on the belief of its hear ness in the gods who are its characters.

A large number of legends are also associated with Mother Goddess Kāmōkhyā and her temple. One of such legends is given below:

Kendu Kalai, a Brahmin priest used to worship the Goddess with singing. Being pleased with the singings, Mother Goddess Kāmōkhyā performed dances being necked. The King of Koch kingdom being aware of this fact requested the priest to make necessary arrangements so that he could see the dances of the Mother Goddess Kāmōkhyā. Finding no other alternative, the priest requested the king to peep through the small window of the temple

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while the Goddess was dancing the king did accordingly. Being angry with the king and the priest the Mother Goddess cursed them to be beheaded. The curse of the Goddess could not be gone in vain. Accordingly both the king and the priest were beheaded.\textsuperscript{17}

This legend is still considered today to be fact. The stone images of both the beheaded king and the priest may be seen on the walls of the temple.

Folktale: Folk tale is an important sub-genre of prose narratives. This sub-genre is regarded as fiction. According to W. R. Bacom, folktales are not considered as dogma or history. This sub-genre of prose-narrative may or may not have happened, and folktales are not to be taken seriously. Nevertheless although it is often said that they are told only for amusement, they have other important functions, as the class of moral folktales should have suggested. Folk tales may be set in any time and any place and in this sense they are almost timeless and placeless.\textsuperscript{18}

But all these observations made by W.R. Bacom may not be accepted since in many respects, folktales may function as oral history. The entire society is being reflected through these tales.

\textsuperscript{18} Bacom, W.R. : \textit{op-cit.}, P. 97.
A few traditional oral tales are associated with the Mother Goddess, Her temple and Her menstrual festival i.e., *Ambuvāci*.

One such tale says that there was a cultivator in a village. He was a true devotee of the Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā. The menstrual festival of the Goddess was observed by the cultivator yearly, regularly, honestly and cordially. But once he was ill-advised by a heterodox, not to observe the *Ambuvāci*. The ill-fated cultivator did accordingly. But that year he could not cultivate due to dearth of rain and lot of other causes. He could realize his omissions and commissions. He prayed the Goddess. Being satisfied over the cultivator, She advised the cultivator to observe the *Ambuvāci* regularly, honestly and cordially. By the grace of the Goddess he could do well in the next year.\(^\text{19}\)

iii. Time of Festival: According to some old books like *Svāpa-matsya-purāna* and the *Smṛti Sāgara*, *Ambuvāci* begins when the Sun is in the first quarter of the Ādra-nakṣatra, the sixth lunar mansion. It continues for four days from the seventh day of Āhār on which the Sun enters the sign of Gemini. The time of commencement

\(^{19}\) Informant: Srimati Hemalata Devi, (70, W), Kāmākhyādhām. Data collected from N.C. Sarma, since she has already passed away.
mentioned in these books are still followed. Every year the festival begins from seventh of Āhār and lasts for four days.

In Orissa, the Raja festival is celebrated for three days. The first day of the festival falls on the last day of the solar month of Jaistha. The festival normally starts from 13th or 14th of June. On the fourth day, of the festival, a ritual ceremony is observed known as Basumati snāna. This ceremony is to some extent related with Bhūmidāha of Assam. The last three days of the month of Jaistha and first three days of Sankrōnti, this period of seven days is known as Bhūmidāha or Sātha. It is an integral part of Ambuvāci.

iv. Song, Dance, Drama and Sport associated with the festivals.

Song: The Raja is a festival of singing and dancing, merry-making, feasting, displaying of gymnastic, playing various kinds of games and so forth are the most important pre-occupations for all three days. Songs occupy an important place in the festival. Young girls from the day of Pahili Raja to Bāsi Raja spend hours after hours moving up and down on improvised swings in the open field. While swinging, out of joy they sing typical Raja songs in the form of duet. The girls echo the village sky with their impromptus songs.
None can say definitely anything about the composer of these songs. But whatever it may be, much of these songs through beauty of diction and sentiment have earned a permanent place in the hearts of the singers and have contributed a lot towards the oral poetry of Orissa. These songs speak of love, affection, respect, role of step mother, sister-in-law's behaviour, about rosy future, prospect of good marriage, pictures of their lovers and everything of social order that come to the minds of the singers. The songs are always beginning with the invocation to God and Goddess. A very long song has been collected from an old lady from the remote village of Bhadrak district, which along with other songs are reproduced below. e.g., :

1) \textit{lalēte dei chandana,} \\
\textit{prathame bandili srīgajanana,} \\
\textit{doli gite hela mana.}^{21} //

i.e., I affix \textit{chandana} on my forehead invoking Lord \textit{Gajanana}. My heart longs to sing \textit{doli} songs.

2) \textit{bandoi saralā devī,} \\
\textit{prasanna hoile uttar devī,} \\
\textit{manare rakhiba bhābi.}^{22} //

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textit{\(^{20}\) Patnaik, D. : op. cit., P. 38.} \\
\textit{\(^{21} , ^{22} , ^{23} , ^{24}\) Informant: Banalata Mohanty, (50, W), Nimapara, Puri, Orissa.} \\
\textit{Data collected on 9-7-2000.}
\end{flushright}
i.e., I worship Goddess Saralā Devī. If She is satisfied with me, I want to open my heart.

3) doli mundare deli kalā;
   prathame bandili sarbamangalā,
   sarati uthiba galā.\(^{23}\)

i.e., At the outset I invoke Goddess Sarbamangalā to warm up my voice.

