Summary and Conclusion

The present study is on a comparative study on the Ambuvāci of Assam and the Raja of Orissa and it consists of five chapters. In the first chapter an attempt has been made to give a description regarding the origin of the name of Assam and Orissa as well as the geographical account of both the regions. Apart from this, the relation between the states in the sphere of historical, social and cultural aspects have been discussed. The objective of the study, the scope of the study and the methodology adopted for the work have also been mentioned in the chapter.

The second chapter deals with the Socio-Cultural Relation between Assam and Orissa. At the beginning of the chapter, “Socio-Cultural life of Assam” and “Socio-Cultural life of Orrisa” are being focused separately. It is noticed that Assam and Orissa are not only the museum of races and languages but also of culture. Each race has its own language and colourfull culture, thereby in their composition; the people of these regions present a type of intermixture of the culture. Though physically apart, but their cultural knitness is very much evident. Perhaps no two states of the country show so much resemblance with one another. The construction of homestead, way of living, food habit, language, economic condition and so on mark the distinct resemblance. Even the caste system in both the societies is flexible and fairly liberal.
The third chapter deals with the seasonal festivals with special reference to Ambuvāci and Raja. At the beginning of the chapter a short survey on the festival has been attempted. It is observed that the culture, tradition and history of the people of a country or a region are reflected through festivals. It not only keeps people amused amidst the monotony of hard work and worries of worldly affairs but also makes people religious and pious and also creates an atmosphere of sanctity. That is why people keep aside some time for celebration. The festivals are a part of traditional culture. Their nature is determined by both season and religion. Since tradition is never static, so along with life style, customs, beliefs and so on are also changing. Thus in many festivals, we notice more noise and exuberance than the evidence of faith on conventions set by the tradition or insisted upon by elders. Here the classifications of festivals into sub-genres have also been shown briefly.

In Assam prior to Ambuvāci another folk festival celebrated generally by the people of Lower Assam called Sāthā vrata or Sāthā barat. The last three days of the month of Jēth (i.e., Jaiśṭhya) and the first three days of Āhār (i.e., Āṣādha) and in the middle the day of saṃkrāti. This period of seven days is known as Bhumidōha or Sāthā barat. An introduction regarding this folk festival is also included in the foregoing chapter. Regarding the origin of Bhumidōha or Sātha it is shown that the festival is exclusively celebrated by the people of Assam alone. There is no
influence of either the neighbouring state Bengal or of any other parts of the country. A vow is observed by the Aryan Hindu women (only Sādhavā) during this festival called Sāṭhā barat. The vow is performed mainly for the welfare of their husbands, children and other members of the family.

This chapter deals with the critical studies of both the Ambuvāci and Raja festivals. The Ambuvāci festival is celebrated from 7th to 10th in the dark half of the month of Ahar (Asadha). In simple sense the world Ambuvāci means the menstruation of the Mother Earth. Since remote past Mother Earth has been identified with a normal woman. Thus the functions of both the earth and a woman are same. As in Aryan Hindu society a menstruating women is kept-aloof from any kind of household as well as religious activities for three days, so does the Earth. During Ambuvāci and Raja all kinds of agricultural activities are suspended by the people. Religious works including daily worship, prayer, and auspicious works are not done by the Assamese. As during Sāṭhā barat a special vow is observed by the married women of Assam, so also during Ambuvāci another kind of vow is observed by widow, Brahmacāri, the person who has lost his parents in the first year after death. The influence of Ambuvāci is noticed in the temple, local prayer Hall, Satra institution, including Kāmākhyā temple also. That is why during these days, the Goddess Kāmākhyā is not offered normal bhoga, instead, fruits, curd, flattened rice, molasses and so on are offered. All the temples remain closed for the visitors.
The *Raja* festival of Orissa is also celebrated more or less in same process. The phenomena of treating the Earth with a woman is same. But there is no influence of the festival in case of temples or personal prayer halls. Their functions continue like the normal days. The vow observed by the widows in Assam is done by the young unmarried girls in Orissa. They are trained to observe the vow from early age.

The fourth chapter deals with beliefs, myths, rites and rituals associated with both the *Ambuvāci* and the *Raja* festivals. Further more, this chapter gives emphasis in dealing with the time of festivals, song, dance, drama, sports, relation between performers and audience, symbols, fairs, religion, ethnicity and the gender of the participants and so on with reference to *Ambuvāci* and *Raja*.

