The Ankīvā-nāṭas, a unique innovation of Śaṅkaradeva for the propagation of his Neo-Vaiṣṇavite religion in Assam, are valuable assets of Assamese history and culture. Besides being the chief vehicles of Vaiṣṇavite thoughts, these 'nāṭas' in themselves are great works of literature. Only six of Śaṅkaradeva's 'nāṭas' now survive. They are Patni-prasāda, Keli-gopāla, Kāli-damana, Rukmiṇī-harana, Pārijāta-harana and Rāma-vijaya. In his biographies (Carit-puthis), of course, there is a mention of a nāṭa called Cihna-yātra as being written and performed successfully before his first pilgrimage. A few biographies also allude to another play called Janma-yātra said to have been written after his return from the second pilgrimage. But unfortunately no manuscripts of these two plays are extant now. Numerous printed editions of the surviving six plays are now available; but in none of these editions the texts have been critically edited. Of these six 'nāṭas' Rukmiṇī-harana is the longest and Pārijāta-harana is considered to be dramatically perfect. In this present dissertation an attempt has been made to determine critically and comparatively the texts of these two plays stressing on their literary and historical significance.

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(ANITA CHOUDHURY)

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Research Officer,
Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Guwahati-1.