CHAPTER III

SEARCH FOR HISTORICITY OF ḌĀK

I. Ḍāk as a Non-historical Entity:

It has already been extensively discussed regarding the currency of the maxims of Ḍāk in different regions of the northern belt of India in the preceding chapter. Despite the differences in the names and in the sexes also somewhere, even if they being the result of local variations and etymological errors respectively, the folk concepts point out to a similar oracle in each case as the source of the sayings and we ventured to equalise them all with the Assamese Ḍāk. Again, it has been shown that Ḍāk very appropriately means 'sayings of the wise', 'knowledge revealed by the learneds' or 'loud proclamations' etc. instead of an individual and hence the Ḍāk-vacanas are rather impersonal sayings than individual compositions. But for Ḍāk being given to believe howsoever superficially as an individual and as Varahmihira's son, seem to be forceful factors in the projection of his so-called historical entity.

Varahmihira is very much a historical person who flourished as a giant in the fields of astronomy and astrology during the sixth century A.D.\(^1\). It is of course needless to say that the literary tradition namely that Varahmihira was one of the nine jewels in the court of Vikramaditya is merely a fiction\(^2\), for, king Vikramaditya of Indian tradition is unknown to genuine history\(^3\). This Varahmihira being associated to Ḍāk in filial relationship has given rise to the confusion about Ḍāk's entity which apparently may seem historical. It has already been

discussed that in almost all the regional folklore tradition of the northern belt of India except those of Bengal and Orissa, Varahmihira happens to be the father of ḍāk. Somewhere he was on pilgrimage, somewhere on the move to his home to beget a son at an auspicious moment, but stranded on the midway for want of time and the son born of an irregular marriage or an illicit relationship with a stranger woman. The episode hardly bears historical credibility, because the same Varahmihira could not have gone all the way from Assam to Rajasthan giving birth to one son in each of the provinces. But the popular traditions of almost all the provinces of the region claiming the same thing have reduced it to a mere make-belief.

History recognises only one son of Varahmihira whose name was Prthuyasās. Therefore ḍāk is neither recognised as an astrologer immediately succeeding Varahmihira nor as his son by the history.

The works on astrology by Varahmihira and his son Prthuyasa (and thus of all his contemporaries) are written in Sanskrit. That shows that, by then, Sanskrit was hailed as the only dignified language to deal with the subjects like astrology etc. But the languages in which the ḍāk-vacanas are found in different regions are not Sanskrit but of later origin and called regional languages of the NIA (Neo Indo Aryan) group viz., Assamese, Bengali, Oriya, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Rajasthani etc. If ḍāk were a son of Varahmihira even though unrecognised, his works (i.e., the sayings or the maxims) would have been written in Sanskrit because of the taste of the time and the demand of the subject matter. Moreover, the composition of the sayings in more than one regional language stands against the historicity of its author. Therefore, ḍāk can not be the son of Varahmihira as claimed in the various popular traditions and as such he cannot be a historical personage.

4. Dandekar, R. N.: op-cit, P. 148
5. Sircar, D.C.: op-cit, P. 163
Like the attempt of associating Dāk with Varahmihira, the attempt of associating him with the Mughal Emperors Humayun and Akbar current in the North Western provinces of India is also thoroughly fictitious.⁶ Therefore, the statement that Ghāgh earned high regards in the Dorbār of Akbar⁷ can not be accepted as historically true. Moreover, holding the same person as the son of Varahmihira⁸ who had to emerge during the 6th century A.D. and to have received the patronage of the Mughal Emperor Akbar during the 16th century (1542 - 1605 A.D.), spanning the time of his survival around one thousand years can be nothing but absurd speculation. A historical personage can not have so much inconsistent fabrication about his existence.

Again Varahmihira, the historical personage, has been split into two different entities in the Bengali and the Oriya folklore traditions. There Varāha is the father and Mihir is the son. Mihir married Khanā. Although Mihir is said to have been an astrologer of repute, Khanā has been given more weightage as an astrologer. Even the sayings have been named after her as Khanā-vacan and not after Mihir. Thus Varāha has been associated as a father-in-law of a female astrologer and not as a father of a male astrologer unlike the other traditions.

It has already been mentioned⁸(a) that the alternative name used to mean the sayings of Khanā as Dākruṣī Vacan shows that Khanā is synonymous to Dāk in the Oriya tradition. In respect of the Bengali tradition also it can be said that both Dāk and Khanā are identical. Rightly does observe D.C. Sircar:

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6. Supra: Chapter II
7. Tripathi, R. N.: Ghāgh aṣṭa Bhadḍarī, P. 20
8. Ibid: P. 8 (kindly see the opinion of Pandit Kapileswar Jha)
8.(a) Supra, chapter II
the sayings were originally assigned to a single astrologer (i.e., Dak) but that were divided between two of them only after the development of distinct legends regarding the latter (i.e., Khana)

As such Varāha cannot be the father-in-law of Ḍakā.

Apart from hailing Ḍak (Ḍaṅk) as the son of Varahmihira the Rajasthani tradition says that he flourished as a sound mathematician in the age of king Pariksita of the Mahabharata fame and married Savitri alias Bhaddali, the daughter of the great physician Dhanvantari. The contemporaneity of Pariksita, Dhanvantari and Varahmihira is not at all trustworthy.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore Ḍak is not a historical being.

