ASTROLOGY, BELIEFS, FOLK-MEDICINE 
AND FOLK-COOKERY AS REFLECTED IN 
THE ḌĀK-VACANAS

I. Astrology:

The Ḍāk-vacanas, like other concerns of folk life have dealt astrology to a great extent so much so that the astrological sayings of Ḍāk have become a common knowledge in the Assamese folk society. It is quite natural since astrology in India has a very very old tradition spreading through several milleniums right from the days of Rg Veda through a course of its gradual development. Astrology, because of its efficacy as a practicable means of foreseeing the future as well as of moulding it in favour, could attract the deepest interest of the ever-inquisitive people and the sayings of Ḍāk being a product of a tradition embraced the said interest into its fold resulting in incessant culture of the subject, but in the own ways of the folk.

Before discussing astrology in Ḍāk-vacanas, it becomes imperative to have an idea of Indian astrology and its development. Indian astrology has its origin in the Rg Veda. The zodiac circle was called Somagrha in Rg-Veda. The composition of the Vedas, the Upaniṣadas, the Purāṇas etc. from time to time mark the gradual development of

2. Ibid : P. 38.
indian astrology\(^3\). This development reached its zenith in the 6th century A.D. (i.e., the Gupta Age) through the contribution of Varahmihira who was equipped with the astronomical and astrological discoveries of his predecessor Aryabhatta\(^4\), who born in 476 A.D.\(^5\).

In course of development, Indian astrology flourished in three branches. To present the devolvement we quote an author who goes by the description of Varahmihira, the doyen of Indian astrology in his encyclopaedic work of Natural astrology, *Brhatsamhitā*:

*Jyotishsastra according to Varahamihira, comprises three branches: the Tantra or astronomical-mathematical branch; the Hora which concerns itself with horoscope; and the third which deals with natural astrology (Brhatsamhitā I.5)* \(^6\)

However others have used different nomenclatures to identify the aforesaid branches. These are respectively— (1) *Gaṇit Jyotisa* (The Mathematical astrology) with its two sub-branches viz. (1) *Siddhānta Jyotisa* and (II) *Karaṇ Jyotisa*, (2) *Phalita Jyotisa* (Sidereal astrology) and (3) *Jyotisa Samhita* (Natural astrology). While *Gaṇit Jyotisa* deals with the movements of different planets and other resultant matters thereof, *Phalita Jyotisa* deals particularly with the powers and functions of the nine planets in two ways. One is about their influences on human life as per their positions in the zodiac circle at the time of birth of a child,

\(^{3}\) Ibid : P. 40

\(^{4}\) Ibid : P. 41

\(^{5}\) (Nehuru, Jawaharlal): *Bhārat Sambhed* (Assamese translation of 'Discovery of India'

\(^{6}\) Dandekar, R. N. : The Age of the Guptas and other Essays (delhi, 1972) P. 147
and the other is about changing fortune or misfortune in human life resultant on the time to time movements of the planets. The *Jyotiṣa Samhitā* on the other hand deals with calculation of various natural happenings on earth and on nations as a result of the movements and attractions of the planets within each other. Phenomena like earthquake, rainfall, draught, flood, famine, epidemic, remarkable political situations etc. fall within the perimeter of this branch\(^7\). The three branches together can only make astrology a complete science although each of them has their own importance. It is seen that other than difference in name, the second branch of Indian astrology has got its perimeter expanded in the name of *Phalita Jyotiṣa* in its course of development including palmistry\(^8\) and chiromancy (*Sāmudrik lakṣana*)\(^9\) into its fold. It is further noteworthy that Indian astrology accepts Sun, Moon, Rāhu and Ketu also as planets among the navagrahas (i.e., nine planets).

In Indian Astrology the mathematical calculation has been included from the time of *Vedāṇīga Jyotiṣa* (Possibly the first one of the about twenty one published works on Mathematical astrology) which started from the *Rg vedic* period (i.e., in about 1480 B.C.)\(^10\). From the *Rg vedic* period upto the rise of Buddhism, Indian astrology was in the shape of *Jyotiṣa Samhitā*. Distinct development of *Horā* or *Phalita-Jyatiṣa* as a branch of astrology can be understood to have been later development. Despite the fact Varahmihira had mentioned *Horā* as a

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7. Sarma, Sibaranjan: op-cit, PP.39-40
8. Ibid: P. 38
10. Sarma, Sibaranjan: op-cit, PP. 39-40
branch of astrology, his son Prthuyasas in about 600 A.D. writing a book on it called *Horāsatpancasikā*\(^1\), proves that it was till then in developing stage. The course of development of Indian astrology can thus be traced.

