CHAPTER V

RESUME AND CONCLUSION

In the foregoing pages an endeavour has been made to make a critico-analytical study of the drama, Śaṅkhaścūḍavadha in its various aspects. The Śaṅkhaścūḍavadha is a Sanskrit drama composed in classical style in the early years of the 19th cen. (precisely Śaka 1724 = A.D. 1802) by Dīna Dvija, an erudite Sanskrit scholar, who was patronised by a top Ahom courteer, a Borphukan (Brhat-Phukkana = Viceroy) towards the close of the Ahom rule in Assam. Dīna Dvija, like other playwrights of the time, seems to have been very much acquainted with classical Sanskrit literature as well as the trend in regional (Assamese) literature. He seems to be well acquainted with classical Sanskrit dramaturgy, too. In constructing the present play, our author seems to have followed the codes of Sanskrit dramaturgy, generally. Yet, it must be admitted, and as shown above, he deviated from the classical codes in many respects (which will be pointed out a little later). Like his compatriots, he could not get himself freed from the overwhelming influence of the master Vaiśṇava composer.
of Assam, Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, who ushered in an age of social reformation and cultural renovation in the 15th-16th century A.D. itself. Śaṅkaradeva introduced a new dramaturgic code in his Aṅkīyā-nāṭas to suit the local conditions for his purpose, and the same is eloquently evident in the present play by Dīna Dvija. The present dissertation shows that the Śaṅkhacūḍāvadha is an amalgam of the techniques and characteristics both of Sanskrit Nāṭakas and Aṅkīyā-nāṭas of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, the neo-Vaiṣṇavite poet and a trend-setter in Assamese culture in the 15th-16th century A.D. Besides adopting the characteristics of the classical Sanskrit Nāṭakas, generally, our poet imitates the special characteristics of Aṅkīyā-nāṭas, more particularly in respect of (a) the overbearing role of the Sūtradhāra, (b) the employment of Bhaṭīmā (c) the descriptive payāra and (d) songs and music set into classical rāga and tāla.

The medium of expression of this drama is classical Sanskrit, no doubt; yet, it has an Assamese manner of speaking. All syllables, whether long or short, were considered in early Assamese as having the force of one
syllabic instant. No *halanta* sound is used in the Assamese verses, as against the Sanskrit grammatical rules. Besides, the songs in the drama are composed in old Assamese - *Vrajāvali*-tones, and the meters used here are also Assamese, that too, to good effect. Thus, the lyrics composed in the *Lechārī* and *Muktāvalī* metres, both typical Assamese metres, the poet expresses the deep emotions of the different personalities. For instance, in the first Act of the play the three deities, viz., Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Gaṅgā, express their deep emotions through these metres.

The unity of time, place and action of Aritotlean plays have not been properly observed in this play; but, like in the Aṅkiyā-nāṭas, through the lengthy descriptions of the Sūtradhāra, our poet does away with these difficulties created evolved out of time and place factors. The Sūtradhāra used to keep inform the audience about the change of place and lapse of time wherever and whenever necessary. Thus, in our play, the Sūtradhāra, unlike that of the classical Sanskrit play, is the key to unfold the dramatic theme as well as to pilot the entire activities in the drama from the prologue to the epilogue, a characteristic of the Akiyā-nāṭa, indeed
Thus, the *Sadkhacūdavadha*, though claimed as ‘*Nāṭaka*’ (as per Sanskrit dramaturgy) by its author, may not be regarded as a full fledged classical Sanskrit *Nāṭaka* in the strict sense of the term. It does not follow faithfully all the codes formulated by authorities on Sanskrit dramaturgy. It, rather, is composed with the amalgamation of the techniques both of Sanskrit *Nāṭakas* and *Ankiyā-nāṭas* of Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, the neo-Vaiśṇavite poet and trend setter in Assamese literario-dramatic form,

Through the lyrics composed in the Lechārī and Muktāvālī metres, both typical Assamese metres, the poet makes to express the deep emotions of the different personalities. In the first Act of the play the three deities, *viz.*, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Gaṅgā, express their deep emotions through these metres.

