As a student of literature I got deeply interested in folk literature in general and in the $\text{Dāk-vacanas}$ in particular since my studenthood. Having read the $\text{Dāk-vacanas}$ in the book $\text{Dākar-Vacan}$ edited by D. Dutta while I was a college student, I got surprised in respect of its variety of subject-matters and more particularly to the down-to-earth nature of the $\text{vacanas}$. Certainly the mistaken, but a reasonably mistaken proposition of the single individuality of the author in simple reading at the first instance was the reason of my exclamatic interest in the subject-matter. Because, I was wondered by the gamut of knowledge of the author that revealed through the $\text{vacanas}$. Further, two other mistaken presumptions namely, the astrological sayings as the short-cut means of learning astrology and the sayings about men and women as the easiest way of understanding the complexities of human characters, of course without caring to the attitudes upheld, were the other reasons of my amateurish interest in the $\text{vacanas}$. Moreover, seeing the frequent use of the $\text{vacanas}$ by the rural folk in their day-to-day parlance, I began to realise their impact in our socio-cultural life. Till then I scented no mystery in their authorship. But the data subsequently found about the $\text{Dāk-vacanas}$ that these are prevailing in almost all the regional languages of the northern belt of India, the currency of the similar if not of the same legend (s) about $\text{Dāk}$ in all those areas and over and above $\text{Dāk}$ being claimed by each of the concerned regional lingual traditions as their own poet had convinced me that there was a great mystery about $\text{Dāk}$ awaiting its resolution.
However, two national seminars organised by the Centre for Literary and Cultural Studies (C.L.C.S.), North Eastern Hill University (N.E.H.U.), Shillong, in 1986 and 1987 on the themes respectively "Women in Literature" and "Folklore, Language and Literature of Eastern and North-Eastern India" and one eleven-day Workshop in Folkloristics organised by the same centre in collaboration with the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore, in 1988 in which I also participated, had further deepened my interest in the discipline as well as in the specific subject-matter. Because, the appreciation I received for the two seminar-papers entitled respectively "Women as projected in the maxims of Đāk"(1986) and "A critical study on the Legend of Đāk"(1987) had really enthused me to carry on a methodical research on the subject.

Before formally undertaking this research project, carrying on some fieldwork on my own, I collected some relevant data which I passed to Dr. N.C. Sarma to make use of these in his forthcoming Assamese book Đāk-Pravacan, as I was sure that this book was going to be of immense help to me. Dr. Sarma, the author, who subsequently turned out to be my supervisor in this research work had duly acknowledged my contribution in his book. The same data along with the others subsequently collected have been made use of in this work too. Amongst the informants, I tried to include people from different walks of life like academician, astrologer, physician, farmer, old-aged house-wife, artist of the ojāpāli folk-art etc. to procure variety of information as the subject demands.

By way of reference it may be mentioned that the above said seminar paper entitled "Women as projected in the maxims of Đāk" with slight modifications has been incorporated as a portion of the chapter VII entitled "Men and Women as Reflected in the Đāk-vacanas" of this
work. The other seminar paper entitled "A Critical Study on the Legend of $Dāk$" although has not been incorporated as such for want of scope, the contentions have been made use of while analysing the tradition of $Dāk$ in the chapter II. Likewise, the chapter VIII entitled "Social Functions of the $Dāk$-vacanas" is also a slightly modified form of a seminar paper under the name "Social Functions of $Dākar$ vacan" presented by me in a departmental seminar held in the Department of Folklore Research, G.U. in June, 1995. Thus I can humbly say that before completion of this work, few portions of it had already reached some readers or audiences. I feel gratified to think that the complete work now will satisfy all my readers.

I do solemnly declare that the study has been carried out purely on academic interest and with no motive to eulogise or underestimate anything in excess. Further, the study has been carried out on my own endeavour and convictions although it was tried in utmost to be objective in attitude. The completeness of the study is only relative in nature since there remains scope of further studies in areas as indicated in the chapter IX entitled "Concluding Remarks". I do sincerely hope that this will be done by some efficient scholar in some convenient time.

Acknowledgement:

I sincerely feel myself under deep obligation to acknowledge the help and advices offered to me by few persons who contributed in a great deal in completion of the work.