In astrology deliberated in the *Dāk vacanas*, the *Tantra* or *Ganit Jyotiśa* is conspicuously absent. The reason can only be inferred as that astronomical mathematics for being highly complex, demands a very high intellectual standard of those who want to deal with it and the folk failing to reach that standard could find no interest nor success in that. Moreover the subject being highly theoretical in nature could provide no practical interest to the folk and therefore might fail to attract them. Either or both of these could be the reason(s) of the said absence. Whatever may it be, the absence of the branch has made astrology in *Dāk vacanas* a deficient discipline.

Astrology in *Dāk vacanas* is comprised of the rest two branches, viz. *Horā* or *Phalita Jyotiśa* and *Jyotiśa Samhitā*. However, the subject has not been presented in a systematic order in any of the manuscripts. Different compilers and editors have presented the subject-matters dividing into different parts and putting captions thereto as per their own wisdom. We see in the collection edited by N.C. Sarma five chapters namely, *Atha barṣādi lakṣānanam*, *Atha jyoutiśa prakaranam*, *Atha yaṃgahaṇṭa kathanaṇa*, *Atha yātrā lakṣānanam* and *Atha gṛha*

\(^1\) Dandekar, R.N. : op-cit, P. 148  
\(^2\) Sarma, N.C. : op-cit. PP.43-45  
\(^3\) Ibid : PP. 52-53  
\(^4\) Ibid : PP. 53-75  
\(^5\) Ibid : pp. 76-78
laksanam dealing with astrology. Although from the title, only the chapter *Atha jyotiṣa prakaraṇaṃ* sounds like telling about astrology, the chapter is very short containing only six sayings, those too only about eclipses. *Phalita Jyotiṣa* and some part of *Jyotiṣa Saṁhitā* have been discussed at length in the chapter *Atha yamaghaṇaḥ kathanam* containing two hundred and fifty five sayings where of only six sayings (Sl.No.1-6) speak really of yamaghaṇa (the deadly moments) while from the saying no 7 to 210 it is *Phalita Jyotiṣa* described, from the saying no 211 to 249 it is *Jyotiṣa Saṁhitā* and in the rest it is again *Phalita Jyotiṣa* not based on the study of planets but on folk numerology to determine the life and death of a couple. In the other chapters, namely, *Atha barṣādi laksanam, Atha yāṭrā laksanam* and *Atha grha laksanam*, although there are some astrological sayings, only some astrological factors are considered as determinants of some natural occurances like rain, draught etc., and in many occasions some natural protents also are given the same importance. For example -

(i)  
caṭṭa r caturdaśi yadi samatul /
   dāke bole barṣā howe bahul //  
— While there occurs two fourteenth days (of course of the same fortnight) there will be sufficient rain in this year.——

(ii)  
udaye sindur pacime kālā /
   tebe jānā bahu bāriṣār mālā //  
— In which year the sun at the rising time appears vermilion -red and black at the setting time, there

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16. Ibid : PP. 79-80
17. Ibid : p. 44 (maxim-12)
18. Loc-cit (maxim-18)
It can therefore be concluded that findings of Nature observation by the folk also had assumed the astrological significance beyond the scriptural or scientific astrology.

H. Barman in his book Sampāṇa Dākar Vacan appears more methodical in presenting the chapter on astrology. Omitting yamaghanta, he divides the chapter into four sub-divisions namely, (ka) Kośṭhī, (kha) Grahan, (ga) Deś-kāl-pātra and (gha) Jīvan - maran. D. Dutta in his Dākar - Vacan appears more extravagant to add few additional chapters namely, (i) Jyotiṣa prakaraṇ(kha) (ii) Rāhu lakṣana, (iii) Gharar bhītā nirupana (kha) (iv) Rāhu o ketu and (v) Kośṭhī phala. Moreover both H. Barman and D. Dutta by incorporating the chapters on Sāmudrik lakṣana (i.e., chiromancy) which also speak a lot about palmistry have added a new dimension to the culture of astrology in the sayings. Numerology also finds a place in the concerned chapter in all the collections. But the discipline is still in its infancy to deal only with 'death' and for lacking scientific explanation of the astrological or cosmic significance of the numerals, it is folk numerology in nature.

It is thus seen that there are disparities in subject-matter, irregularities in chapter division and discipancies in number of sayings in a chapter among different collections, particularly in respect of astrology. Moreover repetitions of the same maxims, contradictions of the maxims in the same collections as well as in different collections and notable omissions indicate beyond doubt that astrology in Dāk vacanas is not the outcome of a methodical culture of the science. We present below few examples of each feature.
(i) Repetition:

\[\text{cāri sāgarat grahar melā /}
\]
\[\text{dolā catre tāhār khelā //}^{19}\]

this maxim is repeated as —

\[\text{cāri sāgare grahar yog /}
\]
\[\text{āce kośṭhit narapati yog /}^{20}\]

and in different places such as in maxim no. 48 in the same page, in maxim no. 66 (page 59) and in maxim no. 99 (page 62) etc.

