CHAPTER IX

CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the study presented in the preceding chapters it appears clear that there in fact remained scope as well as importance of the present study on the Ḍāk-vacanas in a detailed manner despite the matter being dealt earlier by different scholars, but for their respective limitations. The Hypothesis accepted that Ḍāk for being claimed as an individual author by each regional folk tradition of Northern India even in different names and irrespective of sex, could not likely to be an individual author but a folk-tradition, in as much as an individual author could not have born in different places, in different times and compose the sayings in different languages, found to test positive. In stead, cultural affinity if not homogeneity, could help to grow in and flourish similar rather the same tradition through the areas concerned, of course with variations of local colours. The bases of local colours happened to be variations in the geo-social factors in background of the traditions concerned. The differences in the names appearing to be local colours and the seeming difference of sex for misconceiving the tradition as individual author(s) caused by etymological errors have posed the problem of the tradition being misidentified as individual author(s). This finding inspired us to proceed till the end of the study as foreseen.

To proceed in the line of the hypothesis, all the available regional traditions of Ḍāk have been studied in chapter II entitled "The tradition of Ḍāk prevalent in Assam and other parts of India as well as outside
India. "It is admissible that except the mentioned regional traditions, there may be some other traditions of Ḍāk either in the same name or other, since we have not brought the tribal lingual folk traditions into the fold of our study. The reason behind this exclusion happens to be the want of cultural affinity. Guided by the Sanskrit linkage of the work Ḍāk i.e. ḍā: means sound in Sanskrit and therefore one who proclaims or foretells is ḍāk or ḍāk-puruṣa, we were engrossed by the notion that the tradition could originate and therefore popularly run only in the folk societies of Aryan culture-origin. Since India is a field of rich cultural assimilation, there is a possibility of such a tradition (or traditions) running in the tribal societies of India and there remains the scope of further research. But for the interest of brevity, this aspect has not been included in this project.

In studying the different regional traditions of Ḍāk, unlike most of the authors, we preferred not to be obsessed to claim the own lingual or regional tradition nor any other one as the original one, to hold the rest as imitations. Folk societies are not merely imitative, for, what they narrate or formulate are based on their own experiences and aspirations. Similarity, even if occurs in expressions of the experiences and aspirations of two or more folk-societies that is better not to be regarded as imitations, but as similarity only. Hence it was resonably not considered necessary to look into the originality and imitations aspect of the traditions of Ḍāk in respect of the legend(s) as well as the sayings. However, striking similarities are found and have been mentioned in respect of the legend(s) and the sayings of Ḍāk amongst as good as six regional traditions namely, the Assamese, the Bengali,

the Oriya, the Maithil, the Bhojpuri and the Rajasthani tradition. While the similarities of the sayings have been shown through comparison with few Assamese sayings in each case, the similarities in the legend appear obvious by itself in each narration particularly in respect of Ḍāk's mode of birth (i.e., through a casual marriage or relationship of the parents), birth to a so-called low-caste family and in variation to a Brahmin family, filial relationship to Varahmihira, unnatural death etc. The sex-difference maintained by some regional traditions with the seemingly female names Khand, Bhaddan, Bhaddali etc., while stands negated in analysis so as to mean the same thing as the seemingly male names Ḍāk, Ḍañk, Ghāgh  etc. do, re-asserts the similarity amongst the traditions with enriched local colours. Thus it appears that the tradition of Ḍāk pervading through different regions of the northern India is basically one, but adopts some variations region-wise accommodating the local colours. The regions those bear the tradition of Ḍāk interestingly fall within one prominent cultural-belt of India in between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas known as Āryāvarta 2 from the days of yore indicating the prevalence and dominance of the Aryan culture. The other prominent cultural belt geographically falling in the southern part of India marked by the prevalence and dominance of a non-Aryan culture in general and the Dravidian culture in specific, is not aware of the tradition of Ḍāk, although it may have some other tradition alike representing the sayings of Agasti 3. Therefore, it appears clear that the