4) āji pahili raja,
   barasare thare āsichi raja,
   gheni nuā saja bāja.\(^{24}\)

i.e., Today is the first Raja. The festival has come once in a year with new beauty and grandeur.

5) barasei nuā megha,
   pōsi mahakōi āmba panasa,
   hoichi badhiyā pāga.\(^{25}\)

i.e., The clouds are pouring new rain. Seasonal fruits like mango, jackfruits are ripped and smell deliciously. The weather is also very favourable for the festival.

6) rāsira chārilā chopō,
   godare nāichu guā kholapō,
   mundare sindura topō.\(^{26}\)
i. e., The skins of season are removed. I have put on nut-peels on my foot and decorated myself with vermillion on my forehead.

7) *doli hue kata-mata*,

> *mo bhāira mundare sunā mukuta,*

> *disuṭhāi jhata-mata.*  

i. e., The swing makes a jarring sound. There is a golden crown on the head of my brother and it dazzles.

8) *jā re mana doli udi jāre,*

> *ā-re megha chui pheri ā-re.*

i. e., O, the swing of my imagination, fly higher and higher and return back after touching the clouds.

9) *banaste gōzilā gaja,*

> *barasare thare āsichi raja,*

> *āsichi raja lo,*

> *gheni nuā saja- bāja.*

i. e., The elephants roar in the jungle. The festival *Raja* has come once in a year with new beauty and grandeur. The

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27,28,29,30 Informant: Tarulata Patnaik, (66, W), Cuttack, Orissa.
Data collected on 10-7-2000.
rajabatis are addressed to come decorated for participating in the festival.

10) raja-saja mouja belaku /
    tipi-tipi megha chōridelāre //
    raja-saja mouja belaku /  
    ēma majhiyāni, se bada siyāni //
    kolatha dolire hengu delāre /
    raja-saja mouja belaku.30 //

i. e., At the time of preparation for Raja, clouds are pouring rain slowly. Our middle one is very cunning, she swings in kolatha swing. The paste prepared out of hingu cereals (kolatha) to administer in the body to undergo exciting experience of Raja.

11) banaste dēkilā gaja /
    barasake thare lo āsichi raja //
    pindhi nuā saja bēja /  
    rāsiro chārilā chopā //  
    godare nāichu guā khalapā /
    mathāre sindura topā //
    urilā suā nāhākā /  
    dolītā kōheki lōguchi ekā //
    kāhā binā ekā-ekā /
    pāchilā boicha kali //
bekare nāichu gajara māli /  
jhulāo rajara doli //  
panasa pāchilā bane /  
bara podigole duniyā jāne //  
mana kathā kiyā jāne /  
sankha mala-mala ginā //  
daradi bujhelo darada sinā /  
baniyā chinhanti sunā //  
limbara buke chandana /  
devātā garhilā nāri janama //  
dele nāhi joubana /  
dhemenā chārilā kāti //  
purusa sinā lo bhramara jāti /  
nuāre manati niti //  
chandare kalanka chinha /  
naba joubana kiyā gumāna //  
aileni jibā dhana /  
pokhori tutha pathara //  
tote dekhitihili bāli bandhara /  
ākhi thilā ene tora //  
sāhārā gachara sāi /  
sedina kothā ki to mane nāhi //  
ete mana kāhi pāi /
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khosāre khosili phula //
kete tu dekhāo nukhurā gela /
noire sukhilā bāli //
kete phuli heu puchuki gāli /
bhāngi bebi tora beli //
bājhilā telengi bājā /
rasika jōne lo snehara majā //
se sinō no mana rajā /
dura parbata sobhā //
pōnire kātili sara /
to pari dekhichī kete nāgarā //
goda dhuli sāri nuhe mora /
bāsilā mahula bane //
nāka teki kete tu kahula tāna /
bhāngi jība sati pana //
boyasa tora bāra tera /
kōhu sikhi helu ete nāgarā //
achi to boyasa tora /
pārā khāi galā dhāna //
tume ki bujhība ōmari mana /
sōhu kete hini mana //
ghāsare māi kākara /
kāthāre pānire pakāo sara //
kāthāre rahichi phera /
sambal puriyā kulā //
thiri-thiri kari tu doli ti jhulā /
buku bāsa udi galā //
usunā chōula chunā /
kete tāuluchure sara sābanā //
mo ārako thare anā /
banare phutilā māli //
rasare bharichulo naba chāini /
rakhibani mora ali //
kaitha gachara athā /
tuni-tuni kahare nakari haiā //
sabu gacha phala mithā /
phutilā bane mālati //
dāgā dōre chinālo purusa jāti /
niti nuā khojuthānti //
buluchi bane harini /
hasi gīta gōulo naba rangini //
pathara huayā pōni /
sambal puriā sōri //
nāli-nāli tora hāta pāpuli /
dekhi mu jibana deli //
pokhuri pānire koi /
to pari sundari jane ke nāhi //
delu mu chitta mazāi /
kalā pānire jāhāja //
kāli ki nathibalo ājī mouja /
ājī pā pahili raja //
hāti bhāinge bada dōla /
dina tāre karo nā mo sānge gela //
hasibe sangini dala /
āsare ratha jālarā //
sohala bayasi mu saraga tarā /
dhaile nadeu dharā //
pākelā pānare chuna /
hasi-hasi kuhago mithā bachana /
bhulāuchi mo mana //
boula phuliyā bā /
phulei chāluchu to chāru hiyā //
mo chātire jale niyā /
kiyā phuli uthe bāsa //
to nāli othore muruki hasa /
hasi mate kalu basa //
māilā latā bijuli /
i. e., In the advent of Raja doli festival, roar the elephants in the forest. A young rustic girl feels a stir and gets herself

dressed up with her well-preserved new attire. She wears nut-peels around her legs, puts on vermilion on her forehead and prepares herself for the swing. However the girl feels lonely at heart as the thoughts of the lovebird haunts her. As her friend sets the swing on, the girl unfolds her heart in untold language.