(ii) Contradiction:

The following maxim -

\[\text{saptamat marīgal thāke jebe /}
\]
\[\text{meghat bāyut bhay tebe //}^{21}\]

- while repeated in maxim no. 109 (page 63) has however been contradicted as -

\[\text{yebe ksītisut thākay sāte /}
\]
\[\text{jiwe sitojan nicar bhāte //}^{22}\]

and as —

\[\text{kuja bhājīlā saptame sthita /}
\]
\[\text{tāhār bhārīyār nāsādhe hita //}^{23}\]

Besides the kind of contradiction of maxims as shown above i.e., in the same collection for plurality of the same maxim, there are also contradictions of maxims between different collections even while a maxim is singular. This is no less confusing since the

19. Ibid : P. 55 (maxims-23)
20. Ibid : P. 57 (maxim-46)
21. Ibid : P. 54 (maxim-14)
22. Ibid : P. 55 (maxim-20)
23. Ibid : P,68 (maxim - 166 )
conclusion remains unchanged even on the change of conditions. For  
eexample the maxim –

\[
\text{candra suryya eke rāsit /} \\
\text{sarbbakāle bhog huiba biparit //}^{24}
\]

has been narrated as :

\[
\text{candra śukra dui eke rāsit} / \\
\text{sarbbakāle bhog haibek bit//}^{25}
\]

Here the notable contradiction is suryya>śukra.Again the maxim while  
describing the influence of lagna,-

\[
\text{tāte yadi sasir bās /} \\
\text{bhāt kapur nāhike āś //}^{26}
\]

has been narrated as ----

\[
\text{tāte yadi śanir nibās /} \\
\text{bhāt kāpore nāhike āś //}^{27}
\]

Here the contradiction is sasir > sanir.

Further, the maxim again describing the lagna position -

\[
\text{guru śukra candramā nāthāke /} \\
\text{avasye pāi rāj paduke //}^{28}
\]

has been narrated as ----

\[
\text{guru śukra candra thākay yebe /} \\
\text{rājār padak pāway tebe //}^{29}
\]

24. Ibid : P,63 (maxim - 110 )  
26. Sarma : Loc-cit (maxim-113)  
27. Barman : Loc-cit (maxim-85)  
Here the contradiction is नाथाके > ठाकैय. There are plenty of such repetitions and contradictions in the astrological sayings.

It is seen that in the chapter अथा यमागहांता kathanam the influences of the planets have been described from the maxim no.8 in a disorderly manner. No order of the planets nor of the positions i.e., of the twelve houses of the zodiac circle has been maintained. It seems that whichever planet in whatever position whenever came to the mind the narrators had described. That, this obviously is not the method of studying a science has been vindicated by reverting to some extent to a methodical description from the maxim No 114 to 209. Taking the planets in serial order as Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn excluding Rāhu and Ketu from the plan for reasons not certainly known, and taking the houses of the zodiac circle in serial order as lagna being the first, different consequences have been described elaborately. The omission of Rāhu and Ketu indicates that there was a separate chapter on these two planets but the compilers and editors except D.Dutta, failed to pick it up. This disorderliness of description marks all the collections of दाक-वाणस. This is certainly a reason of repetition of maxims. Moreover, mere observation of given cases by novices inspired by innovative attitude instead of scientific analysis of the astrological data led to contradictory findings and creation of new sayings.

30. Sarma, N. C.: op-cit, P.P. 53-75
(iii) Omission:

In the aforesaid methodical description other than the total omission of Rāhu and Ketu as mentioned above, there are further inadvertent omissions in the description of influence of certain planets in certain positions. For example, the description of the influence of Saturn in lagna, Mercury in the tenth place, and Moon and Saturn in the twelfth place have been omitted. Although not uniform, the omissions are more or less there in each collection, while it is remarkably plenty in the collection edited by H. Barman.

Thus, the absence of Gaṇīt Jyotīṣa, intermingling of Phalita Jyotīṣa and Jyotīṣa Samhītā, natural portents being treated at par with astrological factors, laxity of method of study, reckless repetitions, contradictions, omissions, inclusion of folk numerology and chiromancy and over and above the tendency to see everything in life through an astrological view prove that the science of astrology which required for its culture the intellectural standard of the stature of

31. Ibid : P. 60 - In between the maxims no. 121 - 122.
32. Ibid : P. 70 - In between the maxims no. 192 & 193
33. Ibid : P. 71 - In between the maxims no. 205 & 206.
34. Loc-cit: In between the maxims no. 209 & 210
Aryabhatta and Varahmihira fell into ordinary hands of the folk which resulted in earning the utmost popularity and the widest possible circulation in the society. The saying *-jyotisa padhe grahar nai sthit*\(^{35}\) very well indicates that study of astrology happened to be almost anybody's business irrespective of the faculty aptitude, but to the detriment of the subject itself. This obviously led to distortion and interpolation of the sayings. The proclaimed limitations of the subject like *-janma lagna yatra joqai/varahmihire napule orai //* \(^{36}\) and *-yadi barise jaladhare/ ki kariba tak ganitikai*- are rather more trustworthy as advocacy of the folk astrologers about their own want of perfection for the comprehensive reason that they were not as capable in the subject as they should have been. Astrology dealt in the *Pāk-vacanas* was thus converted to folk astrology from scientific astrology although it explicitely owes the allegiance to Varahmihira. However all there are still not lost although the sanctity of the saying *-dakar vacan vedar bani*- cannot be upheld in toto any more particularly in respect of the astrological sayings.

