CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The concept of affinity in the present study transcends the quest for specific universals, the discovery of commonalities in a narrow sense of the term. It was not about the establishment of the existence of similar genres in the verse forms, nor was it about simply discovering similarity in theme, structure or referents in the verse forms being compared. The study engaged geographically distant cultural groups in a cross-cultural dialectal framework as a mutual interrogation of the principles underlying their oral poetic expressions. This cross-cultural engagement entailed the investigation of the evolution of a larger oral-derived Native American poetics from within their varied poetic practices. The real aim of the study was to initiate the generation of such appreciative approaches from within the Assam Tribal oral literary practices by examining the dynamics of the relationship between oral rendition and theory as revealed by the Native American experience. The intent here is not examining specific sameness but a pattern of interrogation that may also serve as a heuristic model for approaching similar practices of other cultural groups, a larger conceptual framework to accommodate and transcend both sameness and differences in apparently similar poetic practices. It also questions and interrogates dominant post-alphabetical
assumptions about pre-alphabetic expressive behaviours by positing the oral based against the wholly written.

Such a dialogic framework inevitably involves an access to and interaction of literary forms rooted in diverse and distant cultural and linguistic milieu. And access is only possible through documentation. However, the documented version of a verbal act is obviously different from the enacted event bound up with extra-verbal constituents. The gradual and continuous movement from the aural to the documented has necessitated the postulation of oral-derived as distinct from oral, though not entirely different. Oral-derived literature should be defined by its formative tradition, namely mythical, historical, and linguistic determinants. Oral-derived literatures are also explicated to a great extent by contextualising it against the genre to which it belongs, and by the understanding of the inherent dynamics of a particular type of rendition. Thus a song assumes its fuller meaning when considered against the background of its genre. Also important to the concept of the oral-derived is the proper appraisal of the nature of the text. The text can be derived from recorded versions of performances or the later recounting by a native performer in a non-performative milieu. It can also be a later reworking of an earlier recorded version. Such later reworkings of living oral forms are important in the sense that it helps in identifying both traditional elements and post-traditional modifications and intrusions.

The dialogic framework of the present study proceeds from an intrinsically cross-cultural engagement. If the generation of oral-derived as a discourse of
appreciation in variance with the primarily written proceeds from a cross-cultural
generative endeavour, oral expressive practices of diverse cultures may
interconnect in the evolution of a wider paradigm. Native American poetics is
itself the result of a multicultural endeavour, where the oral expressive behaviours
of a multiplicity of tribes have interconnected into a larger paradigm of
appreciation. The gradual theorising in folklore to conceptualise and comprehend
it as a larger scholarly discipline is gradually overcoming the reservations toward
folklore universals that marks certain contemporary critical attitudes
(Harring1999: 1-7). The present study is not about universals in their external
manifestation like images and symbols, but as Dan Ben-Amos puts it, in the
distinctions peoples make in their verbal performances between metered and non-
metered speech and between true and fictional accounts (ibid: 05). By studying
the oral-derived verse forms of the three Native American tribes and the two
Assam tribes in a comparative framework, underlying patterns of distinction,
construction, and functional and artistic concerns were co-related to uncover an
appreciative framework latent in the Assam tribal oral poetic practices and
thereby a broader vision of oral-derived poetry.

Advances in the theoretical perspective in Native American scholarship can be
fruitfully examined in the context of other cultural expression, as is being done in
fields like Finnish Folkloristics. Pertti J. Anttonen, a Finnish folklorist, applies
advances made in the method of studying Native American oral literature by
Hymes and Tedlock in the examining of Ingrian poetry in Finland and “seeks the
meaning and function of the text in performance” (Siikala and Vakimo 1994: 10).

Similarly, Thomas Dubois, an American scholar, applies Tedlock’s and Hymes’ methods in the analysis of the body of poetry produced by one of the significant of Finnish rune-singers, Arhippa Perttunen, illuminating “... the possibilities of the ethnopoetic method of examination as well as the problems involved in the analysis of archival materials” (ibid: 10).