In each of the regional popular traditions, the community of Ṛiṅk has been mentioned. He has been attributed to different communities in different traditions and sometimes to multiple communities in a single tradition also. As for example, the Assamese tradition in whole speaks of three communities of Ṛiṅk, namely, Potterman, Brahmin and Milkman\textsuperscript{11}. These inconsistencies also definitely go against the historicity of Ṛiṅk.

Likewise, the death of Ṛiṅk as per the legends' contention is also a notable factor. According to the Assamese tradition itself there are three legends telling about Ṛiṅk's death as occurring in his different ages and in different ways\textsuperscript{12}

The varied beliefs about Ṛiṅk's birth, community, life-span and

\begin{itemize}
\item [9.] Sircar, D. C.: op-cit, P. 161
\item [10.] Ibid : P. 164
\item [11.] Supra: Chapter – II
\item [12.] Sarma, N.C.: Ṛiṅk-Pravacan, Pp. 95-96
\end{itemize}
the different incidents leading to his death, Varahmihiras paternity and the relative modernity of the language of the sayings, uncertainty of his time of emergence, reckless repetitions and sometimes contradictions of the sayings, the various literal meanings of the word ḍāk are enough of impediments to establish ḍāk as a historical personage. Rather they help on the other hand to establish ḍāk as a tradition.

II. ḍāk as a Tradition:

In the above discussion it could be ascertained that ḍāk is not a historical personage. Composition of the maxims in different regional languages, difference of the texture of the sayings in different languages, difference in observation of different phenomena whether natural, agricultural or of human kind and varied suggestions about the mundane interests of life (even within the sayings of the same language) force to hold that ḍāk is not even an individual author.

It has been mentioned before\textsuperscript{13} that the subject matter of the sayings of ḍāk is of highly mundane interest. A prosperous and happy material life is basically the thriving goal of them.

Agriculture having happened to be the backbone of Indian economy, the possibility of a prosperous life had always been dependant on it since time immemorial. Ram Naresh Tripathi has quoted few ślokas from the Parāśara Sūnīhitā which eulogised agriculture as a means of livelihood. Two of them are cited here for example::

\textsuperscript{13} Supra : Chapter II
(a) *suvarṇaroupya mānikya basanārapiṇītāh /
tathāpi prārthaneyeva kṛṣakān bhuktā tṛṣṇāyā //

—The people rich in gold, silver, jewels and cloths etc. are to pray the farmers for consumable goods in hunger and thirst.—

(b) *annam tu dhānya sambhutam dhānyam
kṛṣayā bīna na ca /
tasmātsarvamparityājya kṛṣim yatnena kārayet //

—Eatables are produced from rice, rice is not produced without agriculture, therefore agriculture is to be pursued with all efforts leaving the others things behind14.

The practice of agriculture is very old among the Hindus and in India as well. Therefore it is natural that the experiences about agriculture is also quite old among them. The experiences thus gained from the practical field were expressed in small vernacular verses and were circulated through the lips of the farmers. This treasure of the farmers has been rolling down as a rich heritage through generation after generation.

In a country like India agriculture was and still to a large extent is dependent on rain. For the well-being of agriculture it was highly necessary to have a premonition of weather and the rural farmers irrespective of their formal education, could gather this most useful knowledge by experience of nature-study. They could predict the weather by observing different natural phenomena. The behaviour of

different creatures both domestic and wild, the indication of the wind blowing and the colour of the sky at a certain time are some of the indicators depending on which the farmers predict the weather and the predictions come true. In course of field work we met an Assamese farmer who emphatically claimed that he could predict rain more than six months ahead watching the nature of fog-falling in the preceding winter. According to him, the sky surely pours down after one hundred and eighty nine days (na kuri na din) of fog-falling. The intensity of rain occurs as per the intensity of fog-falling on the corresponding day (i.e., the day one hundred and eighty nine days before). He said that for few consecutive years he had kept records of the days of fog-falling and depending on that calculated beforehand the days of heavy rain to facilitate the sowing of grains for seedlings (kathiya) and that calculation invariably came true. But on being asked he said that he could not recollect wherefrom he learned this arithmetic. Simply he guessed that it was learnt from some elderly people. Although wonderful, still it is not unique so to say. According to the farmer folk of the northern and western provinces of India, the gestation period of rain is of one hundred and ninety six days in between the months of poṣ-māgh and sāwan-bhād portended by some certain atmospheric phenomena.

Therefore nature observation in quest of an unmistakable knowledge of weather is one of the principal features of the rural farmers not only in India but also elsewhere. 'Weather proverbs' found in the English literature are ample evidences of the practice current in the

15. Tripathi, R.N. : op-cit. P. 6
17. Tripathi, R.N. : op-cit. Pp. 6-7
western world. This observation of nature and its findings are expressed in small versified compositions and very often they are expressed for the benefit of the entire society. It is not at all important who has composed a saying, but the all important thing is what does it say and whom it is meant for. Thus a tradition had been set long past and still is being operative usefully. Because of the feature of their composition and transmission, the 'orality', they are called *sayings* or *vacanas* although may be reduced to writing later on. Every society has such kind of sayings of their own, may be similar in nature to a great extent to those of their adjoining societies. The sayings of Ḫāk are the compositions of this type of sayings.