She says had the smell of a ripened jackfruit spread the forest and had the wind get alert as the forest sets fire, where as a girl’s inward suffering goes unnoticed. She however tells that as a goldsmith tests the genuineness of gold, a heart pinned down with kindred feelings and sympathetic concern understands the affection. A snake spreads its sloughs to assume a new cover, a black-worm wonders from flower to flower in search of honey and likewise a man often leaves his old time for a new one.

In the mean time there appears the man of her dream and reminds her how she wandered another day with an unsteady mind by the side of the sandy road. He also tells her whether she is forgetful of their encounter and the subsequent happenings beneath the shadow of tree on that day. He then adorns her with fragrant flowers and heaps of flattery on her. The girl feels impressed and regards her man as the king of her heart. However the girl accuses that men are of such type that they are indifferent to the sufferings of their sweet hearts. On the other hand they know the art of flattery to win over the ladies. At this hour of time the lady apprehends the game of mischief played by the wind, as the latter is set to strip off
her body's wearing. She lovingly implores her lover to slow down the speed of the wind so as to neutralize the on slaughter of the wind. The man then approaches his sweet heart with a passion. He says how sweet fragrance of jasmine fills the air in the forest and how love swells high in his ladylove. The girl feels impressed but requests her lover not to put her in an embarrassing situation by making it public. She further tells him jokingly how men look constancy and sincere in love. But in reality they are rather unsteady and unfaithful. The man on the other hand does not mind the pinching remarks and goes on praising her attractive attire, charming appearance and beauty of her reddish palm. He also says how never before he has seen a beautiful lady of her like. He invites his beloved to plunge into the pleasure pursuit, since the festive show shall not go beyond this day. But the girl does not appreciate the idea of merry making in the broad day light. As an elephant breaks the branches of a banyan tree, the publicly of love as the girl says would invite her friend's laughter. She further tells how all his flattery and persuasions are meant to divert her from her stand. The man does not contradict his beloved's version, but expresses his inability of self-restraint. He says how her glance and attractive bosom have set a fire in him. He is dying for her love; her bewitching smile, her blushing cheeks and for a self-delicate touch. He earnestly desires to share the pleasure of the day with his beloved. However the girl says how she is ashamed of it. She rather tells her lover to enjoy the day by himself. The lover then firmly invites his girl to sit on his lap in the swing. He also tells
her not to disappoint him through the play of winds. He admits that the lady knows manipulating art to overcome the situation through sweet and shrewd remarks. In the end the lover succeeds to persuade his beloved and both share the pleasure of swinging in the Raja-doli festival.

In Assam during Ambuvāci no such songs are sung by anybody. But of course during the Bhumidāha period, in some parts of lower Assam a special vow is observed by the women folk called Barat pūjā. During this vow certain mystic syllables are sung by the vratini at different times. But there is much difference between the Raja-doli songs and the songs of Barat pūjā. The songs of former one are romantic and merry making but the songs of latter one are devotional. They are to propitiate Opani Gaurī, an incarnation of the Mother Goddess Kāmākhyā to get her blessing. Some of the songs are reproduced below.

In Kāmākhyā dhām areas:

1) phul kateri jāgā /
   āmār kāse lāgā //
   hallirpe malli dim /
   phul kateri galat dim //
   apanthe pantha hoy /
   bhāngā ghare sivā hoy //
māti muthi tulili / 
sindur muthi pāi //
larbā sārbā prānek nāmerbā /
tumi karā nite nite //
āmi karo basar dine /
sāthak diyā ji bar //
āmāko diyā sei bar /
opanigouri jāgā āmāko diyā sei bar //
rousasthi jāgā āmāko diyā sei bar /
man kamini jāgā āmāko diyā sei bar //
mahālaxmi jāgā āmāko diyā sei bar /
kāmākhyā jāgā āmāko diyā sei bar.32 //

i. e., Please awake flower and knife and come near to us. I will be always ready to sacrifice myself from beginning to end. If situation needs I will garland you. The old broken house will be a temple by your grace. The clay will transform to vermilion at your grace. You may punish me, but do not kill me. You perform this Sāthā barat every day and we perform it once in a year. The boon given to Sāthā barat may also be inferred to me. O, Opani Gouri, please awake up and grace us with boon. O Goddess Mānkapāmini

please awake and give us boon. O Goddess Mahālakṣmi and Kāmākhyā please awake and grace us with boons.