The initial investigation comprised of identifying distinctive elements of the selected Native American tribes and their relationship with a larger Native American poetics. The verse forms associated with rites and rituals reflect best the religious belief systems and worldview of a tribe. The various Navajo ceremonials, like the ‘Night Chant’, which is basically a healing ritual, reflect functional, religious and aesthetic ideals. These community centred rituals conceive the universe as an entity where persons, animals, plants and the supernatural co-exist in a harmonic plane. The Navajo ceremonials aim to integrate varied strands and dispel aberrations like ailments and cohere individual and society into an unobtrusive co-existential plane. The functional concern is reflected in the verbal motif of a trail of beauty that is achieved after resolving all tensions between opposing forces like east-west, north-south, day-night, earth-sky. This trail of beauty is a persistent verbal and graphic motif in Navajo expressive manifestations. Navajo oral-derived verse forms are wholly bound with the ritualistic, since the Navajos hardly provide examples of non-ritualistic verse forms in traditional expressive behaviour. Songs of blessing for horses or
homes, or chanting for success in war or hunting are all examples of ritualistic verse forms. Ritualistic chanting to invoke the rains is characteristic of the Navajos and the Pueblo group of tribes, where the participation of all the members of the group is not only to ensure rain but also a successful crop. The active participation of man and nature sustains a beneficial cosmic order. Nature and ritual intricately link up in the ritualistic songs of *Midewiwin*, the medicine society of the Anishinabes. Like the Navajos, the Anishinabes too have intricate healing rituals, though the songs are cryptic and often come across as evocation of natural scenes. Nature and man unite to 'make medicine' and nature is a part of the mystical language of the shamans. Parts of the ritualistic songs are incantations for bravery and success in war. These were chanted before setting out for battle and consist of recounting personal bravery and reinforcing the battle spirit. The Love songs amongst the Anishinabes are an important genre of Native American songs in the sense that love songs are not common to traditional Native American cultures. A post-contact belated intrusion amongst the Anishinabes, it is often rooted in the world of nature for its referential moorings and expresses disappointment and sadness associated with love.

Inuit oral-derived verse forms reflect their social reality. Hunger is an ever-present spectre that loom large over their society and success in hunting is the only guarantee of survival. The ritualistic chants of the *angekoks* are directed towards the ensuring of success in the hunting expeditions. They also heal and cure the ill through their healing chants, for any member of the society that cannot
make a meaningful contribution to the society is a liability that not only puts the individual at great danger, but the survival of the whole group at stake. A man who cannot hunt or a woman who cannot work means extra mouths to feed. Thus the integration of ailing individual into society as a working and contributing member is of great functional relevance, rather than esoteric significance. The maintenance of social order and balance to ensure success at work is of prime importance and Inuit Nith or drum songs are also unique tools of maintaining social harmony and balance by resolving arguments and enmities through playful exchanges of songs. Unlike most Native American oral verse forms that are predominantly ritualistic, the Inuits have strong secular characteristics to their renditions with description of natural settings and interpersonal relationships.

The subsequent interrogation revealed translation practices as a major area of concern in the presentation of Native American verse forms and an important part of the overall conception of oral-derived literature. Translation itself becomes an act of criticism as it reflects the intention and the appreciative categories the translator brings into his practice, which might not always tally with the original aesthetic and functional elements. Early translator’s sense of belonging to a superior culture often gets reflected in their translation practice, as is evident in Densmore’s idea that the Native Americans had no idea of musical correctness (page 130, chapter III). And in trying to appropriate literary forms of a different culture into the idiom of one’s own language, translators often interject and insinuate elements totally absent and misrepresentative of the translated cultures,
which "do not represent 'linguistic fidelity to the original' and, further, they
misrepresent the 'cultural matrix' ..." (Tedlock 1983: 59) of the original verse
forms. Tedlock in his example of Frank Cushing's translation of Zuni narratives
(page 123, chapter III) and Sanders and Peek in their illustration of the translation
of the Anishinabe 'fire-fly' song highlight this point (pages 133-134, chapter-III).
Misrepresentation of the 'cultural matrix' is basically the failure to refer back
verse forms to the cultural context that engendered and fostered them. Oral-
derived verse forms are not only the recorded entity, but part of a larger design, a
multimedia event integrating graphics, performance and the verbal rendition. The
Navajo verse forms from the 'Night Chant' or the 'Mountain Chant' are part of a
larger ritual with strong socio-cultural associations, and where the songs are
interpolations that has to be referred back to its original context to translate not
only the lines, but the larger mytho-cultural milieu of the songs. The songs from
the 'Night Chant' cannot be appreciated as autonomous units, and doing so would
be a great inaccuracy, but as a part of a nine day continuous ritual. Thus
translation of oral verse forms is a multidimensional endeavour of translating the
verbal edifice with a sense of the extra-verbal constituents and determinants.