2. Barua, Anundoram: Ancient Geography of India
   Publication Board, Assam, Gauhati, 1971, P.4

3. Informant: Chandrasekharan, R.
   Reader in Tamil, Bharathiar University,
   Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, Data Collected on 27.03.87
tradition of ḍāk is the product of the Aryan culture. It is said above about the regional variations of the tradition. This kind of variations are rather the specialities or originalities of the regional traditions. These originalities can be sorted out with the help not of the common sayings but of the uncommon sayings. As for example, the following uncommon saying appears to be exclusively an Assamese saying exhibiting the originality or speciality of the Assamese tradition as well as of the Assamese culture.——

\[\text{rāgar mīṭā barāri} / \]
\[\text{jibhār mīṭā khārī} \]

— As Barārī is the best of the rāgas (i.e., the primary modes of music) so also khār or alkali is the best of the substances to eat (or vice versa).—

Because khār (Sans : kṣār) or alkali is the substance to eat, preferred by the Assamese folk-society alone for which the Assamese are called khār khowā asamiyā (the Assamese, the alkali eaters) in a light vein by themselves as well as by others. Therefore, there is the scope of further research for the enthusiast researchers to find out the most original sayings of ḍāk in each regional tradition in general and in the Assamese tradition in particular, with a view to determine the cultural originality of the community concerned besides the common Indian features shared.

In the chapter III entitled 'Search for Historicity of ḍāk', the legends' faiths holding ḍāk as an individual with various historical connections like Varahmihira's paternity, Mughal Emperor Akbar's royal patronage to him, his birth and settlement in different times and in

different places have been critically reviewed. This review has shown that the legends' faiths are nothing but mere make-belief. In view of this finding it has been established beyond doubt that Đāk is not a single individual, not to speak of a historical entity. This non-historical as well as non-individual status of Đāk assert it as a tradition formed mostly by the verbal revelations of folk wisdom although some parts of it like some agricultural and astrological sayings might have had their origin in ancient Sanskrit works. The different meanings of the word 'đāk' like 'to shout', 'to proclaim', 'the revealed wisdom' etc, coupled with the specific mode of composition and transmission of the sayings (i.e. oral) definitely prove Đāk as a tradition. The mode of composition of the sayings of Đāk has been best explained by Kunjabehari Dass to prove them as a tradition in whole, in the following terms:——

Every village has, to its credit, a number of intelligent men and women. Proverb or Dakbachan is their creation.

As the sayings are the product of a tradition spreading through a long span of time, different tastes, experiences and aspirations of the folk society led to composition of them on various subject-matters as well as different and even contradictory sayings sometimes on same subject-matters also. Along with the passage of time, new sayings are also being composed and added to the same stock but without being reduced to writing since the composers, the folk, are least worried about the authorship or the written form. Thirty nine such sayings collected by N.C. Sarma⁵ and few more by us⁷ from the Assamese

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7. Infra: Appendix
tradition are ample evidences of this feature. Thus some more such sayings may be current in some nooks and corners of the folk society where we could not reach. This may prove that the tradition of Ḍāk is still a living tradition.

Revelations of folk-wisdom in popular oral sayings is a common feature in all the folk-societies around the world. Some sayings or proverbs current in different foreign folk-societies similar in structure and sense as shown by means of comparison, convincingly establish the universality of the Ḍāk-vacanas. Further, comparison of some sayings with some of those composed by none other than the geniuses like the Greek poet Hesiod, Indian Saint Gautam Buddha etc, shows that the sayings of Ḍāk are almost similar to those authoritative literatures in content, attitude and expression although might have been composed by unknown laymen, generations after generations. The factors like unspecified author(s) and unspecified time of composition of this folk literary tradition of Ḍāk refute any idea of its historicity. There should, therefore, be no more misgivings in respect of the apparent historical and mythological references available in the legend(s) of Ḍāk that these are all along unfounded for being inapt fabrications by the folk-pysche with a view to earn popularity or sanctity to the vacanas. Other than providing some fictional pith and substances, the bogus historicity of Ḍāk intended to perpetrate by the fabricated historical and mythological references had however, very least to do with the popularity of the vacanas.