In Hajo areas:

2) _agni burhi jāge /
āmār kāse lāge //
hallirpe mallit diyā /
phal kateri garat diyā //
bhāṅgā gharar sikale /
apanthē panthe //
mātī muṭhi tuli diyā /
sendur muṭhi pāi //
laīrbā sāîrbā prāne nāmerbā /
bāmūnir salik ji bar diyā /
āmāko sei bar diyā.³³ //

i. e.: O mother _Agni Burhi_ please wake up and come to us. I will be always ready to sacrifice myself from beginning till the end. If situation compels, I will garland you. By your grace even the broken house can turn to a beautiful one. By your grace a hazardous path turns to a smooth one. The clay brought from the beneath the water becomes vermilion by your grace. If you please

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you may torture us, but do not kill us. The boons that are awarded to
the Brahmin's son may also be granted to us.

In Nalbari areas:

3) nangalāte roi āse ukuni burhi āi /
    sonār sāti rupar ghat bari ānā jāi.

i. e., Ukunī Burhi, the old mother is waiting at the gate. Please
welcome her with a lamp made up of gold and a pitcher of
silver.

4) ukunī burhi jāge mor kārjyat lāge /
    hallio pāi mallio jiye ukunī burhi rakhya kare.

i. e., Ukunī Burhi is waking, she will help me in my
religious performances. At the grace of the mother Ukunī, one can
have the lost things and can also revive one's life. Mother
Ukunī always protects her devotees.

5) a māi ukunī burhi rathe āsā roi /
    āko dibā nari āso golā kāpor hoi.

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34 Informant: Bhaben Dev Sarma, (45, M), Barbag, Nalbari. Data collected on
35, 36 Same as reference No. 34.
i.e., O, Mother *Ukunī*, you are waiting at the chariot. As we have no other things to offer you, so, welcome you with earnest devotion.

6) \[ \text{kailāsate upajīa a ukunī burhī āi} / \\
     \text{hāte padmo mukhe solok rākhā mahā māi}.^{37} // \\
\]

i.e., The old Mother *Ukunī*, born at *Kailāsa*. She is holding a blooming lotus in her hand and reciting Sanskrit verses. O, Mother please protect us.

7) \[ \text{āi ukunī burhī jagatmātā} / \\
     \text{tumi samastāre dātā} // \\
     \text{prithibite thākā tumī indra nāri} / \\
     \text{tusta hobā māi ukunī burhī}.^{38} // \\
\]

i.e., O, Mother *Ukunī*, you are the Mother of the world and you are the giver of boons to all. Although you have the divine abode never the less you stay in the Earth to grace your devotees. So, old mother please be satisfied with us.

8) \[ \text{prithvi nandan prithbi sandan} / \\
     \text{prithivit bahi moi karo pranām} // \\
     \text{āi prithvi lobā phul} / \\
     \text{tumi āi hobā santul}.^{39} // \\
\]

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{\(^{37}\) Informant : Jamuna Bala Devi, (65, W), Barbhag, Nalbari, Assam. 

{\(^{38}\) Same as reference No. 37.}
i.e., The Earth is full of pleasure. I offer you devotion from the Earth. O Mother Earth please accept my offerings and be satisfied with my worship.

9) āi padyo phular pāt /
    bōra māhat dilo hāt //
    pātā sepi dilo moi /
    pateswari halo moi //
    dhān sepi dilo moi /
    dhaneswari halo moi //
    barelā sepi dilo moi /
    bar gireteni halo moi //
    ālu kasu dheke dilo moi /
    thāpe-thupe thāklo moi //
    sābitri sāt kuwari santustā hobā /
    sābitrik ji bar diyā /
    āmāko sei bar diyā.⁴⁰ //

i.e. O, Mother you are like the leaf of lotus. We worship you throughout the year. With the grace of you one can become queen, Lakṣmi, singer and so on. You can be worshipped with mere leaves, flowers, and paddy as well as with various vegetables. O, the seven mothers be pleased with our worship and give us the same boons that are inferred on Sāvitree.

⁴⁰ Same as reference No. 36.
Dance: During Ambuvaci, on the day of purification, Kômôkhyô temple’s doors are opened ceremonially after performance of regular rituals. On this day at the temple premises, a traditional dance called Deodhani nāc is performed by professional artists. Except this no other dance takes place anywhere. In Orissa during Raja festival a kind of special dance called Gotipuo nāc is performed by professional artists. The difference between two dances are that Deodhani nāc is performed ritually that too in temple. But Gotipuo nāc is nowadays performed in the open pandal for mere enjoyment.

Drama: During the Bhumidhāha or Ambuvaci no drama is staged anywhere in Assam. But in Orissa during Raja, Oriya people enjoy these evenings through various attractive programmes. In some prosperous villages Yatrā performances are arranged for the whole night. Professional Yatrā parties are invited to perform the show. But in many villages modern dramas are staged by local artists.

Games and Sports: People of Assam and Orissa are mainly agriculturists. So, they are to remain busy in agricultural activities for couple of months together. Thus they cannot afford much time to spare for sports. But during some agricultural festivals they enjoy various sports. Like the people of any other regions of the country,
the Assamese and the Oriya people are also very much found of sports which are means of pleasure and entertainment.

Since we are concerned here with *Ambuvāci* and *Raja* festival, so it would be relevant to discuss some of the traditional games and sports associated with these two festivals.