Though the presiding God of the play is Nārāyaṇa, our poet eulogizes other gods also. Brahmā and Hara are also eulogised in equal strain. However, as the theme of the play goes, Nārāyaṇa or Hari is the Supreme God, who controls the entire universe, *i.e.*, creates, sustains and destroys. Like the Vaiśṇavite poets of the age, our poet seems to aim at extolling the Vaiśṇava faith and imbibing
in the minds of the masses the spirit of devotion to Hari-
Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa.

Another significant feature of this play is that it reflects
the socio-cultural conditions of that period in its various
aspects, more particularly in the area of flourishing literary
art-culture. At the end of most of songs, like the Śaṅkarite
poets of the time, he mentions his name in a polite manner.
For example:

\[
\text{dīna dvija bole vāṇī } \quad \text{śuniyo rasika prāṇī} \\
\text{dhanya dhanya vaikuṇṭha sampada //} \\
\text{—Act I.v. 20}
\]

This sort of composition echoes the words of the saint
poet. cf,

\[
dhanya dhanya kalikāla \quad dhanya naratanu bhāla \\
dhanya dhanya bharata varि́śe // \\
—Śaṅkaradeva, 
\]

In Sanskrit plays, Vidūṣaka is created as an assistance
of the hero. But in the Śv the character of Vidūṣaka is
missing. In our play the role of mediator between the hero
and the heroine is played by the creator (Brahmā) himself.
When Tulasī was meditating upon Brahmā for getting
Nārāyana as her suitor, Brahmā suggested her to marry
Śaṅkhacūḍa and vice versa.

The Bhāṭimā used here is the Deva Bhāṭimā which is the creation of Srimanta Sankaradeva. It is a type of highly devotional and sublime prayer. The Bhāṭimā helps the playwright in promulgating its objectives, i.e., to sing the glory of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa.

Last but not least, the Śv occupies a significant position in the domain of Sanskrit dramatic literature. It is one of the contributions of North-East India towards the greater world of Sanskrit learning. It reflects social customs and beliefs obtaining in medieval Assam.

The special features of the Śaṅkhacūḍa-vadha, briefly, are as follows:

(i) Our drama is more narrative in nature than the dramatic works in general.

(ii) It appears that the playwright has hardly made any change in the story narrated in the Brahmavaivartapurāṇa and has not made any improvement on the original for the dramatic purpose.

(iii) It represents a tendency towards the change in the established general norms of Sanskrit dramas.

(iv) The influence of the Aṅkīyā-nāṭas composed by
Śrīmanta Śaṅkaradeva, the propounder of the Neo-Vaisnavism in medieval Assam, is fully noticed.

(v) The drama embodies a very bold experiment in respect of composing Assamese verses in Assamese metres, that too, in a Sanskrit play.

(vi) This drama also deserves to be reckoned as a very important datum in respect of the cultural history of Assam pertaining to the late medieval period (i.e., later part of the eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth century A.D.

(vii) The songs of this play are set to classical rāga and tāla.

(viii) Some elements of Brajāvali dramas or the Aṅkīyānātās of medieval Assamese literature are incorporated here which are not found in other Sanskrit dramas composed according to the traditional norms of dramaturgy.

(ix) Assamese is the sole medium of expression so far as the songs are concerned.

(x) If the lyrics of this drama are composed in typical Assamese metres, the Sanskrit verses are in classical Sanskrit metres.
From the above analysis it appears that our poet-playwright has deviated from the codes of Sanskrit dramaturgy, and thus judged from the classical Sanskrit dramaturgic point of view, his play may not be called a ‘Nāṭaka’ in the strictly classical sense. Herein, the playwright seems to have made an attempt, a bold one indeed, to introduce a new trend in the Sanskrit dramaturgy, as against the established norms, by adding new features. Even then, our play makes a significant contribution to the development of Sanskrit dramatical literature, more particularly in this part of India, i.e. Assam.