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36. Ibid: P. 55 (maxim-65)
37. Ibid: P. 43 (maxim-1)
II. Beliefs:

As quite usual, the Assamese folk society manifested through the \textit{Dāk-vacanas} are used to some popular beliefs. While discussing about the beliefs, instead of enlisting them we prefer to analyse the characteristic features of the concerned folk society in view of the beliefs they upheld.

The people generally believed themselves as weak and therefore always depended on unseen powers particularly in situations beyond their control. Thus developed the faith in God, destiny etc., which were very easily taken recourse to. The saying about nursing a newborn say:—

\begin{verbatim}
dhulai pakhalai kole laiba jebe /
bhale bhale phul pariba tebe //
haridhbani kari nabh kathbi /
drulai musti kari gathi bandhibi \textsuperscript{38}
\end{verbatim}

After a child-birth instead of offering any treatment to the mother for removal of the placenta it is only to wait till the baby being cleaned and taken on lap as if the nursing of the baby would help the removal of the placenta. But it is a common knowledge that the case is not always so normal to indulge in carelessness as the saying goes:— \textit{powati rakhi cawa putak}\textsuperscript{39}. What is understood is that the course was to leave on destiny's hand. The attendants are advised only to shout in the name of God (\textit{haridhbani}) while cutting the umbilical cord of the

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid : P. 2 (makim - 2 - 3)

\textsuperscript{39} Loc-cit. (maxim - 1)
baby. But some subsequent sayings eloquently speak of offering medicine to both the mother and the baby for some other necessities. Ignorance and incompetence made their belief strong in God and destiny so much so that homage to God drives away all disasters.

Another strong belief that engulfed the folk psyche is that man's life is pre-destined. One cannot command one's own life, since the lives on earth are constantly being watched and guided by different planets from different positions of the zodiac. Allegiance to astrology in respect of all occurrences in life made the people fatalist.

The grahas or the planets despite being heavenly bodies had been moulded after man's image, for they see from, reside in, go to or occupy a place in the zodiac circle as these are some humanly works in the earth. They are believed even to be bound by some humanly relations among themselves eg. friend and foe, father and son etc. Different planets are even known by such identities, eg. March as kṣitisūt and bhūminandan, Mercury as candrasūt, Saturn as sūryyaputra, rabinandan etc. Moreover the planets are even identified by some names meaning physical disabilities as an unfortunate man can have like humpbacked (kuja : kujā : manigal or March) lame (khorā : sāni or Saturn) and blind (kānā : sukra ; Venu). Further Jupiter (bṛhaspati) and Venus (śukra) are respectively believed as the devaguru and the dāityaguru.

Even if it was believed that man's life was pre-destined by the planetary influences, still it was further believed that man was worthy of credit or discredit in respect of their deeds. It can be presumed that there was the recognition of man's will-force. Few sayings like (after
describing donation of some specific things and benevolence as pious deeds):

(i) \( dāke bole sehise sūr/ \)
\( āpunī marile ki kare ār ār \) \(^{40}\) and----

(ii) \( bhāl po naṣṭa gel nusudhile bāpati/ \(^{41}\) etc.

indicate the belief that men can determine their fate by their own vision and deeds. Good deeds and evil deeds respectively fetch virtues and sins. Virtues lead one to heaven\(^{42}\) and sins to hell\(^{43}\) after death. Therefore, eternity of soul, consequence of deeds or \textit{karmaphala}, virtues and sins, heaven and hell, the other world (\textit{paraloka}) etc. are the running beliefs which served check and balance of human deeds.

Attitude to the Nature upheld by the folk was very friendly. It was strongly believed that Nature is the friend, philosopher and guide of the human community. Because it serves premonitions to them particularly in matters or in situations beyond their knowledge. The belief is particularly reflected in the chapter \textit{Yātrā laksāna} which speaks of the portents of a move. Of course, in the other chapters also there are some sayings of the same nature. It is needless to reiterate here the nature study of the folk in astrological perspective. Nature in both animate and inanimate forms can and in fact does indicate, at least up to the belief of the people, the imminent consequences of a move. Those who do not care or fail to read them might face risk. A saying goes: \textit{hāci jeṭhi ujhanti khāle/ micā nāmāte sarbbakale/} \(^{44}\) (A sneez, a call of a

\(^{40}\) Ibid : P. 6 (maxim - 16)

\(^{41}\) Ibid : P. 17 (maxim -37)

\(^{42}\) Ibid : P. 6 (maxim-13), P. 9 (maxim-14) etc

\(^{43}\) Ibid : P. 8 (mixims,9-10), P.9(maxim-15,17) etc.