In Orissa, during *Raja* festival all kinds of agricultural activities remain suspended for three days. So, it is a kind of leisure time for everyone. People of all ages spent their time through various kinds of indoor and outdoors games. The most favourite outdoor game for the young boys is *Bāgudi*, it is something like modern *Kābdī*. Competitions are organized by some villages where teams from neighbouring villages take part. As prize for competition a goat, or a jackfruit or a bunch of banana or a packet of sweet are kept. The winning team acquires the prize and enjoys a communal feast (in case of a goat). All the villagers, young or old alike gather at the field to enjoy the game. Nowadays beside *Bāgudi* cricket, volleyball competitions are also getting popularity. The elderly people engross themselves in indoor games like card, dice etc. Both the games are very popular. These are played at night also. Competition in the card is a common scene. Gambling in dice is also very popular. Elderly people from nearby villages come for dice playing.
The young girls also play various indoor and outdoor games. Among them ludo, card, puchi, kauri, bahu-bahukā and so forth. Puchi and bahu-bahukā are outdoor games. Bahu-bahukā is played by young boys also. Among outdoor games, puchi is very popular. The girls, since cannot play the country games like the boys in the open air due to natural shyness and social restriction, gather in some neighbour's broad courtyard and play their puchi game. Actually it is a sort of exercise practiced by the young girls of Orissan villages. It strengthens the thigh and the muscles of the waist and abdomen. And in future life they will be relieved from various pains like delivery. The proper time for the game is twilight. The girls sit in a circle and dance throwing one leg and one hand forward alternatively. The process creates rhythms in the whole body. While playing, they sing songs. But mostly the songs are meaningless. For example:

puchi lo puchi lo /
ja, ja, ghunchi lo //
gahīrī bilare moisi /
dhōna kendā kendā khāuchi //
ācei dele gouça bhāi /
bahu bēpāghara jāuchi.44 //

Though incoherent, it has its natural beauty, which is much enhanced when sung in chorus by maidens. The game is

known by different names in different places. For instance in Balasore it is called *pucho-puchi*, in Sambalpur *chielai*. The songs related to the game also differ from place to place.

v. Performance and Communication

The concept of folklore as communication derives much of its theory and method from the field of socio linguistics. It owes a direct debt to Hymes’s idea of “The Ethnography of Communication.” This application of linguistic theory and the methods to the social dimensions of speaking recast communication in culture in a new mold. It demonstrates pattern of speaking, not only of language. Hymes suggests concurring with other studies in socio linguistics and cultural anthropology, that using the analogy of language, the entire network of cultural communication has its rules of appropriateness.42

In account of storytelling, we generally find information about the broad cultural context of tales and occasionally an indication or general description of the major types of story telling occasions. Very rarely do we come across accounts of actual narrative events.43

The interest of the story is vastly enhanced and it is given its proper character by the manner in which it is told. The whole nature of the performance, the voice and the mimicry, the stimulus and the response of the audience mean as much to the natives as the text. The performance again has to be placed in its proper time setting—the hour of the day and the season.

Now referring to the two festivals Ambuvaci and Raja, we find that there is no such event of story telling. But during Sāthā barat, the story telling event is an indispensable part of the festival. On the last day of the festival, after the priest leaves the place performing the sacred ritual ceremony, the women are left alone. Now the Ojeni, the old lady of the group carries on the remaining functions of the ceremony. Among other functions, storytelling event is also an important one. The chief narrator of the stories is Ojeni. The participants of this function are vratae, other women and some young unmarried girls. The Ojeni sits at the centre while the listeners sit around her. The stories are being narrated and interpreted by the Ojeni. The stories are completely imaginary. The same stories are being continued from generation to generation. But they certainly bear the educative value, which are being communicated by the Ojeni through the listeners. These are all about the importance of Sāthā barat i.e., what one gains by performing this vow or how one is blessed through this vrata. The stories are narrated by the Ojeni in such away that even the young girls are being motivated to perform
such vow in future. To enhance the beauty and charms of the stories, the *Ojeni* adds proverbs and riddles in the middle.

vi. Symbol: Since the earliest times, the Earth has been symbolized with a woman. Thus the functions of both the Earth and a woman are same. Mother Earth menstruates in order to prepare herself for her fertilizing work. Further a woman feels the burning sensation in her lower abdomen just before menstruation. So also the Earth is considered to be burnt with extreme heat of the sun. That is why there is continuous rain during the *Ambuvoci* period. The rainy period symbolizes the menstrual period of the Earth. The Earth has been symbolized with productive capacity of Nature. She becomes particularly activated after the onset of wet weather. The Earth also symbolizes a mother’s figure, because she is the mother of *Sītā*, the heroine of the Epic the *Rāmāyana* and also of *Narakāsura*, the mythical king of Kāmarūpa who was later killed by her.

In some areas particularly in the district of Darrang, Assam the Mongoloid people take their meals with the curry prepared out of pork along with the rice beer. They consider it as the symbol of productivity.  

In Orissa, on the day of purification, the Mother Earth is given a ritual bath. The grinding stone and the blade of the plough are used for it. These two articles are nothing but the symbols of

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male genitive organ. So, the union of the plough blade and soil gives birth to the new crops. After Basumati snāṇa, the Earth is considered fit for productivity.

The agriculturists of India consider the Sky as the symbol of Father and the Earth as Mother. While horizon is the symbol of their meeting place. Another interpretation can be supplied as the Sky is the male and the Earth is a female. Creation is possible only after the union of male and female. After Ambuvacī or menstruation the Earth she attains a new look. The Father Sky gets attracted towards the Mother Earth. They meet and pours incense rain and thus Mother Earth becomes fertile. While the cultivators attain the source for cultivation.