Good translation needs sensitivity to the languages involved. This is often a
difficult proposition, and the way out of this difficulty lies in a reciprocal and
intercultural collaborative effort. Important to the postulation of the oral-derived
is the role of translation in accessing the oral. Translation of oral verse forms
should reflect the style, the prosodic and rhetorical features of the original and the
context that determines the style. Translation is a way of experiencing not only the translated versions, but also the cultural and traditional reality that engenders and fosters the origin of such a version. Such an experience is possible through collaboration with native bilingual informants. The collaborators provide latent cultural information, references that remain immanent. This enriches our understanding of native verse forms.

Such a concept of translation leads to subsequent postulations of oral-derived literature. Reworking of older translation with a sense of the indigenous cultural idiom removes original inaccuracies of the earlier translators, as illustrated by the reworkings by Swann and Sanders and Peek. All of them rework from versions of early collectors to rid them of their bias. Swann’s reworking of the ‘Mocking Bird’ song is based on an original word by word version given by Natalie Curtis. Translations and reworkings also need to study the traditional role of vocables, pauses, and sound segments (aspects not taken into full consideration by Swann in his reworkings). But (as Tedlock has illustrated) they are important ‘paralinguistic’ structural elements that can indicate a line change as in written poetry (page 126, chapter III). The failure to appreciate the true significance of the above mentioned features and elements like repetition is basically due to the import of mainstream western appreciative categories in the appreciation of oral-derived verbal expressive forms. A way out of this lies in the examination of the basic question of how is oral-derived literature different from written literature?
Scholarship on Native American oral-derived literature has proceeded along the contours of the answer to this question. While the written form is an individual endeavour, oral literature is shaped by a community and is an articulation of collective emotions and experiences. The basic and most important difference is thus the difference between self-expression and collective expression. The media that bear the collective expression is the spoken word. The word is an object of veneration in Native American poetics, the bearer of truth of being and experience, an entity that has a life of its own, independent of the speaker or singer. The poets and shamans are merely the keepers of sacred word bundle. The word derives its power from the great mystery of creation and reveals itself to the holy man (shaman or priest) who shares it with the community to ensure the wellbeing of the whole community through collective ceremonies and rituals.

The prime function of these ceremonies and rituals of the Native Americans is the promotion of balance and proportion and the articulation of its importance. Ceremonial patterns reflect this concern in the careful balancing of opposite principles by pairing. Thus we have mother earth and father sun, sun and rain, light and dark and so on. The graphic, the verbal and performance coalesce to highlight integration and dispel discordant notes in nature, the community and the individual. The spoken word is the integrative tool, whose potency is reinforced through repetition. Sacred numbers like the number four in Navajo ceremonials often occasions fourfold repetitions. Variation within the repetition pattern
account for powerful effects in the songs and measured verbal patterns generate a sense of proportion and harmony.

This reinforcement through repetition, unlike in western mainstream poetics, is not an emphasis on words for words sake, a subjective engagement, devoid of an externally perceivable referential framework. Poetry here is not original and an aesthetically self-sufficient use of language but rooted in the collective experience. The singer's individuality evolves in an interaction with a larger cultural pattern. This cultural pattern is a shared reality that, to use Foley's term, remains immanent, and a song is complete when referred back to this shared reality. The common cultural categories that the performer, the participants and the audience brings into a verbal performance often remain latent, and an oral-derived text comes across as cryptic and figurative. But treating the oral-derived text rooted as an associative and interactive act rather than as an immovable autonomous text will help to understand it as representative of the emotional, spiritual and cultural reality of a tribe.