Agriculture mostly depends on the favourable condition of weather. Again the favourable condition of weather is calculated through the help of astrology particularly in the society of non-elite rural folk. Because the weather factors like rain, flood, draught and wind etc are believed to be the results of the influences of the planets (*grahas*), stars (*nakṣatras*), rāśis and days (*tithis*) etc. In a round about way therefore, astrology, however rudimentary might be in standard has crept into folk agriculture-science to an intense degree. For this reason the people used to watch nature with an astrological inquisitiveness and upon the same findings coming repeatedly many sayings were composed upon these. Some of such sayings are available as the sayings of Ḫāk. Some of such sayings may be mentioned from the Assamese sayings of Ḫāk.

(a)  

\[ \text{āśūdhāḥ navami śukla pākṣat /} \\
\text{yadi nabarise bhūmi talat //} \\
\text{hāl tul beci cintiyō deva /} \\
\text{rāj gṛhat kariyo seva //}^{18} \]

—If it does not rain on the ninth day of the bright fortnight of the āsāḍḥa month, think of God by dispossing off the plough and the scale (implements of cultivation and business) and get into royal service (for survival) —

(ii) 
cajtrar caturṛddāśi yadi sama tul /
ḍāke bole barṣā howe bahul //

—If there occurs two fourteenth days of the same fortnight (either bright or dark) Ḍāk says that there will be sufficient rain in that year.—

R.N.Tripathi also mentions two such sayings of Ḍāk emphatically authenticating their unfailing truths from his personal experiences. Equipped with these experiences it is speculated that in thousands of years the same things might have occurred several times and the experiences getting engraved in the folk psyche led to the composition of the sayings. Thus astrology, rather folk astrology as a supplementary to meteorology had been inevitably related to agriculture as an auxiliary branch of knowledge for its furtherance. Since agriculture carries behind it an wonderfully rich tradition, addition of astrology to it only enriched and widened the same with novelties. Of course, here we need to examine the tradition behind agriculture.

Agriculture has been a very old traditional profession in India and the very basis of the Indian economy. Therefore not only the

19. Ibid : P. 44, maxim -12
   (i)  śukrabāṛi bādarī, rahe ṣānicar chāy/
        ḍāṅk kahe sunu bhaddarī bin barase nā jāy//
   (ii) maṅgalbāṛi hoy diwāṛi/
        hāṣaj kīsān rowāṛi bepāṛi//
uneducated farmers but even the learned saints like Parasara also put their efforts for improvement of it. Different aspects of agriculture have been discoursed in ślokas by the learned saints who could not even be believed to have been actively involved in agricultural activities. It was only an effort on their part to make well aware the new entrants to the profession like a training course. Tripathi mentions few ślokas composed by Parasara from the Vācaspati kośa\textsuperscript{21} the translated texts of which are given below:

\begin{align*}
\text{īsā (harīs : dilāmārī), juwā (juwāli) hala-sthānu (nāmal - kudh), niryol (phāl), rāśikā (dāwo), aḍḍacalla (pācar), śail (śalmārī) and paccani (pācan jari)} - these eight are the parts of a plough. The īsā should be of five hands length, two and half hands hala-sthānu, one and half hands niryol and the juwā should be on the exact height of the shoulders of the bullocks. Niryol, rāśikā and aḍḍacalla, these three parts should be of twelve fingers measure (each) and the sails should be three times of that measure i.e., one hand length. The pācar (dākurā) should be of nine or twelve and half a fists length made of matured bamboo and an iron point fixed at the head of it. In the middle of the juwā there should be round cut structure of fifteen fingers length and breadth. The juwā should be of four hands length and the paccani should be of five hands length. The niryol (phāl) is of one hand
\end{align*}

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid : Pp. 3-5 (Ślokas,1-10)
five fingers or one hand length and the *pāśika* is of nine fingers length equal to that of a leaf of *madār*.

Again, the *biddhak* (the weeder) is of twenty one nails. The *hemgā* (*maj*: the leveller) of nine hands length is good for the purpose. These are the implements of plough according to Parasara. The farmer who possesses these implements his well being is sure. The *kudh* (*halasthānu*) is of forty eight fingers length; out of these forty eight fingers below the hole of the *īsā* (*dilāmāri*) there remains sixteen fingers and above the hole twenty six fingers where the *īsā* stands.

Thus few more *slokas* of the same nature have been quoted in the book. About the measurements of the various agricultural implements discoursed in the *slokas*, the author comments that if it is noticed among the rural farmers it would be seen that they are quite as per the advices of Parasara. Parasara further said about the appropriate time of ploughing and sowing which later on have come to being in local language as the sayings of *Ḍāk* or *Ghāgh* with a little variation of time, so far the name of the months are concerned. It is but agreeable that due to the motion of the earth, the seasons are also advancing in time, hence the variations of time between the sayings of *Ḍāk* or *Ghāgh* and the Sanskrit *slokas* of Parasara in regard to ploughing and sowing are plausible.