Certain symbols are associated with Sātha of Assam also. The bringing of mud from the underneath of water may symbolize the mother Goddess Lakṣmī who comes out of water at the time of churning the sea by the Gods and Demons. Or it may symbolise the Mother Earth who was brought over from the Samudra by Viṣṇu in his boar incarnation. Lakṣmī is also identified with the Earth. The corns, which are used to sprinkle on the clay, are the symbols of Goddess Lakṣmī. The idols prepared during the Sātha are of white and yellow colour, which again symbolize the seedlings and ripened paddy. The other items like knife, bungles, and vermilion are inferred to be the symbol of fertility.
vii. Fair: Besides in other places and shrines, *Ambuvāci* festival is celebrated in Kāmākhyā temple of Kāmarūpa with popular śāstric rites. On the fourth day of the festival the doors of the shrine are opened ceremonially. After the ritual worship, the temple is opened for the visitors. On this day a big fair is held at the temple premises. Various articles relating to temple and household goods are brought for sale. But the most attractive thing for which people hanker is the red-silken clothes of *Yoni pitha*. Everyone try to get a piece of this cloth because they believe that such a pieces of cloth posses’ magical power. Another aspect of the fair is the performance of *Deodhani nāc* (i.e., male shamanistic dance) and *Ojāpāli*.

viii. Religion ethnicity of the participant: The *Ambuvāci* or the *Raja* is chiefly the festival of Hindu people alone. In no religious books except those of Hindu it has been mentioned about the annual menstruation of the Mother Earth. But to improve the cultivation in many places even in foreign countries Mother Earth is worshipped. The Hindu religious books like *Smṛtisāgara*, *Svaplamatshya* and so forth mention about the commencement of *Ambuvāci* and *Sātha*. As it is the festival of the Hindus so it is observed by Hindus alone. The Muslims and the Christians do not believe in the phenomena of Mother Earth menstruating annually. But of course in other activities related to the *Ambuvāci* and the *Raja*, people of other religion, especially Muslims are seen taking active part. For example the fair
held in Kāmōkhyā temple premises on the day of purification attracts many Muslims. Some come to enjoy the fair; some to purchase their necessary goods while others come with the stalls for business purpose. Many Muslims are seen collecting red silken cloth of Yoni Pitha to use as amulets like the Hindus.

In Orissa, on the occasion of the Raja, many outdoors and indoor games competitions are organized. Many Muslim players or team take part in these competitions. In the evening Yātra party, song competition, Drama etc. are held in the open pandals. Many Muslims are seen in and around the pandals as spectators or as competitors. The special cake of the festival poda- pithā is consumed by the Muslims without any hesitation.

In Assam, on the day of the purification, the Hindus enjoy varied seasonal fruits. Many Muslims, especially young boys and girls visit the Hindu houses and freely enjoy the offer.

Thus it is clear that though the festival belongs to the Hindus, nevertheless except in ritual activities, in other aspects the Muslims are also seen giving equal importance to the festival. So, instead of calling it a festival of the Hindus alone, it should be termed as a festival of greater community.

ix. Gender of the Participants: The study of folklore from the point of view of gender is a recent development. The study is gaining
momentum on the assumption that folklore, which provides many useful insights in understanding cultures, can also provide useful data for understanding the actual status of women in such culture. This is because only folklore can serve as medium of expression for a large percentage of women who are illiterate in countries where literacy is still the privilege of the few and where women are subject to domination. Women have their own songs, costumes and rituals, in which they have expressed their feelings, emotions, protest, aspirations and desire.45

The study of gender is not women’s studies in and of itself, even though women’s studies has laid foundation for gender studies and continue to underline studies investigation in so profound a manner that any discussion of gender must necessarily touch on any issues central to women’s studies.46

The gender studies must we integrated into main streams studies so that the full range of human experience, male and female, can be recognized and appreciated from women’s as well as from male’s point perspective.47

From the grammatical point of view the term ‘Gender’ generally recognizes three possibilities: masculine, feminine and

neuter. But human society, gender assignments are culturally and socially powerful and produce fundamental difference in worldview of women and men, girls and boys. \(^{48}\)

Now here the effort would be made to analyse the festival Sāthā barat, Ambuvāci and Raja with a view to understanding how men and women, boys and girls per take in the festivals and to see their relationship. The focus is on the festivals and the analysis will focus on the following three levels:

(a) Women including Widow and Sādhavā.
(b) Male,
(c) Boys and girls

(a) Women including Widow and Sādhavā: In true sense the women play a vital role in Sāthā barat and Ambuvāci festivals. Right from Sāthā barat till the end of Ambuvāci the women play significant role. During the period of Sāthā, a special vow is observed by the women folk called barat pūjā. This pūjā or vow is observed by only married women whose husbands are alive. This vow cannot be observed by widows. But during Ambuvāci period the widows observe another vow. This vow is more rigorous than the former one. The vow of barat pūjā is for the welfare of the husband and other members of the family. But the vow of Ambuvāci is personal. It is for one’s own salvation or in other sense to free

\(^{48}\) Ibid. \(\) P. 2.
themselves from the sins if they had committed without their knowledge.

Both the festivals are specially meant for woman only or in other words the festivals are wholly women dominated festivals. All the rites and rituals centre round the women folk alone. They are the prominent figures of the show.

But in Orissa during Raja festival the role of women is almost insignificant. No doubt, they too observe the festival but keeping themselves behind the screen. Yet, their role cannot be neglected. Because the new generation is always trained and encouraged by the old generation. The women teach the importance and significance of the festival to their young girls, the future mothers of the society. Their importance is again witnessed during the ritual called Basumati snāna: Because this ritual is performed by the eldest lady of the family. Of course she is preferred to be sādhavā.