The gradual emergence of oral-derived literary forms in Assam since the days of Anderson and Endle is an interesting phenomenon. The mid and late twentieth century saw a spurt in documenting and translating oral forms in Assam primarily due to the emergence of Folklore as a discipline of growing interest with the pioneering works of scholars like Praphulladatta Goswami followed by later scholars like Birendranath Datta and others. There was also the fear of traditional songs and other verbal texts dying away, as expressed by Mohini Mohan Brahma.
The current ethnic assertions to chart out a tribal identity as distinct and different from Assamese have given a further impetus to the interest in tribal art forms. A host of tribal scholars are engaged in the documentation of their traditional literary forms in both tribal languages and non-tribal languages like Assamese and English. Along with the documentation of oral forms, it is interesting to note that the oral has regenerated itself as a vibrant and living form in the folk milieu and can be seen as a part of what can be called the ethnic renaissance in Assam (see song in page 294-295, chapter VI). This is interesting, because it affords the opportunity to study the traditional elements present in the documented forms and the change, if any, in their current existing manifestation. One can analyse the dilution of traditional cultural referents and study how the folk have responded to diverse and changing cultural realities. However, in the absence of an analytical framework against which the documented forms can be grounded and analysed, systematic and analytical interpretation of oral-derived literature is not yet a serious endeavour. In the quest for a viable appreciative paradigm for oral literary expressions amongst the Assam tribes, specimens of Bodo and Mising oral-derived verse forms were analysed along methods similar to the interpretation of the verse forms of the selected Native American tribes. The initial cross-cultural investigation revealed both affinities and divergences in the oral-derived verse forms of both the larger groups. Songs of rituals and ceremonies are of prime importance and is a common category. Ritualistic and ceremonial songs trace the origin and the genealogy of the tribe; they are part of
healing and restorative ceremonies; they seek blessings and success for activities of socio-economic sphere; and they also help to harness the benevolent forces in nature. The Mising *bangs* of the *Miris* and *Mibus*, the Navajo ceremonials like the 'Mountain Chant' ‘The Night Chant’, ‘Red Ant Way’ or ‘The Wind Chant’ are in the motif of a journey quest where members of the family take part actively. Whereas in the Navajo ceremonials the patient undertakes the journey merging his identity with a mythical character, it is the Mising *Miri* who undertakes a journey in the land of spirits (*yal*) to identify malevolent spirits and placate them. The Anishinabe *Mide* songs and Navajo ‘Chantways’ are aimed at collective welfare. Similarly the Bodo *Garja* and *Kherai* ceremonies are part of protective ceremonies. Such ceremonies seek to promote social balance against calamities and individual ailments. Some of these ceremonies like the Navajo ‘Chantways’ or the Bodo *Garja* ceremony are also for purification of the souls of those who have come in contact with impure and corrupting elements like transgressing accepted social parameters. Through elaborate integrated routine of dance, songs and graphic representations (Bodo *Kherai*, Anishinabe *Mide* or the Navajo *Chantways*) the patient is drained of all evil. Even the cause of ailments comes across as strikingly similar in Mising and Inuit belief systems. Both the tribes ascribe it to the temporary loss souls and the Inuit *angekok*, and the Mising *Miri* seeks out the soul from the land of the spirits to revive the patients.

The ritualistic songs are chanted to ensure success in the field of the tribes’ diverse occupation. Thus invoking rain and ensuring the health of their livestock
is an important ritual for the agrarian Navajo, Bodo and the Mising tribes. The Navajos have intricate rituals for the 'blessing' of their horses with which intricate myths are associated and the Bodos ritualistically ensure the health of their cows and bulls during the *Baisagu* festivities. Similarly, the Inuits and Anishinabes invoke blessings for hunting expeditions, their prime source of sustenance. Like the social dance songs of the Bodos and Misings during festivities like *Baisagu* and *Ali-aye-ligang*, the Inuits too have their social dance songs. Work songs, game songs, children's songs like the Mising *neibing* song and the Inuit *petting* songs are also common categories.

There are divergences too. While secular songs of dance, communal feasting, and social customs like marriage are pronounced amongst the Assam tribes, where meat and wine adds to the general atmosphere of joy and gaiety, hardly any traditional verse forms of the Native Americans are devoid of religion and mystical significance and are bound up with religious piety and austerity. Songs in fact comes through fasting and other penance that helps revealing through vision truth of a higher plane. Even laughter is a part of the ritualistic discourse, where "humor forms a recognized important adjunct of most formalized social exchange and religious performance" (Toelken and Scott1981: 87). Love songs, which abounds amongst the Misings and the Bodos, are rare amongst the Native Americans. The Assam tribal oral-derived verse forms are distinguished by the reflection of a very strong secular tradition that celebrates life in its variegated hues. Love and marriage are as important festivities as those associated with more
formal seasonal festivals. The oral-derived songs reflect an unobtrusive extension of the ritual and the ceremonial into the secular as in Baisagu and Ali-aye-ligang, without any marked division between the sacred and the secular. If the Mising Mibu fulfils his religious role in ritualistic renditions, he is also the mediator between the boys and the girls in the dance songs of the festivities of Po:rag (song number 15, page 187, chapter IV). Ritual war songs and battle chants are rare amongst the Mising and the Bodos and Bodo songs of valour are more narration of tribal history than chants to ensure success in war.