22. Ibid : p. 5
23. Ibid : P. 6
24. Ibid : Pp. 5-6
Therefore, it appears that composition of sayings about agriculture in the form of ślokas is a very age-old tradition in India. For the inconveniences arising out of unintelligibility of Sanskrit to the farmers of the succeeding ages, the process had to shift to the intelligible local languages (vernaculars) resulting in composition of the sayings or vacanas even by the farmers or the people of lower intellectual order only on the strength of their practical experiences paving the way for incorporation of innovations. This transmission of knowledge and incorporation of innovations were definitely not the task of any single individual, for, a tradition does not rest on any single individual. Thus the tradition was set and we believe that this incorporation of innovations has kept the tradition alive. As such, it was not restricted to only Parasara and his contemporary scholars. Tradition does not mean a blind adherence to the ways of the past, rather it offers a great place to conformative novelty against insipid repetition.25

It is known that Parasara had once discoursed about the appropriate measurement of different agricultural implements. Much later when some other household implements were felt equally necessary some sayings in the same line had been composed in the Assamese tradition of Ḍāk eg.,

\[
\begin{align*}
dui \ hât & \ dui \ mûthi \ korar \ nāl/ \\
bukar \ samān \ tokan \ dāl/ & \\
bātelir \ muriā \ hajbo \ ek \ mûthi / \\
cācar \ nāl \ karā \ cay \ mûthi / & \\
\end{align*}
\]

— The handle of a spade is of two hand and two fist length, a stick is of the chest height. The handle of a chisel is of one fist length and handle of an adze is to be done six fist. One hand and one fist is the handle of an axe, the handle of a dao is to be made of the root of a mango tree, the rest is to throw off keeping only two fist length thereof and the handle is to be fixed decently. —

But there are multiple versions speaking about different implements as well as different measurements of the same implements. This variation of text with varied contentions indicates that the saying of Dak are not the composition of any single individual author nor mere immitative works, rather the product of a tradition, variations being their originality. The innovations are the marks of dynamism.

It is seen in the text of the sayings of Dak that there are reckless repetitions. It is also seen that while the meanings appear same in the repetitions, the literal structures are not the identical ones. This kind of repetitions also show that the sayings of Dak are not the composition of any single individual. Had they been so, they would have been systematic, i.e., devoid of useless repetitions. Therefore, it can be said that the sayings of Dak are but the casual writing of the oral sayings of various people. So it would not be illogical if we say that Dak is not a historical being, but is a tradition.

27. Sarma: Loc-cit. (kindly see the texts of the manuscripts kha & cha respectively presented in the foot-notes.)
III. The Meaning of the term दाक :

महत्वपूर्ण शब्द दाक का अर्थ किस प्रकार से होता है?

दाक, गंगा, खाना, क्षेत्री, भज्जार, भाद्दर, भज्जालीमात्र ये समानार्थक हैं जिन्हें दाक के नाम से सम्बन्धित किया जाता है। दाक शब्द उन लोगों के लिए भी महत्वपूर्ण हैं जिन्हें अपनी ध्वनि और उच्चारण के लिए दाक का नाम दिया गया है।

दाक शब्द का महत्व क्या है?

दाक शब्द का संदर्भ रूप से उल्लिखित नहीं किया गया है। हालांकि, इसका स्थानीय समाज में दाक शब्द का संदर्भ रूप से उल्लिखित नहीं किया गया है। हालांकि, इसका स्थानीय समाज में दाक शब्द का संदर्भ रूप से उल्लिखित नहीं किया गया है। इसका स्थानीय समाज में दाक शब्द का संदर्भ रूप से उल्लिखित नहीं किया गया है।
In Sanskrit दक means 'sound'. One who makes 'sound' is दक or one who proclaims is दक. An omniscient who can predict the future is दक-पुरुषा. Therefore, the compound word दक पुरुषा is used as an adjective only and not as a noun.

The word दक can have some connection with the word दरिक. From the linguistic point of view, the word दक may have developed from दरिक. In Rajasthani language, दरिक means an astrologer. In Bengal also दरिक is famous as an astrologer. Even in Assam too, astrology is one of the principal domains of the sayings of दरिक. Therefore, the proclamations or the sayings of an astrologer or दरिक (or दक) are the sayings of दरिक or दरिक-प्रवचन.

In Tibetan language the meaning of दक is knowledge. Therefore, the meaning of the sayings of दक is 'learned sayings' or the sayings of the learned.

The word दरिक or दक may have some connection with the word दर्मका. दर्मका means a drum. Of course it is difficult to ascertain any direct relation between दर्मका and दक. But in ancient and mediavel India proclamations were made by beatings of drums. Therefore, the sayings which were proclaimed amongst the people either by the beatings of drums or by any means might be the sayings of दक.