First of all it is my reverend Dr. N.C. Sarma, Professor and former Head of the Department of Folklore Research, G.U., who, besides
supervising my work remained the never-ending source of my inspiration. I can never, really never forget his stance as the true friend, philosopher and guide. Other than providing me with his personal books and journals, he continued to pour the showers of inspiration on me while I myself appeared apprehensive of the work remaining incomplete for my health-hazards on repeatedly being caught by typhoid after ankylosing spondylosis and in many other crisis. His hospitality while at his home also needs a special mention. I feel, amongst many odds, it was my fortune to get him as my supervisor. I have no hesitation to admit that without his able guidance this endeavour of mine would perhaps have remained a blind alley. In fact I suffer from want of adequate words to acknowledge his invaluable guidance and affection to me.

My sincere acknowledgements are also due to Dr. Soumen Sen, Director, Centre for Literary and Cultural Studies, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, for first infusing in me the interest of research particularly in this subject by compelling me to prepare the seminar paper ('Women as projected in the maxims of Ḍāk') for the seminar on 'Women in Literature' in 1986 while I was there in St. Edmund's College, Shillong. Had he not been so compelling me, I am afraid, if I would have opted for this subject. I therefore offer my sincere gratitude to him.

I am also thankful to Dr. Kishore Kumar Bhattacharyya, the present Head of the Department of Folklore Research, G.U., for his fruitful advices and inspiring gestures which he kept on offering me in different occasions.

I have got a real friend other than a colleague in Prof. Sarangadhar Baral, Head of the Department of English in my college who appeared to me as an aid in adversity. Spending a lot of his valuable time and exhibiting a great deal of patience, Prof. Baral had rendered the Oriya book Bruhat
Khanā Vacana Bā Ḍākrusi Vacana into prosaic English alongwith discussing it with me which appeared indispensable for my want of knowledge of the Oriya script and the language as well. Moreover, he is the man who brought me the two books of Oriya sayings of Khanā (or Ḍāk) all the way from Puri. I really feel hesitant to articulate any word of acknowledgement for him lest be inadequate. Therefore, I earnestly pray that boundless blessings of Lord Jagannatha be showered on this magnanimous gentleman and his family.

I am bound by the bond of gratitude to my reverend Principal Mr. L. Talukdar who enjoys helping one in need trying for any achievement and for remaining so to me also with his outstanding inspiring gestures. Dr. K.B. Deka, my erstwhile teacher and now colleague also has kept me bound in gratitude for the relevant academic informations and fruitful discussions he provided to me in many occasions. I would further like to offer my sincere thanks to my erstwhile classmates and well-wisher friends Dr. Pradip Kr. Das, Principal i/c, Rangapara College, Rangapara (Darrang); Mr. Putul Ch. Sarma, Head of the Department of Assamese, Dimoria College, Ksetri (Kamrup), my erstwhile colleagues and friends Mr. Biren Bhuyan and Mrs. Minati Bhuyan Choudhury, Lecturers of Dudhnoi College, Dudhnoi (Goalpara) for their constant inspiration and to all my departmental collegues for their active help and sympathetic gestures while I was in need. My younger brother Dipesh Ch. Bhagabati, Lecturer in Education, Tihu College, Tihu also deserves my thanks for the trouble he took in fetching me a necessary book all the way from Calcutta while I was unable to move.

This note of acknowledgement would remain incomplete without the specific mention of my valued informants. I remain indebted to all of
them for the invaluable data I was provided with by them which help this work in attaining some originality. I can only pray the almighty to bestow them with peace and prosperity. My special gratitude goes to late Dr. B.C. Acharya, Professor, Department of Oriya, Sambalpur University, Orissa, and to Professor Dilip Kr. Sarma, Department of Mathematics, Cotton College, Guwahati, for responding me by letters in respect of certain information I sought in spite of having no personal acquaintance with me. Those were the gestures I will cherish in the core of my heart for long.

Regret:

With heavy heart, I express my regret for the inability to complete this work before four of my valued informants respectively Dr. B.C. Acharya (Sambalpur, Orissa), Sri Surendra Nath Sarma (Bali), Sri Dwarika Nath Sarma (Barbila) and Sjta Mahindri Devi (Bamunkuchi) had left this world, who certainly would have liked to learn the completion of this work of mine.

May their souls rest in peace.

15.12.2000

(Jyotish Bhagabati)