\(^{44}\) Ibid : P. 76 (maxim-6)
lizard and a trip while at the time of making a move, never goes wrong; the move is sure to fail. Thus, even if some portents indicate failure or danger, still Nature is not the cause there, rather a true friend to indicate the adversities before hand. Moreover it is advised to make a move auspicious warding off the evils by proper use of Nature. A saying goes.

\[
\text{dbija gomūtra dakṣine lajba/}
\]
\[
\text{sāphal minak hāmat lajha/}
\]
\[
\text{āg kari dibā dakṣin pāwa/}
\]
\[
\text{jaike lāge tajke jāwal/}^{45}
\]

— Keep a Brahmin on right side, take little urine of a bull on the right hand and a living fish on the left, put forward the right feet and go wherever you need.—

There are plenty of such sayings about both auspicious and ominous portents of a move. Thus, the belief on the Nature made the people very Nature-frienly.

On the basis of the beliefs upheld by the folk as explained, it can be understood that the folk society is simple minded, pious, owner of a creative intellect and capable of subtle observation of Nature which facilitated their thrust for success to translate into reality to a considerable extent.

In the chapter \textit{Atha janma prakaran} the following sayings reflect the folk view regarding ghosts and evil spirits and the measures to protect a new-born from their clutches. The sayings go:

45. Ibid: P. 77 (maxims, 11-12)
— An weapon be kept with the mother, the baby be kept well-wrapped with cloths. Some thorny branches like *siju* and *bac* be planted in the four corners and in the door step for those days —

According to folk belief still prevalent among the rural people of Assam ghosts and evil spirits are very greedy of the new-borns to have as their prey, but are afraid of iron. Hence a weapon is to be kept with the mother to deter them. The baby is to be kept well-wrapped with cloths so that the ghosts can not see it. By planting thorny branches as directed, the room is fortified against their probable entrance as if they would come walking, but for the thorns they cannot. We personally have come across the practice in a slightly modified form that instead of the four corners and the entrance door-step and instead of planting, only above the entrance door of the labour room, some thorny branches are kept hanging even today in rural areas. The practice reflects the folk idea regarding ghosts and evil spirits and their enmity to human as well as the measures of keeping them away. The subsequent saying speaks of invoking fortune to the new-born by showing it to the Sun after the unholy days. The saying goes:

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46. Ibid: P. 4 (maxims - 18,19)
At the end of the unholy period the parents should make the child to look at the Sun.—

This prescription of the benevolent right about the first outing of a new-born with offering salutations to the Sun is founded on an optimistic belief that the Sun being the source of the highest potency may bestow all the goodness upon a new-born.

Agriculture being the prime concern of economy, there grew few popular beliefs in this sphere of folk life. Ploughing in the beginning of an agricultural season can not be started on any day just at will. An astrologically auspicious day is to be sorted out. The maxim prescribes that a piece of gold should be fixed on the plough blade (phāl) 47. Gold has some potential effects on earth and seeds. So such type of prescription has been given. The practice now being obsolete in the Assamese peasant community, the reasons behind are also obscure. It can however be conjectured that the practice could be an attempt to appease the earth, a contemplated feminine entity, with a golden touch while tilling it, to breed golden corns sufficiently. Further the tearing of the ploughing rope (jot) and breaking of the yoke (jongali : yuwali) while ploughing, cause the death of the tiller or of the house-owner (grhastha) 48 were some running beliefs although at present not upheld as literally true, but certainly believed as ominous portents. This belief

46. (a) Loc - cit.
47. Ibid : P. 48 (maxim-2)
48. Ibid : P. 49 (Atha halabāhana kram continued, maxim - 7)
seems to aim at cautioning the farmers to maintain their implements carefully to avoid inconvenience at their peak time.

Folk belief about people becoming rich or poor depending on the housewife's certain modes of action is noteworthy. *Lakṣmī* the goddess of wealth and fortune lived in or left a household on the housewife's mode of using salt. If the housewife touches salt with her left hand, *Lakṣmī*, the goddess, never leaves that household. Another saying maintains that a woman who touches salt by hand, there remains no gold with her i.e., she becomes very poor. This meant that salt was an untouchable commodity for women who aspired for wealth. The sayings may very well indicate the scarcity of salt and advise the womenfolk with some severity to be thrifty in its use, but to believe the same in literal sense amounts to go with a befooling notion. Now in modern time, availability of salt of course have made the sayings obsolete.