The word खना or खोना might be derived from the Sanskrit word खसनादा. खसनादा means 'an astrologer '. खना is said to be the प्राकृत form of खसनादा although the development has also been explained otherwise. According to N.C.Sarma खना or खोना is the

32. Sarma: Loc-cit
33. Ibid: Pp. 192-193
34. Sarma, S.N: Assamīyā Sāhityar Samīkṣātmaka Itibētta. P. 53
N.I.A. (Neo - Indo - Aryan) lingual form of the word (*ksañada*) which was previously *khana* in the *prākṛta* form. Whatsoever, *khana* (or *khonā*) then meaning an astrologer, could not be the name of any single individual person. Rather it meant the whole class of astrologers. Rightly does observe D.C. sircar: "...there is reason to believe that *Dāk* and *Khanā* could not have been personal names."39

Likewise, the word *Ghāgh* has been explained in a Hindi dictionary as "a very clever man", "cunning" etc.40 Here also the word "*Ghāgh*" has not been used as a proper name or noun, but as an adjective only. The meaning of *Dāk* is also "wise man". Although there is difference from the view point of phonetic structure, nevertheless there is similarity from the view point of meaning between the two terms.

The corresponding relationship among the three (apparently) nominative words *Bhadḍar*, *Bhaḍḍari* and *Bhāḍ* can not be denied. The word *Bhāḍ* is quite possible to have developed from the word *Bhaḍḍar* which again might be a distorted form of the Sanskrit word *bhadra* meaning "a distinguished man", "gentleman", "learned man" etc.41 The well-acquainted name in Uttar Pradesh, *Ghāgh*, is well known in Bihar by some other names like *Dāk*, *Khonā*, *Bhāḍ* etc.42 *Bhāḍur* is a synonym of *Bhaḍḍar*. The currency of the word *Bhaḍḍar* or *Bhāḍur* is seen in the Hindi speaking area to indicate a low-caste Brahmin community. The people of this community predict the influences of the planets (*grahaphal*) and accepts the offerings made to the planets. They also calculate the portents. *Bhaḍḍari* is only an

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39. Sircar : Loc-cit
40. Bhārgav Ādarsā Hindi Šabdakoṣ : Quoted by N.C. Sarma in *Dāk-Pravacan*, P.193
41. Sarma, N.C. : op-cit, P. 194
42. Tripathi, R.N. : op-cit, P. 26
43. Bhārgav Ādarsā Hindi Šabdakoṣ : Quoted by N.C. Sarma in *Dāk-Pravacan*, P. 194
extended form of the word *Bhadḍar*. Both the words *bhāḍḍar* and *Bhadḍari* indicate a community professing on astrology\(^4^4\).

*Dāṅk* and his wife *Bhadḍali*, the couple as said in the legend current in the Rajasthani tradition may remind us of the couple of *Khanā* and *Mihir* as said in the legends current in Bengal and Orissa. Both *Dāṅk* and *Bhadḍali* were astrologers. Likewise both *Khanā* and *Mihir* were also astrologers. The word *Bhadḍali* means a community of astrologers inhabiting in Rajasthan. Therefore, *Khanā* and *Bhaddali* or *Bhadḍari* are not feminine words, but masculine ones, and the two have openly been being used to mean astrologers. It has been mentioned above\(^4^5\) that the folk mind has imagined them as females because of an etymological error and both of them have been shown to get married to *Mihir* and *Dāṅk* respectively \(^4^6\). It can therefore easily be inferred that *Dāṅk, Bhadḍari, Dāṅk, Khanā, Mihir* etc. are entirely based on legends. These characters infact have no connection to historical reality.

From the above discussion it appears that the similarity of the meanings of the words *Dāṅk, Khanā, Ghāgh, Bhadḍar, Bhāḍ, Bhaddari, Bhaddali* and *Dāṅk* are clear enough. It can be presumed that these words were in fact used to mean 'an astrologer' or 'astrologers'.

**IV. *Dāṅk-vacanas* as Folk-wisdom:**

While *Dāṅk* means an astrologer or astrologers, the *Dāṅk-vacanas* from its very name should have meant the astrological sayings only and that too should have been very much scriptural. But in reality, they are not only scriptural astrological sayings. Apart from folk astrology, the *vacanas* discourse about agriculture, weather, medicine,

\(^{44}\) Sarnia, N.C.: op-cit, P. 194

\(^{45}\) Supra: Chapter II

\(^{46}\) Sircar, D.C.: op-cit, Pp. 164-165
food and culinary matters, auspicious and ominous portents of a move (i.e., yātrā), good and bad inherent in physical structure of men and women, characters of men and women, religion, law and justice, politics, ethics, tips for setting a home etc. and many other things. Moreover, there are more or less difference of weightage of the themes in different regional traditions. Looking at the subject-matters of the sayings and their inter-region differences it can be said that whatever came to the life of a people concerning their mundane life by way of either learning from the older generations or by practical experiences based on their own long days' observation got manifested as the sayings of Dāk. These are not the kinds of truth invented and tested in laboratory, but wisdom churned out of life-experiences. Thus, the experiences gathered from life had inspired formulating the sayings and the sayings running traditionally from the remote past have been attributed to Dāk to enhance their value and credibility. Because, the folk psychology instinctively prefers to attach importance on the authoritative compositions than the compositions devoid of authority or impersonal compositions. The breeding ground of the impersonal verbal art is the agrarian folk society, but the folk society itself is not inclined to accept the unauthoritative sayings or verbal art unless said to be composed by some learned man. In this situation the impersonal sayings imbued with folk wisdom have come to be known as the sayings of Dāk. The scholars of repute contribute to the opinion saying that various sayings full of national wisdom gathered throughout the centuries have been accumulated in the name of Dāk, who is

47. Infra : kindly see the contention marked by Foot Note No. 51.
48. Sarma, N.C : op-cit, P. 202
   & Sarma, S. N.: Asamīyā Sāhityar Samākṣāmak Itibṛta, P. 52
quite likely a fictitious entity, designed mainly to facilitate the publicity and transmission of the sayings 50.

