PART - II

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ASSAMESE ḍāK-VACANAS
CHAPTER -V

SOCIO-POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE AS REFLECTED IN THE DĀK VACANAS.

The maxims of Dāk in Assamese apart from other things present a picture of the socio-political and religious life of the folk concerned. The term 'Social life' bears wider ramifications. We consider appropriate here to discuss the population structure and its impact, economy and its impact, family life and social attitude of the folk as components of social life, manifested through the maxims. Some other things which may also come under the purview of the term 'Social life' will be discussed in other places subsequently under different headings for an orderly presentation.

(I) Population Structure and Its Impact:

Population structure is an important factor of social life of a people since a homogenous society happens to be more cohesive than a heterogenous one for many comprehensive reasons. The society manifested through the maxims of Dāk is a homogenous one. No difference of ethnic origin, no difference of life-style, no profession of different faith, nor different likes and dislikes of the people have been spoken of. It can be well perceived that the population is only caste Hindu agrarian folk. Eloquent submission to different Hindu gods
and goddesses irrespective of cult specification like *Sri Kṛṣṇāya nama:*, *smaraṇ karibā kebale hari*, and *Brahmā Bīṣṇu, Rudra devā/sakale kare gaṅgāk sevā //*, *Candra Brḥaspati ek rāsit/Lakṣmi Saraswati tāhāte sthita //* etc. alongwith the information of old vedic practice of performing *yajñā* (sacrifice)° and upholding the importance of vedic knowledge° undoubtedly identifies the people as belonging to a homogenous caste Hindu society through a long spell of time which underwent the process of evolution of different cult faiths.

Although once in a blue moon in some special circumstances the reference of Muslim people is found, these are notably full of disregard, rather disdain. The following two maxims are of this nature:

1. **About bad omens of women** ----

   *mechā karikāl uphandā hiyā/
   sei chowālik phālūgik diyā //*

   — A girl with a fat waist and swollen breast should be sold to a *phālūgi* i.e. a Muslim —

   and——

2. **About bad omens of bullock** ----

   *tokā lejā thotor cuti/
   sehi jānibā gariyā guṭif*

   — A bull with a long enough tail and a short chin is (untouchable) like a *gariyā* i.e., a Muslim——

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1. Sarma, N.C. (ed) : दाक-प्रवाचन, P.2
2. Ibid : P. 23 (maxim - 96)
3. Ibid : P. 6 (maxim -17)
4. Ibid : P. 57 (maxim-42)
5. Ibid : P. 13 (maxim-14)
6. Infra : Kindly see the reference indicated by the Foot Note No. 17
Here in both the occasions the mention of the words \textit{phāliningi}\ and \textit{gariyaḥ}\ indicating a Muslim sounds disdain. Therefore it can be assumed that the Muslim people was not a part of the society in question, rather outsider. Moreover few maxims appended as 'additional'.\footnote{Dutta, D: op-cit. P. 152 (maxims 42-44)} mention about Muslims in the manner that they may indicate of a Muslim population in the society. The relevant parts of the maxims read thus (1) \textit{dom mariyār neherāi cin/}..... and (2) \textit{yabane ki kāc khāba l}..... while the word \textit{yabana} means Muslim in general, \textit{mariyāḥ} means a particular clan of Muslim who work on brass. But the two maxims can be well understood as relatively modern, not being authenticated by any manuscript and so rightly appended as 'additional'. Particularly another maxim in between these two mentions about the \textit{Mārwāri} business community as \textit{-keñār cin matsya nucuba}. Therefore these maxims are sure to have originated after the Assamese population have become composite by imigration. Hence, they cannot give the demographic picture of the Assamese society as antique as of the original maxims.