In the chapter IV entitled "The Assamese Editions of Ḍāk-vacanas" it is found that although the Ḍāk-vacanas are the verbal creations of a folk-society, in course of time they have been able to
draw the attention of the enthusiast compilers to get into print and the learned academicians to work upon them for academic interest. Besides the four such collections discussed about, there may be some more recent collections which have not brought into the discussion for want of timely publications of them. However, this may not alter our findings in the study although they deserve review.

In respect of theme, it can precisely be said that the aspirations conceived and the experiences perceived regarding the mundane life by the folk-society in terms of the world as seen are the essence of the *vacanas*. Because of the conception of aspirations and the perception of experiences being continuous processes, the composition of the sayings also is a continuous process. Hence the theme of the *vacanas* is bound to be dependent on or relating to contemporary life-pattern(s). So far the nature is concerned, the *vacanas* are generally versified statements tinged with rhetorics on occasions but not poetry in true sense. Because poetry is not the means of expression in everybody’s command. However they are full of good senses articulated in points and expression of cultural sanctions. Therefore their relevance in social life can never be in question. In respect of structure it is seen that there is no hard and fast norms. There are various structures of the *vacanas*, viz., single sentence in single line, single sentence in double lines and single sentence in multiple lines, while in the double lined *vacanas* one line sometimes may in fact carry a complete sense without warranting the second line, but only for the interest of alliteration the second line with another complete sense is added thereto. In some cases, the verse constructed by the application of alliteration is of a very superficial form and very close to prose. When the alliteration is
withdrawn the statement is rendered to simple prose. This elasticity of structure is quite conformative to the expression and artistic skill of the folk, as because they are more concerned to content than to form.

As oral literature, the Dak-vacanas are not the testimony of a dead past alone, but also the portrayal of a contemporary life with a view to the future. With all the recognised features such as multiplicity of versions, orality, anonymity, and traditionality as analysed, the Dak-vacanas are oral literature per se, one of the most important genre of folklore. As an outcome of a continuous process, all the sayings are not equally old. Because of the changes occurring in the social life some of the old vacanas loosing their relevance might have lost their currency also in oral transmission and thus gone out of the stock. But those preserved in written tradition are only being preserved and have become irrelevant appearing now only to be the testimony of a dead past. On the other hand some new vacanas are being composed to suit the incoming changes and all such new vacanas may not be found in the manuscripts, but on the oral transmission. It can, therefore, quite reasonably be concluded that no manuscript is, nor any collection of Dak-vacanas will be quantitatively complete or authentic for all time to come.

In part II, three chapters viz., chapters no. V, VI and VII respectively have been devoted to content analysis of the Assamese Dak-vacanas with a view to have a glimpse of the cultural past of the Assamese folk life. From the discussion of "Socio - Political and Religious life as reflected in the Dak-vacanas" (Ch. V) it is evident that hardly any of the life patterns as portrayed in the Dak-vacanas exists as it is today
although the social life may be seen bearing some legacies. For example, the features of social life like casteist considerations, strictures on women, the highest possible dependence on agriculture as the basis of economy etc, although have much gone on considerable relaxations, still not totally extinct so far the folk society is concerned and their legacies are still perceptible. On the other hand the religious and political features like unireligious pattern of the society, the king-centric polity etc, are totally extinct long back. It can therefore be concluded that the portrayal of socio-political and religious life in the *Dāk-vacanas*, as of a long past, stands today only faintly relevant. The differences better be regarded as changes and not as deviations since nothing can be a set standard for good. The changes can well indicate the improvements taken place in the said life-patterns of the Assamese folk-life along with the exterior influences there upon, thus providing a scope of another research for any enthusiast researcher.