Thus, it is apparent that the sayings or maxims attributed to Ɖāk are nothing but traditional folk wisdom.

V. Universality of the Ɖāk-vacanas:

The maxims of Ɖāk although current in Assam and some other states of India in that name and style, still some sayings alike are found to be current even in some other countries outside India. The reason behind this phenomenon lies in the uniformity in the social and economic life. It is observed that the common concerns of life like agriculture, food and drinks, material property like land and other valuables, manners and behaviours, customs and conventions, disease and death, medicine and regimen, weather and nature etc. certainly invoke the interest of the people in general irrespective of time, place and class. These concerns for being full of mysteries happen to be the breeding ground of various experiences. Experience breeds fine poetry, idioms, riddles and proverbs filled with interior meanings. The aphorisms of Ɖāk also have evolved in this way51. The folk-sayings current in different parts of the world may not be and in fact are not necessarily identical to the sayings of Ɖāk but are of same nature. Because, the aspirations of the common people or more specifically speaking, the folk and their mode of attempt to achieve them by and large are the same. Therefore, the implication of the sayings is not

51. Sarma, N. C. : op-cit, Preface, P. 07
strictly limited to the people only who compose them, but also applicable to the people everywhere of the same stratum. Thus, the sayings earn universality. Since the geo-natural conditions causing rain in England and in Assam are not the same, so the weather sayings of both the traditions can not be identical, but the urge behind composition of the sayings is the same. This uniformity in the urge bestows the universality in the sayings.

There is another aspect of the reasons of universality of the sayings. This kind of sayings are not composed in all the societies in all the time, only in a particular time marked with a particular kind of social condition the composition of such sayings are possible. From the sayings (of Ḍāk) it can be inferred that these were composed in a time when the society arrived at the feudal system passing the traditional tribal system of agriculture. The transformation of the social system is an inevitable reality to any society and hence feudalism also is a stage sure to come to any society. Therefore, as the sayings of Ḍāk reflect the remnants of a social system, they bear more or less a common appeal to all the societies which have passed and those which are still running through the same system. Because, the obsolescence of a social system does not mean the end of everything of it, since some of it's remnants may still remain alive to a far longer period of time. Therefore, it can be decided that the sayings of Ḍāk composed in Assamese bear an universal appeal surpassing the limit of time and place to all the feudalistic societies of the past and the present throughout the world. The desired goal like the peace and prosperity of the mundane life, the concepts of vice and virtues, hell and heaven, the allegiance to the dictates of the scriptures, the womanhood, chastity, pilgrimage, the

52. Sarna, S.N.: op-cit. P. 52
consequence of the sacrificial gifts and the faith in astrology, material richness aspired through agriculture etc. have fostered this universality.

The following sayings picked up through random sampling will show that their contents are not strictly applicable only to the Assamese people, rather they are relevant to any community of people throughout the world.

1) \[ \text{bheda } \text{dan} \text{a } \text{sama } \text{dan} \]
\[ \text{cari rupe nyayak jin} \]

— Know it that there are four ways of administering justice. These are bheda, i.e., alienation, dan\(a\), i.e., punishment, sama, i.e., compromise and dan i.e., sacrifice or abandonment.—

2) \[ \text{apoc patra nohe bhal} \]
\[ \text{or, } \text{asodhana bhaile kihar patra} \]

—An officer / administrator is not good if he does not respond to or does not enquire of an issue.—

3) \[ \text{sabale nirbale kihar niy\(a\)} \]
\[ \text{pace panc\(a\)se kihar biy\(a\)} \]

54. Ibid : P. 12, maxim-8
55. Ibid : P. 24, maxim-102
56. Ibid : P. 15, maxim-24
— There can be no relation between a mighty and a weak (or rich and a poor). So, a marriage between a fifty years old groom and a five years old bride is also futile, etc.—

Moreover, some sayings of Đāk are found current in different literature far out of India which confirm the universality of the sayings of Đāk, eg.,

1) Đāk:  
\[ \text{bhuī kinibā mājhat khāl/} \]
\[ \text{coāli ānibā māiki bhāl/} \]  

Japani saying: (rendered to English in prose)
— Purchase a piece of land which is gradually sloping towards the centre and wed a girl who has a good mother\textsuperscript{57(a)}—

2) Đāk:  
\[ \text{bhojanar ras bhunje bhoke.} \]  
— hunger tastes the flavour of a meal. —