Thus the beliefs running in the society can be perceived as of a simple nature and tricky in places too. The specimens mentioned and explained above had made the people aware and careful in their respective field of work that helped them obtain desired success and prosperity.

III. *Folk-medicine*:

The Assamese *Dāk-vacanas* also present a system of folk-medicine of the society it represents. Generally two chapters in the collections of *Dāk-vacanas* respectively named (i) *Janma prakaran*
and (ii) Drabyagun kathan deliberate about folk medicine. But the chapter Randhan prakaran although mainly concerns folk cookery still some sayings of it also contain medical values like improvement of eye sight 51 removal of distaste 52 and improvement in glaze of physical health 53 etc. But the book edited by D. Dutta contains totally seven chapters in this respect, namely, (1) Janma prakaran. (2) Sarir bicaksan (3) Drabyagun katha (4) Randhan prakaran (ka) (5) Randhan prakaran (kha) (6) Bhojan prakaran and (7) Rogar ouşadh. It is felt that the number of chapters could have been reduced by a bit orderly presentation and avoiding the repetitions of the contents. However, the increase in number of chapters in a collection does not anyway disturb in understanding the system of folk-medicine of the society concerned. The chapter Janma prakaran speaks particularly about folk-medicine applicable to child-birth concerning both the mother and the baby in the labour room.

The system of folk medicine as reflected in the Đāk vacanas may be divided into four parts. These are respectively (1) Prescription (of drug) (ii) Regimen (iii) Prohibition and (iv) Nursing.

While 'Prescription' is the principal part, the rest three are supplementary or auxiliary in nature.

(i) Prescription: What have been prescribed as drug(s) almost all are known plants, herbs, roots or fruits, but raw in form. Therefore,

51. Ibid : P. 30 (maxim-8)
52. Loc-cit (maxims - 9,10)
& Dutla, D : op-cit, P.80
along with the names of necessary materials, the process of preparation as drug and method of application also have been mentioned in detail to obtain the best effect of them. The following saying, as specimen, exhibits the kind of minutest details that had been adhered to:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{triphalā diyā nimar cāl} & / \\
\text{cāga dugdhare batiba bhāl} & // \\
\text{niśābhāge tāk niyarat thaiba} & / \\
\text{prabhāt samaye māthāt laiba} & // \\
\text{hāte ghahi ghahi māthe māthiba} & / \\
\text{sukhāile pāce snān kariba} & // \\
\text{jiiane kariba ehi prakār} & / \\
\text{kroṣek pathalaj drṣṭi tāḥār} & // 54
\end{align*}
\]

— Pasting rind of Neem tree and triphalā (dust or dried residue of the three myrobalans) nicely with goat milk keep in the open at night to wet in dew\(^{55}\). Then in the next morning take it on the mid head. Rubbing by the hands smear it over the whole head. After getting dried up have bath. This will give one the eye sight upto a distance of one krośa (i.e., 8000 cubits).—

Some prescription of course are very short and simple, like -

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54. Sarma, N. c : op-cit, P. 81 (maxims, 1-4)
55. Dutta, D : op-cit, P. 102, – Bean is also needed as an extra ingredient in the compound and be kept for three nights in dew.
_jāmir rasat laban misalāi /_

*nāsiba aruci prabhāte khāi //^56_

— Do away with distaste consuming a mixture of lemon juice and salt, in the morning,—

Since most of the ingredients mentioned in the prescriptions are very simple and known things of day-to-day rural folk life, some of them are common food items like goat milk, goat meat^57_, honey^58_, ghee^59_, molasses^60_, milk and vegetables^61_ etc. and some common spices like salt, garlic, chilley, ginger, pepper etc, the prescription is obviously formulated from the common daily menu in most cases. Only the preparation and the doses needed some expertise. For the inquisitive people these might not have been inconvenient since the scope of experiment was more than enough. But, two of the prescriptions are really very thought provoking and challenging in nature, as we find --

(i) *marā garur murār talar māṭi / rasa karpūr dibā samāne baṭi // bāhi jule baṭi māṭhāt laba / yatek bāyu sāntānā haṭiba //^62_*  

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^56^ Sarma, N.C : op-cit. P.83 (maxim-25)

^57^ Ibid : P. 81 (maxim-10)

^58^ Ibid : P. 82 (maxim-14) & P.85 (maxim-44)

^59^ Ibid : P. 83 (maxim-24)

^60^ Ibid : P. 83 (maxim-24)

^61^ Ibid : P. 84 (maxim-39)