The society despite being an unireligious Hindu society, two main different cult faiths and practices thereof were current in full force in the form of Saktism and Neo-Vaisnavism along with some old vedic practice like \textit{yajña} (sacrifice). This situation has been ascertained above by evidences. Although Neo-vaisnavism should not ideally indulge in casteism, the reality was however division of the population into different castes bearing social implications. The maxim -

\begin{align*}
\text{brāhmanar pitṛ deva arccan/} \\
\text{kṣetriyaganar juddha karan //}
\end{align*}

\footnote{Dutta, D: op-cit. P. 152 (maxims 42-44)}
having no adequate acumen against them.—

This interpretation of the saying may of course seem controversial. Because, this had been interpreted earlier as a saying indicating the intensity of the culture of music in the rural folk society of Assam that even the women-folk of Lehidangarā knew five rāgas i.e., five primary modes of music\(^\text{26}\). But this interpretation appears to be a mistaken one since the context of the saying, the number-indicating word *pāñca* associated to *rāga* as well as the metaphors like *dāmrā* and *binā-singe* have not been taken into consideration while interpreting the saying. Taking all these things into consideration we have thus interpreted the saying in the fullest possible perspective in a subsequent chapter\(^\text{27}\) while highlighting the men-women relationship as a pointer of the social situation.

It is undeniable that the concerned saying is highly metaphorical and the metaphors have been applied in the second line, i.e., *bhaidār dāmrāi binā singe yuje*. But the admissible fact is that such metaphorical sayings are not profusely found in the body of the *Dāk-Vacanas*.

Apart from allegory, parabolic sayings, simile and metaphor mythological examples are also used to make the sayings convincing e.g.,

(a) \[
\begin{align*}
\text{bhādat kariyā kalā ropan /} \\
\text{sabāmṣe maril laṅkār rāvana} \parallel \text{28}
\end{align*}
\]

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\(^{26}\) Neog, M (ed) : *Asamīya Gīti Sāhitya*, PP.88-89

\(^{27}\) Infra : Chapter VII : 'Men and Women As Reflected in the *Dāk-vacanas*.'

\(^{28}\) Sarma, N. C. : op-cit. P. 52
—indicates that the society aspired for the high ideal propounded by the Gita (cāturbharṇyaṁ mayā srṣṭam guṇakarma-bibhāgaśca) leading to casteism in relation to virtues and works. But the following maxim while deliberating astrological features mentions about thirty four castes, may confuse one about the racial structure of the population.

If Rāhu, Śani and Maṅgal are drowing in the sea, even the great people will have to suffer big troubles. It will be difficult to pass their days and thirty four castes will disturb them.

Since this 'thirty four castes' are found in proverbial literature of other regions of India also this is not unik to Assamese society and therefore needs a consideration beyond its literal meaning. In Haryani Ghāghā

11. Sṛmadbhāgavata Gītā: IV/XII
vacan also Ghāghā advises thirty four castes (mentioned as fools). A Bengali proverb also speaks: *bhojaner saṅge khoj nei /bhojan chatri jāte //* (No hesitation about the company while taking meal: meal with thirty four castes). There is reason to believe that this number 'thirty four' has been used simply to mean variety of people and not to mean the exact number of the castes prevailing. It is historically authenticated that economic development leading to emergence of different arts, crafts and professions paved the way for evolution of numerous new castes and sub castes. These thirty four castes thus mean the people belonging to different professions within the same race or community known as the Assamese.

In the casteist Hindu society the maxims like.—

1. *bhāl drabya jekhane pāibu /
   devatā dbijak tekhane diba //* 16.

2. *sākhi paṅca sapta nava jan /
   vedabetā tini howe brāhman //*17 and—

3. *sudra jane yadi badhe biprak
   badhibe nypati sito sudrak //*18 etc.

unambiguously speak about the Brahmins enjoying the highest social dignity. The other castes also enjoyed their respective status gradually inferior to the Brahmins without any complain or grumbling. The

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   Introduction, P.33.
17. Ibid: P.8 (maxim - 7)
18. Ibid: P. 10 (maxim-25)
maxims like - *kāryat suddha nāpitar hāt*\(^{19}\) and *ghāṭat suddhi ḍomar nāol*\(^{20}\) vindicate that even the so called inferior most castes were given their due status while on the other hand the casteist discrimination was very rigorous in form and practice. The people despite discriminated by rigorous casteism leading to some sort of untouchability in a veiled form maintained mutual trust and upheld the dignity of others to form a cohesive social life. Otherwise there would have been maxims telling about social unrest caused by caste conflicts. Perhaps the folk because of being fatalist by nature which can be perceived by their faith in and inclination to astrology had learnt to believe the castes they belonged to as the dictate of their destiny.