Astrology, one of the principal concerns of the *Dāk-vacanas* has been discussed together with belief, folk-medicine and folk-cookery in ch.VI entitled "Astrology, Beliefs, Folk-medicine and Folk-cookery as reflected in the *Dāk-vacanas*.". It transpired from the study on Astrology dealt in the *Dāk-vacanas* that this astrology is not strictly the scientific astrology or scriptural astrology, rather it is the astrology lowered down to the folk level for which it may appropriately be called 'folk astrology'. It has some footing on the running beliefs of the folk. This observation along with the interest of brevity has motivated us to present the discussion on astrology together with those of the beliefs and etc. Although for clubbing so many things together in one chapter the endeavour bears the apprehension of being something like *killing*
an elephant and putting the carcase in a basket, as the saying goes, still utmost care has been taken to see that none of the matters remain incomplete. It must be admitted that the Astrology part of the Dāk-vacanas as a science content is marked by inadequacies and loopholes while the baffling contradictions have sometimes made it disgusting as well as confusing. Folk - medicine as manifested in the Dak-vacanas reveal the interest of experiment as well as the progressive attitude of the concerned folk. Folk-cookery also likewise exhibits the interest of experiment concerning the dietary delicacies of a rural folk revealing the fact that food instead of taking for mere survival was rather raised to the level of an art. The dietary delicacies are marked with graceful simplicity. Practices regarding both medicine and cookery exhibit the people's knowledge about and dependence on Nature.

Chapter VII entitled "Men and Women as reflected in the Dāk-vacanas" deals with the social position accorded to men and women by the folk attitude in the Dāk-vacanas. It is seen in the chapter that while the vacanas upheld discriminatory views professing strictures on women, one concerned legend on the other hand counters it upholding women's status belittling that of the men's with perceptible disdain. This indicates of a social conflict between the two sexes emanating from a social transformation from matrilinacy to patriliney and its consequences.

In part III, Ch.VIII entitled 'Social Functions of the Dāk-vacanas' surveys the functions served by the Dāk-vacanas. The chapter asserts that beyond their hey - day, the Dāk-vacanas are still functioning as
useful implements of folk life in many respects and therefore they have not lost their relevances at all even in changed situation.

The Tradition and Its Concern:

The tradition of Դակ  being a product of an agrarian folk society survives lively in such a society only and reflects the tastes, experiences, aspirations, ethos and ideas and above all the life-style of an agrarian folk society only. Besides that, it is almost unaware of a modern city-life or an industrial society.

The tradition as a living tradition as on one hand running its own race in the concerned society, so also facing its obstacles in changed situation. With progress of education, expansion of scientific thinking, easy availability of technological service and fast industrialisation resulting in detraction to tradition, the ground is gradually turning infertile for the tradition to flourish in the manner as it was upto half a century ago. Moreover, the aspirations and the taste of the society are also bound to undergo change as result of progress in different respects. Hence, difference in attitude might be seen between the age-old sayings and the recent ones. But, as a tradition is hard to die without revolutionary changes the tradition of Դակ  also on evolutionary course will continue to survive with new style and carrying in new aspirations of the folk society concerned.
Utility of the Study:

The study has set to rest all the running controversies about the author of the Dak-vacanas helping to understand the vacanas in their true perspective. Particularly the confusing mystery behind the creation of different legends even in a single tradition, the mystery behind the incongruities between the spirit of the vacanas and a certain legend concerning Dak’s birth which tells of Varahmihira’s defeat to Dak in verbal dual establishing the mother-right, have been resolved to a convincing conclusion. Now as a result of the study, Dak being credibly established as a folk-tradition born out of social experiences instead of an individual author, the Dak-vacanas as well as the concerned legends can be regarded as source materials of social history of the concerned communities in the way it has been shown through content analysis in part II of the study.

The study helps to understand the world view of our past generations as the foundation of our cultural heritage. Moreover it will certainly help to widen the mental horizon of the coming generations of the regions concerned imbuing with the sense of cultural homogenity to the neighbouring communities since the tradition of Dak is not limited to one community alone inhabiting in one particular state of India. By trying to effectively infuse this sense of cultural homogenity amongst the communities inhabiting in different states of India in general and the northern India in particular, since the tradition of Dak is pervading through the States from Rajasthan to Assam with all those in between (Ref. Ch. II), the present-day academicians, the political and the cultural activists will be able to contribute a lot to the cause of national integrity of India.