^62^ Dutta, D : op-cit. P. 102
Thus, soil picked up from below the skull of a dead cow long lying in an open field or a cemetery to use as a drug of abdominal diseases (bāyu rog) as mentioned (in Ref. i above) and to throw stone dust into the eyes as a treatment of cataract (Ref. ii above) sound surprisingly confident and challenging prescriptions and definitely need experts' opinion to agree or disagree. But these certainly indicate the depth of search (if not of research) and knowledge (if proved true) as well as level of experiment tried by the folk physicians. The medical philosophy seems to be more liberal here compared to social philosophy to prescribe marā garur murār talar mâti (soil taken from below the skull of a cow long dead) to take on the head as a drug which is generally an untouchable matter for an orthodox high caste Hindu. Some prescriptions of course seem to be over enthusiastic as said that the use of certain drug can keep one safe from all diseases, like –

bhāt khāi utthi tini silikhā/
tāk ki karibe rog pilikāl/64

Since no specific disease has been mentioned it is difficult to believe that consumption of three silikhās (a kind of myrobalan fruit) always after meal can keep one safe from all diseases.

63. Ibid : P. 103
64. Sarma, N.C. : op-cit. P.82 (maxim -19)
Also kindly see the maxims no. 15,16 in the same page and the maxims no. 28,29 in the page no. 83
Other than drugs some manners or forms of actions also have been prescribed and some others prohibited for cure and maintenance of good health which may be called some dos and don'ts. The don'ts are suitable to be included in the prohibition part. As example the following saying contains both of them.

\[ \text{bhari dhui māthāt dibek tel /} \\
\text{nidrā samayat nakarā mel} // 65 \]

— Rub mustard oil after washing the foot and no gossip
at the time of sleeping.—

Likewise, a menu telling about what to be taken when and how exhibits the peoples' food awareness and experimentation.

These are the fundamental things of health care considered to be known to the common people although few of them by constant efforts earned professional expertise to be recognised as baidyas. But the common belief and perhaps the reality also was so that the health formulas or prescriptions, as we mention, on being properly followed hardly necessiated the call of a baidya.67

\( \text{(ij) Regimen, Prohibition and Nursing :} \)

Regimen, Prohibition and Nursing are supplementary to prescriptions. The things, which on consumption, boost the effects of drugs and therefore quickens recovery of a patient are called pathya or regimens and those negotiate the drugs and consequently aggravates

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65. Dutta, D. : op-cit, P. 62
66. Ibid : P. 62,
&  Barman, II : op-cit, P. 58 (maxim, 1-4).
67. Sarma, N.C. : op-cit, P. 84 (maxim - 37)
the health condition of a patient are called *apathy* or anti-regimens. The anti-regimens may be clubbed together with 'prohibitions' as their consumption are prohibited. While all food items are said to have some drug value there are infact very less regimens in the true sense to mention. However, a woman after child birth is advised with her necessary regimen for enhancing her breast milk thus ----

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lon jhāluk di khuāba jhāl} & \\
tebe stanaras huibek bhāl
\end{align*}
\]

Some tested devices have also been described about how the anti regimens of certain favourite fruits and food items like mango, jack fruit, cucumber, cucumis melon, banana, honey, molasses etc,can be done away with\(^69\).

Prohibitions also play a significant role simultaneous to drugs and regimens in treating diseases. While few sayings of this category are scattered here and there in the *Dāk vacanas* like *tarun jarat nākhābā daī*\(^70\) and *-maranak yadi āce tarās/ahit bastuk kadāpi nakhāts*\(^71\) etc., twenty five sayings of this nature have been presented in a serial order in the chapter *Rogar qusadh*\(^72\) right from the beginning. Prohibitions in respect of quantity, quality as well as of combination of eatables have been deliberated there. Strict prohibition to narcotic drugs like hemp and opium\(^{22(a)}\) and by condemnation to those who are addicted to, this part instead of restricting itself to the area of diseases

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68. Ibid : P. 2 (maxim-7)
69. Dutta, D : op-cit, PP. 81-82
70. Sarma, N.C. : op-cit. P.27 (additional text)
71. Ibid : P 81 (maxim-9)
72. Dutta, D : op-cit. PP. 99-101
72(a) Ibid : Pp. 100-101 (maxims 22-25 : numbered by us)
and their treatment only, creates a social awareness for healthy life and healthy social atmosphere.

The *Nursing* part is relatively feeble. Few concerned sayings are particularly found in the chapter *Janma prakarana*. In child-birth both the new-born and the mother become dependant on other's help. Therefore the nursing perhaps has been emphasised there. The sayings are narrated in such a manner that an inexperienced one also can follow them to serve the purpose, eg.,

(1)  
\[
\text{gobar suthi sucali kāth} / \\
\text{sekile nābhi nahawe anāth //}^{73}
\]

— If the navel point is heated by the heat of fire erupted from dried pieces of cowdung and hard wood, it does not remain vulnerable ----

(ii)  
\[
\text{pubalai sire sisu sūyāiba} / \\
\text{sutikā rākhiba agni jalāiba //}^{74}
\]

— Sleep the baby keeping the head to the cast and light up a fire for the mother. ----

Thus with these four parts namely, *Prescription*, *Regimen*, *Prohibition* and *Nursing* the medicine system of the folk is seen completed. However it is not a self complete or all round medicine system since it takes care only of few diseases namely, eye sight problem, physical weakness, rhumatism (*bāt*), abdominal acidity (*pitta*), bronchitis (*kaf*), colic-pain (*śūl*), distaste (*aruci*), body pain, toothache and tooth decay, indigestion, asthma, fever, blood acidity (*rakta-pitta*).

