PREFACE

I had the privilege of being a student of the *Veda* group in Sanskrit of the Gauhati University. At that time, I got the opportunity of critically going through a good number of Vedic texts. This study, in student life, created in my mind a new line of thought regarding the concept of the Indian Mythology. It was really an experience to get acquainted with the new concept of Vedic gods like Agni, Indra, Viṣṇu, Bṛhaspati, Prajāpati etc., through the Vedic as well as Purāṇic texts, legend and stories, and different religious festivals and ceremonies. This created in my mind a keen desire to study the character of Vedic gods, especially of Prajāpati, the creator god, and the various aspects of his personality that had developed through the ages. I, therefore, immediately availed the opportunity to prepare a dissertation on the topic entitled- ‘Prajāpati in the Vedic and the Purāṇic Literature- A Study’ for the degree of Ph.D.

Many scholars, both Indian and Western, have already evaluated the various aspects on the concept of Prajāpati. Yet, a query of investigating Prajāpati’s character and to trace the development of the divinity through the Vedic and the Purāṇic age has brought this work to light.

The present work is a modest attempt to bring out some specific characteristic features of god Prajāpati, which are interspersed throughout the pages of the Vedas as well as the Purāṇas. The present work is divided into eight chapters. The First Chapter is the Introduction. In the first part of the chapter, the conception of god as arising in the minds of the Vedic seers and the rise of the monotheistic idea in the Vedic pantheon have been discussed. It also contains a
discussion on the prominence of Prajāpati as a distinct god since the Vedic age down to the Purāṇic period along with a note on the meaning of the term Prajāpati. The Second Chapter deals with various aspects of Prajāpati as delineated in the Saṁhitā literature. Prajāpati’s supremacy over other gods, which is established in the Brāhmaṇa literature, has been dealt with in the Third Chapter. In the entire Brāhmaṇa literature, Prajāpati is referred to as the creator, supporter or preserver of these worlds. He is also depicted as the annihilator of this universe. Prajāpati’s relationship with the various sacrifices is also broadly discussed in this chapter. It also dwells on the relationship between Prajāpati and other Vedic gods. The Fourth Chapter deals with the various aspects of Prajāpati as found in the Āranyaka literature. The Fifth Chapter contains the materials that Prajāpati holds an exalted position in the Upaniṣadic Literature. The Upaniṣads identify Prajāpati as Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. The Sixth Chapter throws light on the emergence of Prajāpati as Brahmā in the Vedic literature. The Vedic Prajāpati has merged into a new appellation with his power and activities, namely Brahmā in the Purānic literature. But, a study of the chronological development of the concept of Brahmā clearly shows that Brahmā emerged with all the attributes of Prajāpati in the Vedic literature itself. The Seventh Chapter deals with the greatness of Brahmā as depicted in the Purānic literature. Brahmā, who is none other than Vedic Prajāpati is extolled mainly as the creator in the Purāṇas. The Last chapter, i.e. the Eighth Chapter contains a concluding remark on the work.

I shall feel rewarded if this work can raise some interests in the minds of the readers. As I conclude, I am really conscious of the probable shortcomings in the work. However,

“ā paritoṣādviduṣāṁ na sādhu manye prayogavijñānam”