(II) **Economy and Its Impact** : Economy is a very potent factor of social life. The economy of the society manifested through the sayings of *Qāk* is primarily an agrarian economy. Four out of twenty three chapters, small and big, in an authentic collection\(^{21}\) concern only agriculture and these are *BarseNDi laksana, Bṛṣa laksana, Ḥalabāhana krama* and *Kṛṣi laksana*. Apart from these, there are some stray sayings in other chapters also concerning agriculture.

Although the gamut of agriculture presented by the sayings is very wide including almost every variety of crops known to the Assamese people right from seasonal crops like rice, reddish etc. to permanent crops like bamboo, bettle nut, coconut etc, the utmost

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19. Ibid : P. 24 (maxim-106)
20. Ibid : P. 24 (maxim-107)
importance has been given to rice cultivation. It has been said that one can earn the wealth of Laňkā from it. Thus many important but traditional tips of every crop known to the Assamese people have been briefed in the sayings. The sincerity of the effort clearly indicates that the society undertook agriculture not merely as a means of livelihood, but as a potent component of a flourishing economy that generated industry and trade and commerce also from it howsoever rudimentary they might be in nature. The saying about banana farming while says—lanįkār baniį hātate pābā—vindicates that the society was well aware of trade and commerce even of the exterior form i.e., foreign trade. Moreover the saying—ḍāke bole bāp sunā upāi /bāniyyar phal kṛṣite pāi/ explicitly puts bāniyya (i.e., trade & commerce) ahead of kṛṣi (agriculture) in its economic potency. Although not possible for all, few could be believed to have earned wealth to the tune of Laňkār baniį by trade and commerce. But the popular mercantiles were very inferior to the present day standard like iron and blacksmithry products, agricultural products like mustard seed, wart or bean seed, banana, cotton and pottery products etc. The medium of transaction (i.e., the currency) was cowrie shells and the common extent of commerce was hāṭ (local market place) as the maxim ascertains—parihara kari nāi behība khoje hāṭ. Therefore, however eulogised, the trade and commerce was of a very limited extent. The society also experienced

22. Ibid : P. 49 (maxim-5) & P. 50 (maxim-11)
23. Ibid : P.52 (Additional maxim, hence not numbered)
24. Ibid : P. 49 (maxim-1)
26. Ibid : P. 42 (maxim-12)
the emergence of some cottage industries like blacksmithry, pottery etc. as evident from the mercantiles described above. Goldsmithry and textile industry however could not flourish much owing to want of urbanisation and the rural agrarian folk who mostly constituted the population, hardly bore any attraction to jewellery artifacts.

The people who could not adopt agriculture or industry for some reasons or other, adopted small avocations like laundry (dhopā / dhupī)\textsuperscript{27}, shaving (nāpiit)\textsuperscript{28}, fish trade (qom)\textsuperscript{29}, florist (māli)\textsuperscript{30}, dairy farming (goāl / goāli)\textsuperscript{31} etc. although contributing less to the economy but bearing much social significance, for they constituted the so-called low castes. The so-called low castes generally were not only low in social hierarchy, but also low in the economic scale.