However, the study goes beyond similarities and differences at the specific level. The concept of a pre-creation void in the both groups is a good example. The Mising Kayum (page 176, chapter IV) and the Native American Wahkon-tah (page 144, chapter III) are different at the level of specificities. However, conceptually both are abstractions where origination is a great mystery and all things take shape in a pre-origination plane, the mystery of which is borne by the spoken word. It is affinities at the conceptual level such as these that will provide the clue to an oral-derived poetics from amongst the oral verse forms of the Assam tribes, because such concepts reflect latent patterns and principles of poetic vision.

Approaching documentation and translations of Bodo and Mising oral-derived verse forms along comparable Native American approaches revealed what Tedlock calls a misrepresentation of the ‘cultural matrix’ and the lack of fidelity to the style and language of the original. Original cultural significance of
references (like the soul and shadow or the dove and neibing, page 264 and 269, Chapter VI) are often lost due to exposure to different subjective and cultural assumptions. The minimal style of the original verse forms often take on a verbose manifestation, a style at times dictated by the necessity felt by the translators to explicate cryptic and latent cultural references. However, subsequent limited experimentation of collaborative reworkings and translations with a sense of the cultural contexts and determinants uncovered newer dimensions of the verse forms. Thus the dove took on wholly newer connotations in the Mising lullabies reworked with Padun, much different from that of roasted flesh of the bird. An ignorance or dilution of traditional cultural determinants and referents generally occasions such misrepresentations. When the documentation or translation is done by someone from a different worldview, he brings into his endeavour values from his world. And when misrepresentations occur in the work of someone from the same socio-cultural milieu, it occurs due to a dilution of traditional referents through an exposure to a different and usually a dominant culture. The inaccuracies in the Mising specimens of Chapter VI can be said to belong to this category.

Tribal and non-tribal worldviews are as different in Assam as in North America. This is well exemplified by Nahendra Padun’s illustration of the novel *Miri Jiori* incorporating non-tribal individualistic assumptions in dealing with Mising social reality where the individual is subservient to the larger concept of the community (page 278, chapter VI). Even love songs, which abounds amongst the Misings and
the Bodos, are mostly occasion specific and community events. They allow the articulation of individual emotions as a part of a larger communal and collective expression. Subjective aspiration like love and desire become a part of the collective experience, a shared joy or disappointment. It is the songs, the spoken words that enable this sharing of the sense of a tribe, an extended family.

The subsequent investigation revealed that, like amongst the Native Americans, the aesthetics determining the oral poetic expression of the Misings and the Bodos initiated from an underlying conception of the word as a powerful entity. The truth of the tribes' origin and history resides in its spoken words, the verbal texts that has borne it through the ages. This is evident in the Bodo songs of valour that recounts legendary and heroic battles with the enemy or the Mibu a:bangs that carries the tribes history and genealogy in them. Such a concept of history has an intrinsic belief in the truth of the spoken word and not in the verifiable past.

The quest for balance and harmony is a part of the poetic concerns of the Bodos and the Misings. The festivities and rituals are occasions that promote and reinforce social bonding. Pre-planting rituals are an elicitation of collective commitment, a harmonious effort to ensure the success of ensuing crops. The priests and the shamans aims through their rituals and ceremonies (Kherai and Garja) to integrate the ailing and moral transgressors into a balanced and harmonious existence with the tribe and the family by restoring them to their early state of mind and health. And like in the Navajo 'Night Chant', the quest for an integrated vision is reflected in the structural homology of the Bodo Bathou
ceremony. Mythology, songs, dances and graphics converge into a unified structure in the reaching out for cosmic, communal, familial, and individual equipoise.

Style in oral-derived verse forms of the Misings and the Bodos can also be traced to what Padun calls ‘idiomatic expressions’. The idiom is the shared knowledge and experience that a community brings into an oral performance. The common idiom can be the larger knowledge about nature, rituals or festivities. This results in the omission or suppression of what is merely the obvious in the verbal text.

What is omitted or suppressed becomes external to the verbal edifice and forms the referential moorings to the oral-derived text. This often results in a skeletal or minimal style of the verbal text like the Mising oi- ni: tom or Bodo love songs where the linkages and the conjuncts seems to be missing. The minimal text thus has to be understood associatively as a part of a larger reality, and can be called a synecdochic (Kroeber) or metonymic (Foley) unit.