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73. Sarma, N.C.: op-cit. P. 2 (maxim-2)
74. Ibid: P.3 (maxim-14)
and abdominal diseases (bāyu) keeping silence about the others. There is no mention of surgery, sorcery, charms and spell etc. While absence of surgery is a notable deficiency of the system, the absence of sorcery, charms and spell however vindicate that the society had no faith in supernaturalism or magical rites particularly in respect of health care, which is otherwise indicative of a progressive attitude.

IV. Folk-cookery:

Folk-cookery is one of the important concerns of the Dāk-vacanas and the concerned chapter Ṛandhan prakaraṇa deliberates right from lighting up the fire to serving the meal. The descriptions are based on the results of different experiments and as a matter of taste are subjective in nature and sometimes even contradictory too.

The sayings contain few tips to the new cooks about how to catch fire, how to boil rice etc. About catching fire it has been said that firewoods need to be satisfactory—cit jerowā cali kāti //. Then the cook must blow air by mouth to the firewoods in the furnace on long respiration to get the fire caught. Then said the quantities of rice and water in the pot to put on the furnace. These sayings telling about the basic things of cooking are of somewhat educative nature. The rest are mostly about culinary perfection as envisaged by the folk. The cookery was dominated by fish as the most fascinated item. Different species of native fishes like roy, māgur, kāwaj, cēngā, cēngeli, ilih, kac, bac,

75. Ibid : P. 29 (maxim-1,2)
77. Sarma, N.C : op-cit. P. 29 (maxim-1)
78. Sarma : Loc-cit. (maxim-2)
79. Ibid : P. 31 (maxims-15-17)
cital, barâli, garaj, darikanā, kānduli, puthi etc. have been spoken about along with their most preferred combinations and process of cooking. Very less has been said about meat and that too with contradiction about the combination. The sayings go as:

(i) \[ \text{māmsat mūlā hālādhi jāle} / \text{rāndhibā tāk jatane bhāle} /^{80} \]
--- meat with reddish, turmeric and chilley, cook with utmost care. ---

(ii) \[ \text{mānsa naṣṭa gajla rāndhilā mūlā} /^{81} \]
--- meat is wasted for cooking with reddish. ---

However goat meat is said to cause enhancement in the glaze of physical health\(^{82}\) and meat (non-specific) makes the body stout\(^{83}\). But pigeon meat is best advisable only in the month of Āgon\(^{84}\). Although different vegetarian items like various split pulses (\textit{bут, мūg, māh, macur, kālā} etc.) and vegetables also have been spoken of, no specific vegetarian diet has been emphasised. It can therefore be understood that generally the meal was a non-vegetarian one. Currency of various luncheon items made of rice like \textit{pitha, sāndahguḍi, karāi, ākhaj,} etc. prove that the people tried the best to satisfy their taste through culinary creativity. Women reputed as a cook could earn dignity in the society.\(^{85}\)

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80. Dutta, D.: op-cit, P. 82
81. Ibid : p. 80
82. Loc-cit.
83. Ibid : P. 77 and repeated on Page no. 80
84. Barman, H: op-cit., P. 58 (maxim-3)
85. Ibid : P. 47 (maxim-9-10)
& Sarma, N.C.: op-cit. P. 32 (maxim-4)
Variety of taste such as sour (*teṅgā*) derived from lemon (*jāmir*, *nemu*),
ripe tamarind (*pakā teteli*), bitter i.e., *titā* (*sokotār pāt*),
alkali (*khār*), pungent (*trikātu*), *kāhudi* (a kind of chutney made of crushed mustards) etc. as appropriate combinations of different
substances exhibit the dietary delicacies of the folk.

The folk-cookery described in the *Dāk-vacanas* establishes the
attitude of the society that diet was not only for survival but for
satisfaction too, and for that matter, cooking was considered rather as
an art instead of an ordinary work or a responsibility.

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87. Ibid : P. 31 (maxim- 13).
89. Ibid : P. 29 (maxim- 3); & P. 84 (maxim-36) etc.
90. Ibid : P. 19 (maxim- 56); Dutta, D. : Op-cit. P. 77 maxims 24, 28 ;
    & P.82 - maxim 15 (maxims numbered by us).
91. Ibid : P. 30 (maxim- 11).
92. Ibid : P. 30 (maxim- 9).