A large number of beliefs prevalent among the Assamese and the Oriya people pertaining to the festivals. Assamese people believe that if during the *Ambuvāci* period, anything like cloths, utensils, furnitures etc. come in contact with the Earth, they are treated to be impure. That is why on the day of purification these things are washed properly. If a girl or a woman menstruates during the defilement period, she is to observe the same restrictions prescribed for a widow and others. In Orissa such girl or woman should not expose her face to any male person for three days. Further she is believed to be an unlucky one. The *āṅga-vastra* of Kāmākhyā
temple is believed to be of great beneficiary or auspicious for the wearer.

A large number of rites and rituals are associated with the festivals. In Orissa on the fourth day of the Raja Mother Earth is given a ritual bath in every household. The earth is considered fit for cultivation after this ceremony only. In Assam the temples, local prayer halls, Satra institutions are opened up ritually after certain ceremonies.

The concept of Mother Earth being subject to menstruation is reflected in the Indian myth and mythologies. In the Kalika-purana it is mentioned that Lord Viṣṇu in his Boar incarnation rescued the Earth from the beneath of the Sindhu who was being hidden there by Hiraṇakṣhya. 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 Narakaśura was born.

Singing and dancing are associated with Sāthā barat and Raja. The songs of former one are of religious temperament and are sung in sacred tune. While the songs of latter category are rather romantic and sung in a jubilant mood. Other than this, a lot of sports activities take place in Raja festival. People of all ages pass their time through traditional sports, dance, drama and so on.

The relation between the performers and the audience is exposed through the story telling event of Sāthā barata. Neither in Ambuvāci nor in Raja festival such events take place. But it is an
important event of Sāthā barat. The Ojeni performs the role of performers while the other participants act as audience.

The Earth other than being symbolised with a normal woman is also symbolised with a mother. For She is the mother of Sitā, the heroine of Rāmāyana and Narakāsura, the mythical King of Kāmarūpa. The agriculturalists of different communities symbolize the Sky as the Father and the Earth as the Mother. The Father Sky gets attracted to Mother Earth and meet at the horizon. They meet and pour incense rain; thereby the Earth becomes fertile or pregnant.

The Ambuvāci and the Raja festivals should be termed as a festival of greater community rather than of Hindus alone. The people of other religious sect also get involved in the festivals directly or indirectly through various means.

In the forgoing chapters, the impact of the festivals on the people is also being discussed. Festivals are important part of the cultural life of the people of any region. It is 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. Another important aspect of festival is hygiene. The last point is seen more in observing the rites of Ambuvāci and Raja festivals. It also teaches people to be pious or religious.

At the end of the chapter the positive and negative aspect of the festivals are discussed. A number of positive aspects are
associated with the *Ambuvāci* and the *Raja*. Besides teaching people to be hygienic, it teaches them the importance of personal cleanliness, utility of fasting, social unity and so on. Another important positive aspect is, the cultural performance connected with the festivals. It gives necessary incentives, to the people to develop their artistic, dramatic, historic and literary facilities. Dancing, singing, writing and staging of plays are some of the activities that find ample scope of development in connection with the festivals.

Along with the positive aspects the negative aspects of the festivals cannot be ignored. Following the age-old tradition, people keep themselves way from the regular agricultural activities, thereby affecting the economy of the self as well as of the country. In the name of religious belief, people torture themselves physically and mentally through fasting. Further more, in the name of festivals, young boys indulge in many unsocial activities, like collection of money from the people by threat or force. They play loud speakers for whole right, which is a menace to the peace loving people and a cause of sound pollution.

In spite of such abuses, the festivals have their secular effect on the minds of the people. It 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.

Due to the impact of modernity, the traditional way of life is affected. As such the importance of the traditional festivals
may be reduced to some extent in the present time. It is fact that the tradition is always dynamic, it keeps on moving with the time. Further, certain logical views are motivating the modern people against the traditional customs. For example, does the Earth menstruate only in Assam, Bihar and Orissa? What about the other parts of the country? If we admit Earth to be a woman, why then she menstruates annually and why not monthly? If we take one divine day equal to one human year, then also the calculation is puzzling. These sorts of questions arise in the minds of the people. Secondly the mechanical people do not have time to effort for the age-old traditional customs.

A scientific and secular attitude regardless of time, space and history should develop among the world community to pay a fresh and scientific look at observations of various festivals in different parts of the countries. It would help to understand and to know some of the mysteries of our universe. Undoubtedly, festivals could contribute a lot in unfolding certain mysteries of our strange universe if a sincere attempt is made to that effect.