The lack of explicitly marked passages from one part of an oral-derived song to another leads to another important feature in oral-derived verse forms. They can also mark structural breaks, what Padun calls ‘junctures and fractures’. These junctures and fractures facilitate variations and improvisations in an oral performance depending on factors like personality of the singer, nature of audience and the time span available. The theme is the traditional and conservative factor, whereas the creativity of the singer is the dynamic factor that effect changes within accepted parameters. Thus while in older version the heroic
Gambari Sikhla fought the Muslim invaders, in later version she fought the British colonists. Within the wider thematic parameter of valour and patriotism, specific details undergo changes with time.

Repetition also has its root in the performative milieu since it provides the scope to innovate and improvise in a performance. It affords the time for the lead singer in a spontaneous group performance to mentally arrange a following section as the rest of the group repeats the concluding lines of the preceding section. Repetition is also a very important part of the communal discourse. It is through repetition that onlookers join in a Baisagu or Ali-aye-ligang song, thus becoming a part of the festivities. And like in Native American ritualistic verse forms, repetition is also reinforcing the sacred word of the Miri or the Bodo priest. As Bhaben Narzi has pointed out, the belief is that pronouncing the words in a special way generates their power (page 282, chapter VI). The priests’ words are powerful and potent medium to cure, whose origination lies in visionary trance, and this visionary moment translates into an external religious experience to dispel ailment and suffering, to purify the impure and the morally polluted and integrate him into the community. Repetition enhances the potency of the sacred words.

The underlying principles that fashion the verse practices of the Assam tribes stem from a strong collective bias that encompass the community both as an expressive unit and subject of representation. This is of both functional and aesthetic significance. The functional aims at the sustenance of collective well
being, the promotion of an integrated vision of a group that is often the key to its success in the field of economic activities and thereby its survival. This results in the quest for a balance and harmony that manifest itself as verbal motifs in their renditions. The poetic balance and harmony is co-related with the order construed by myths and rituals. The verbal elements like repetition is both a reinforcement of the power of the word to promote this, and also a process of aesthetic elevation by instilling a sense of the pristine and sacred. Individual creativity function within the normative domain of a community as the singer involves those around him in his rendition. Emotions like love is elevating or disappointment more bearable when contextualised against similar experiences of the other member of the community. The idea of poetic appreciation in the verse practices of the Assam tribes is thus not separate from the celebration of community, the access to the numinous through words and a harmonic vision of life. This integrated vision includes nature and man and the songs work in a close participative proximity with the environment, with both informing and enriching the other.

Native American and Mising and Bodo oral poetic practices conjoins into a larger poetic vision in their implicit belief and reverence in the power of the word, the quest for a harmonious and integrated social order, the essentially collective nature of their poetic expressions as opposed to the individualistically oriented, and the combination of the aesthetic with the functional. The stylistic features of a minimal style accessible associatively, stress on repetition, nature as the
predominant referential framework and the interaction between a larger traditional framework and individual creativity come across as common perspective.

Such a comparative endeavour can be seen as a part of the larger contemporary concern with indigenous and traditional cultures that are often misrepresented and misunderstood since their cultural practices do not yield to probings by appreciative categories of dominant discourses. One has to understand that basic assumptions about life, art, and society are different. Appreciation of oral-derived verse forms is a multidimensional endeavour of translating the verbal texts and the extra-verbal constituents and determinants. In short, the study tries to establish the fact that to appreciate documented and translated versions of oral literary forms, a distinct theoretical approach is necessary. This theory ought to be distinct from theories applied to wholly written literature as well as those evolved from a totally oral performative situation. It straddles the written and the oral, the visual and the verbal, imbibing and modifying relevant categories from both while acknowledging the fact that the written representation cannot be the oral. As ethnic, tribal and indigenous cultures are imbibing the trappings of a rapidly changing world, their own mode of artistic and creative expressions are undergoing a change. Yet external changes in expressive behaviours do not always mean a change in traditional worldview or aesthetic ideals fashioned over the course of centuries. Artistic and creative behaviour of such people must be appreciated against their inherent aesthetic ideals and principles. The broadening of the scope of the oral-derived as a theoretical approach to apprise creative
writing by tribal and ethnic writers can be an interesting area for further exploration. Appreciative categories generated from within their artistic practices will go a long way in sensitising dominant aesthetic discourses to the possibility of an alternative viewpoint, a polyvocal reality.