In Assam, during Sāthā barat, the role of widow is almost insignificant. In fact almost in all festivals, of Hindu religion, the widows play an insignificant role. They are the victims of Nature’s wrath. It is probably because our society is a male dominated society. Here women have always been subordinated to male interests. Women are always regarded as the possession of man. Each and every aspect regarding women is decided according to the whims and fancies of men. The rules and regulations are made by
men. Because as it is noticed, there is no restrictions for any widower in taking active part in any religious festivals. Of course, the widows are allowed to act as spectators during the rituals related to the Sāthā. But the vow of Ambuvāci is observed by widows alone.

b) Male: The role of man throughout the festivals including Raja is almost insignificant. They keep themselves away from it. In fact they have nothing significant to do here. Of course, keeping behind the screen, they assist the women folk in performing the vow of Sātha and Ambuvāci. The male arrange all the commodities essential for the observation. Keeping themselves away from regular agricultural activities, they engross in other household activities, like making different kinds of essential commodities from bamboo, cane, wood and so on. On the day of purification they visit the local Nāmghar other religious places for worshiping. The role of Oriya male is slightly different from the Assamese male. As the festival is for merry-making for them, so, like the other member of the family, they too enjoy the festival wholly. Paying visit at neighbors’ house or relatives house, enjoying communal feast, playing indoor games, enjoying Jātrā party are the common scene of the days. Of course the old people are seen visiting local temple to get the blessings of God for better crops in the next year. They also listen to the religious discourses in the matha or under the shade of big trees.
c) Boys and Girls: In any festivals, whether it is a seasonal or calendaric or limited participation, the younger generation is seen taking more active part than the other sections of the people of society. The younger generation of any region of the worlds, especially during festival are like flying birds. No worldly affairs can stop their unbound spirits from roaming about. They have nothing to do with any kind of religious functions. Without understanding the significance of these festivals, they take active part in them.

The festivals Ambuvaci and Sātha are meant for women folk alone. Whatever restrictions are prescribed are meant for women alone. But the young girls assist their mother in their household work, like keeping the cloth and garments separately, cleaning the houses and surrounding and so on. As the boys have nothing particular to do, so they move about in group searching for seasonal fruits, playing country games and so on.

In case of Raja, it is different. The festival itself is for young girls alone. For all three days they lead a different life. They have no link with household work. They spend these days playing different games, visit friends and relatives house. They are seen in their best attire and make up. Similar is the case with boys also. They spend their days playing many indoor and outdoor games. They too are given new dresses during the festival.
b. Impact of the festival on the people:

By nature man is fond of festivals, which provide space for large congregation and joint celebration. Festivals are important part of the cultural life of the people of any region. The festivals are always connected with religious beliefs, rituals and social occasions. They have always been occasions for feasting, merry making and gaiety for entire community during which the rigidity of social restriction is released to some extent. Man and woman can enjoy greater freedom than usual. The traditions and customs of the people have established the dates and durations of the festivals. Because they are associated with seasons like the sowing or planting operation, the harvest activities; the post-harvest activities and so on. In our century where the cultivation is the primary occupation and the lives of the people both tribal and non-tribal are bound with crops and monsoon. So, it is logical that festival should co-incite with important seasonal changes.

The impact of festival on the minds and hearts of the people of India cannot be denied. Almost in all festivals great importance is given to hygiene. This is seen more in observing the rites of the Ambuväci and Raja festivals than in others. In Orissa before the advent of Raja, people clean up their houses, courtyards, surrounding and plaster them with clay and cow dung. The scientific cause behind using this amalgamation is that there is maximum amount of nitric acid in cow dung. So snake and other poisonous
insect cannot come near to it. During raining season also, the houses are saved from creeping poisonous insects. Beside this the use of cow dung is hygienic and is considered by Hindus auspicious. Another impact of the festival on the people is personal cleanliness. People during the festival, before doing anything or taking anything takes morning bath and maintain absolute cleanliness.

In Assam, before the commencement of the festival all clothes and garments except those, which are absolutely necessary, are kept separately. At the end of the festival the used clothes, utensils, furniture are washed properly. The house and courtyards are cleaned and plastered with clay and cow dung. The old brooms are disposed off. The Brahmin people replace their sacred thread to new one. Earthen pots are disposed off. These are nothing but to improve the hygiene. The rural people can hardly afford time for cleanliness. So, festivals are the media through which people unknowingly cling to hygiene.

Another important point attached to the festival is fasting. Fasting is indicative of a sense, pious and ascetic mood. During Ambuvāci, Saint, Brahmachārī, widow, Brāhmin and the person who has lost his parents in the first year after death observe the vrata or fasting for three days. They abstain from taking any kind of cooked food. The widow Brahmins spend those days on their beds.
In Orissa, the young unmarried girls observe certain restrictions prescribed for a menstruating woman. They do not walk bare footed. In order to avoid troubling the Earth, they use a kind of traditional shoe made of areca nut. They live on fruits, sweets and so on. The logic behind it is that, these young girls are the future mothers. They get training from the young stage through this festival.