Japani saying: Anything is tasty to a hungry mouth \textsuperscript{58(a)}

German saying: Hunger is the best cook \textsuperscript{58(b)}

English saying: Hunger is the best sauce

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\textsuperscript{57} Ibid: P. 26 (Additional saying, unnumbered)
\textsuperscript{57(a)} Barua, Mahananda: Bidēśi Yojana bā Paṭantarmālā, (Dibrugarh, 1953), P.13
\textsuperscript{58} Sarma, N.C.: op-cit, P. 22, maxim-80
\textsuperscript{58(a)} Barua, M: op-cit, P. 9
\textsuperscript{58(b)} Ibid: P. 51
3) Ḍāk : \textit{nispha gocar ḍāṅgariyā nakare kān} / \textsuperscript{59}

— A complaint is useless if the justice does not pay heed to it. —

\textit{German saying} : A justice needs to have two ears of the same kind\textsuperscript{59(a)}: etc.

These show that the sayings of Ḍāk although might have been composed amongst one community, still they have universal footing because of the uniformity of life-style of the people concerned and hence appreciated more or less through out the world.

VI. Comparison with Hesiod and Others:

Although by now Ḍāk has been established in the learned circle as a tradition instead of an oracle, still in the folk-society, Ḍāk is hailed as an oracle or individual author. Generally, the proverbs and other folk sayings of any literature are anonymous. But the sayings of Ḍāk or Khanā can be classified with a distinction, because they are running revolving around the name of a so-called historical or imaginary personality. But for this characteristic alone, the sayings of Ḍāk can be compared with some of the sayings of the Greek poet Hesiod. Of course, Hesiod was a man of remote past. The scholars have determined his time to be in the 8th century B.C.\textsuperscript{60} The sayings of Ḍāk bear similarities with those of Hesiod's in more than one respect.

First of all the themes bear similarity. Hesiod wrote a book named "\textit{Works and Days}\textsuperscript{61}" and these works and days are particularly

\textsuperscript{59} Sarma, N.C.: op-cit, P. 21, maxim-76
\textsuperscript{59(a)} Barua, M.: op-cit. p. 61
\textsuperscript{60} Goswami, P.: \textit{Asamīyā Jana Sāhitya}, P. 97
\textsuperscript{61} Goswami: Loc-cit
meant for the farmers. The book is comprised of three parts. The second part contains *inter alia* some tips or advices about the duties of the farmers. Moreover some advices have been given about marriage, kith and kin, religion and rituals etc. The third part enumerates the astrological tips of the auspicious and the ominous days for some particular works\(^2\). The sayings of *Dāk* also deal with almost the same things. *Dāk* also has suggested the works and days for the farmers; deliberated about religion, justice, ethics, selection of bride, virtues of good house-wife, astrology with different facets etc., to mention particularly.

Hesiod has strongly objected the principle of "might is right" and hails the impartiality in administering justice telling that where justice has its dignity, the people live there with peace and prosperity. One of his sayings in this respect is—

Those who administer justice fairly they do not have to suffer poverty and misfortune; the festive smile always looms in their agricultural field\(^3\).

*Dāk* also has few sayings in the same line, eg.,

1. *apoc pātra nohe bhāį*\(^{3(a)}\)
2. *asodhan bāile kihar pātra*.\(^{3(b)}\)
3. *nisphal gocar dāṅgariyā nakare kān*.\(^{3(c)}\) etc.

Hesiod deliberates common sense which is useful to live in the practical world. The sayings of *Dāk* also enumerates the same thing. Among other things, the treatment to women is one of the common

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63. Ibid : P. 99
63(a) Sarma, N.C.: op-cit, p. 12, maxim-8
63(b) Ibid : P. 24, maxim-102
63(c) Ibid : P. 21, maxim-76
things of the two. Hesiod of course maintained a stern view towards the women while Dāk has said about the virtues too of women besides the vices, (But what can be felt is that the virtues of women Dāk has spoken of, are more ideal than real and the vices based on realistic experiences). However, about the vices of women the prose translation of few stanzas are cited below from Hesiod's composition:

—Be aware that your steps do not slip by the enticement perpetrated by the woman who decorates herself in short attire and talks in slang. Because, getting you in close attachment she will ask something of you very softly. Pouring sweet words in your ears she, the witch, will easily understand your mind. Know it for sure that there is a thief hidden behind her smile64. —

This kind of composition of Hesiod about woman reminds one of the sayings of Dāk,

eg.: (Presented only in English prose rendering.)

(1) —The woman who hypocritically remains beside her husband and seductively smiles to other men, goes to other's house for grinding rice despite having dheki (the rice grinding machine) at home, Dāk says not to keep her at home65. —

64. Goswami, P.: op-cit, P. 100
And (II) —The woman who takes her road through homesteads, frequently roams around the market on the pretext of shopping, tactfully shows her breasts repeatedly, Ḟāk says, she is a whore by nature66. etc. —

There are plenty of such sayings of Ḟāk. While speaking about searching for a bride, Hesiod says:

— Bring one of the damsels living near by you; be careful (watchful) in selecting a wife, otherwise the neighbours will laugh at you. To get a good wife is the greatest gain, But a woman that roams about from door to door for nothing, is the roots of all evils. Such a wife not being fire even burns the body of a healthy man to ashes and makes him old in his youth67.—

Likewise Ḟāk also says:

— Considering well the hereditary purity, look by self to the full satisfaction of the eyes. Proceed to ask for the bride only after carefully watching the auspicious and ominous symptoms of the girl68.—

As Hesiod has narrated the avoidable kinds of women, so also Ḟāk has done in a strikingly similar way what we have mentioned in quite a number of places here and there69 and particularly in a subsequent chapter70. Again, although Ḟāk is not silent about the

66. Ibid: P. 38 (maxim. 59-60)
67. Goswami, P.: op-cit. P. 100
68. Dutta, D (ed) : Ḟākar Vacan : P. 27
69. The texts marked by the Foot Notes No. 65, 66 & 75 in this Chapter.
70. Infra : Chapter VII
virtues of women still he is more eloquent about the vices and in this respect he is strikingly similar to Hesiod.

There are elaborate description of the weaknesses of the character of women in Kunāl Jātaka in Pāli language. It is said there that a woman staying near her husband also entices other men by as good as forty devices. A wicked woman can be identified by twenty five means. Hence, it can he said that the sayings of Dāk bear striking similarity with the Kunāl Jātaka to some extent particularly in respect of the views adopted about women.

Regarding the views towards women the sayings of Dāk bear some similarity with some sayings attributed to Lord Buddha. By introduction of the new schism named after him the saint tried to bring forth the religio-philosophical upheaveals alongwith sociological changes against the existing depredation in the country resultant upon the very conservative Hinduism or more accurately speaking, Brahmanism. Consequent upon this, the religious emancipation of the women-folk took place that their religious individuality was recognised and they were given Dhamma on equal consideration to the men-folk. Despite keeping in mind this socio-religious changes one must not in fairness, fail to record the deprecatory expressions in which the Bhuddhist texts have occassionaly indulged. The truth is that old ideas die hard. As a reflection of this it is found that women were condemned by none other than the teacher (Buddha) himself as weak creatures destined only to lead a life of sin and unfaithfulness. The under mentioned saying of the great Buddha in the Milindapanha (IV-4-42) is noteworthy in this respect:

71. Goswami, P: op-cit. p. 101
"The blessed one hath said O Naga Sen,
With opportunity and secrecy
And the right wooer, all women will go wrong,
Aye, failing with others, with a cripple even."\(^{72}\)

Being a misogynist, the Buddha was highly sensitive about woman. He seems to have treated them as embodiments of unchastity and infidelity. In another passage his views are expressed in a still more positive form. Asked by Ananda, his chief disciple, as to "how are we to conduct ourselves Lord, with regard to womanhood?" he replied as follows.

\textit{(Mahabhagga Sutta: VII):}

"Do not see them Ananda!
But if we should see them,
what are we to do?
Abstain from speech Ananda!
But if they should speak to us Lord,
what are we to do?
Keep wide awake Ananda!"\(^{73}\)

This characteristic reply of the great teacher shows that at least for sometime his general view about womanhood was full of disbelief and disdain. Of course, it was not totally the same with Hesiod and \textit{Dāk}, because amongst many of the vices of womanhood, as they revealed their minds, there are still some virtues with the fair sex which

\(^{72}\) Indra: The Status Of Women In Ancient India, (Motilal Banarasidas, Banaras, 1955), pp. 189-190

\(^{73}\) Indra: Loc-cit
can make the life and home of a man happy and pleasant. The spirit with which the Buddha instructed Ananda in the aforesaid speech is almost same with the sayings attributed to Đāk, eg.,

— A woman who is always interested to other men (than her husband), who never drops the smile from her face, is not a chaste woman and must not be kept in the home. She, who finds the words of other men pleasant is an wicked woman. On going some other men to her home she dearingly entertains them offering pīrā (a rustic wooden seat) in front of herself, offers bettle-nuts frequently smacking in pleasure, indulges in indecent fun with them, proceeds closer with alluring smile and indulges in infidelity to her husband depriving him of happiness.

Coming to personal contact with a South Indian Scholar, we could come to know that Đāk or Ghāgh or Khanā is not known in Tamil Nadu. But some similar sayings are current there known as the sayings of Agasti. Agasti is the name of a saint found in Hindu mythology. Like the sayings of Đāk in North India, some popular folk sayings have been attributed to the name of this mythological character in South India whose existence is beyond the periphery of history. Although in want of some specimen of the sayings of Agasti, a distinct comparison could not be shown, still it can be said that some

74. Sarma, N.C.: op-cit, P. 37 maxims 51-52
75. Ibid : Pp. 38-39, maxims 61-64 etc.
76. Dr. R. Chandrasakharan (Reader in Tamil, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, Data collected on 27-3-1987): Referred to by N.C. Sarma on our information in Đāk-Pravacan, P. 190
sayings of Dāk and of Agasti are of similar nature particularly in respect of agriculture, astrology and different portents. Thus it is seen that irrespective of time and place, some popular folk sayings of the nature of the Dāk-vacanas are running in every human society. They appear similar to each other when their backgrounds happen to be similar. It is not important whether the sayings are branded after the name of any historical figure or any fictitious character, but the important point is that the sayings represent the social attitude.