In Assam, on the day of purification, after having cleaned up everything, people visit temple or local Nāmhgar to sing devotional songs. In the Satra institutions, people assemble in the morning for Nāma-prasanga. In Orissa, the old people, besides discussing the religious discourses visit the local temple for better crops in the following year. On the day of Saṃkrānti, special worship is done to God and non-vegetarian items are not accepted. While in Assam, only on the day of purification non-vegetarian items are taken. Otherwise during the period, only vegetarian foods are taken. So, in a sense the festivals teach people to be religious. Further, it is believed that occasional fasting is conducive to healthy living. It also purifies the heart, controls the senses and also instills devotion to God.

The agriculturalists of any part of India can hardly spare time for rest, merry-making, feasting, sports which are absolutely necessary for the people of any region. During Ambuvāci and Raja, as all kinds of agricultural activities remain suspended for three to
four days. So, it is leisure time for everyone. An atmosphere of holiday feelings prevail everywhere. The kith and kin assemble together after a long gap. Thus a sense of merry making prevail in every house. Rejoicing is a necessary appendage of the festivals. Feasting takes place at home or at outside with friends. Besides this, sports, which are another media for rejoicing, attract almost all sections of people. People of all ages engross themselves in different sports and competition. Every evening becomes remarkable with various shows of drama, dance, song etc. People forgetting the past, think for a colourful future.

So, the impact of festival on Indian people is always noteworthy.

c. Positive and Negative aspects of the festivals:

Although the festivals are mainly associated with religion, nevertheless the main purpose of it seems to be recreational. People remain busy throughout the year in their hard work and have to follow a monotonous routine. So, they need a temporary relaxation sometimes. And it is the festivals, which provide them recreation and temporary respite for some days. There are lots of positive aspects of the festivals.

Now when we talk of the concerned festivals- Ambuvāci and Raja, a number of positive aspects are associated with these festivals. Firstly, they teach people to be hygienic. Even though the
rural folk do not understand much about hygiene, but unknowingly they create their surroundings hygienic. The village people can hardly effort time for cleanliness but through festivals they wash their cloths and garment, clean up their houses and surroundings. Secondly personal cleanliness is also an important factor. People of all ages get up early take morning bath before accepting anything. Personal cleanliness is an essential requisite for good health and hygiene.

Another important factor associated with the festival is fasting. Fasting is indicative of a serene pious and ascetic mood. It is also conducive to healthy living. It purifies the heart, controls the sense and instills devotion to God.

Both the Ambugaci and the Raja festivals, have far reaching impact on social unity. A holiday feeling prevail in every nook and corner of the states during this time. The newly married girls come to their parent’s home. Friends and neighbors, relative also pay visit. So feasting and merry-making become an important event of the festival. The dramatic performances are held in connection with the festival. This gives necessary incentives to the people to develop their artistic, dramatic, historic and literary faculties. Dancing, singing, writing and staging of plays are some of the activities that find ample scope of development in connection with the festival. For businessmen, it is a big business boon particularly for the cloth dealers and sweet vendors. During
Ambuvāci, a big fair is held at Kāmākhya temple premises where many businessmen indiscriminately cast and creed do their business. In Orissa in connection with Raja, many temporary shops of cloths, sweets etc. are opened.

So, it can be concluded that festivals have their salutary effects on the minds of the people. It is a source of immense joy and pleasure for all section of the people living in a society. Furthermore the festivals exert tremendous impact on the socio-cultural life by strengthening mutual co-operation, regard, and respect among the people of all ages.

Though the festival promotes a common cause, develop social solidarity, fellow feeling, mutual co-operation, provide enjoyment and recreation, its negative aspects cannot be ignored.

We the Indian people are lover of festivals and enjoyment. We celebrate thirteen festivals in twelve months. It is mostly the rural people who are still clinging strictly to the age-old traditions. Following different taboos, rural people forfeit themselves from regular activities during the festivals. The primitive people believed that the Earth is a female who is also regarded as a mother. So, being a female, she undergoes through her menstrual period once in a year. As she is clean, she is given complete rest for those days. Goddess Kāmākhya is the presiding deity of Kāmākhya temple. She is identified with Goddess Pārvati. Goddess Pārvati is the Nature
and the Nature is Earth. As Goddess passes through her period, so too the Earth. As we human being are related to the Earth so we are to observe certain restrictions. When a woman menstruates, she is believed to be impure for few days. Basing on this phenomenon, we observe certain restrictions during Ambuvāci.

So, following the age-old tradition it seems to be unwise to remain away from doing regular agricultural activities during the festival. Further, pursuing some rituals people spend their saving for purchasing new garments, utensils, merry-making and so forth. People do not realize how this kind of traditions affect the economy of the country. Perhaps this is also one of the reasons why the rural people are of poor state. Nearly seventy percent of the total population of our country are based on rural areas and rely on agriculture. Now if in the name of tradition or belief, people forfeit themselves from works, how can the economy of the country be sound? In Orissa during Raja festival a huge amount of money is spent in purchasing cloth, sweets and in the name of enjoyment like staging drama or Jātrā party or dance or musical competition or in the name of feast.

In spite of a few limitations of the festivals have their salutary effects on the minds of the people. It is a source of immense joy and pleasure for all sections of people living in a society. There are Sāktas, Vaiṣṇavas, and follower of other faiths in the state. It is noteworthy that there is a great deal of religious tolerance among
them. Thus a festival gives an opportunity to all people to come together and sink their differences in an atmosphere of mutual love and respect. This paves the path for emotional integration, a goal that we have set for ourselves to build up a strong and prosperous nation.