The economic disparity divided the people into rich and poor. The rich were much privileged and the poor were a wretched lot in almost all cases, so much so, that the people generally sided with the rich. Therefore, justice was a hard nut to the poor as well as their social dignity was often very vulnerable, for the treatment meted out to them was almost that of a stray dog. The following sayings present the vivid picture:

\[ \text{dhanir joy sakale raṅga /} \]
\[ \text{dāke bole nidhāni ṭajale bhaṅga //} \]
\[ \text{dhāni jāi gāw jokāri /} \]
\[ \text{nidhanik jāi thēla māri //} \]

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid: P. 26 (Additional maxim - tītī sonāvi bīcāte nagar---)
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid: P. 49 (maxims 3-4)
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid: P. 22 (maxim-87)
\textsuperscript{30 & 31} Supra: Kindly see Foot Notes no. 19 & 20 respectively.
\textsuperscript{32 & 33} Sarma, N.C.: op-cit. P. 36 (maxim-43)
nidhani jan ji ghare jai /
ācok bhāt pani māto nāpāi //
āhe jāi bahe ukur /
kajr parā āhe cahāl kukur //34

—All are happy on a rich man’s victory. A man faces defeat only for his poverty. A rich man goes boastfully pushing down a poor one. Wherever a poor man goes, not to speak of meal, he even does not get the mere verbal response. He comes and goes, sits on his sole, people treat him like a stray dog (with scabies).—

The different consequences such as ‘joy’ (i.e., victory) and bhaṅga (i.e., defeat) indicate that there was very often a conflicting situation between the rich and the poor. Even the maxim— aparādhi hui nākhābā neotā /beli pari gel nahal sodhātā//35 indicates that poverty was considered almost as a crime. Even within the family itself a poor man was insulted by his younger family members.36

A very stiff economic disparity facilitated for the rich to evolve money - lending on interest (earlier we mentioned cowrie shell as the currency) as a flourishing business to the detriment of the poor. Few relevant maxims say -

(I) sākhik dekhāi ūnak dibā /
patrat nām lekhi rākhība //
lābh mūl jatek dhan /
gharate hajiba upārjyan //37

34. Ibid: P. 15 (maxim 27-30)
35. Ibid: PP. 15-16 (maxims 31-33)
36. Ibid: p. 16 (maxims 34-35)
37. Ibid: Pp. 9-10 (maxims 19-20)
—Offer a loan only keeping witness(es) and keep the names written on a document. Capital and interest - all will be earned at home itself.—

and (II)  

nisphal jivan dharuäi niye dhari \(^{38}\)

—Life is futile if to be dragged by a lender.—

Therefore, it was advised not to go for any transaction or exchange between rich and poor - *sabale nirbale khiar niyä* \(^{39}\) although it was not much practicable

The unfortunate poor people even had to serve the privileged rich as domestic servant for livelihood and suffer the punishment for no fault of their own, but of their masters, as a maxim goes - *swâmir dose bhṛtyar daṇḍa* \(^{40}\)

Thus, it can be said that economic condition of the people was the principal determiner of social life indulging to some extent in unreasonable obsession to the rich.

(III) : **Family Life and Social Attitude** :

The maxims of Ḍāk being mostly of mundane concern aspired for a prosperous and peaceful family life whereupon the society kept a watchful eye and advised all concerned to follow the suitable paths as per its consideration to attain the goal. The appreciable form of marriage in currency can be perceived to have been *prājāpatya* in which the proposal comes from the side of the bridegroom---- *tebese sudhibå*

\(^{38}\) Ibid : P. 14 (maxim-22)

\(^{39}\) Ibid : P. 15 (maxim-24)

\(^{40}\) Ibid : P. 10 (maxim-22)
The popular preliminary process of consultation of horoscopes of a pair in the form of रणज जयः has not been advocated although unequivocally advised to carefully consider the physical omens in the same maxim. Success of a marriage considered to depend mostly on getting a lovely wife. Thus the aspect of sensuous pleasure was taken into prime consideration. Since in selection of bride the utmost importance was attached to her physical structure and beauty and the groom is advised to see the bride by himself, it can be understood that marriage took place at a considerably grown up age. Hence no child marriage was in practice. But early marriage was preferred since to retain a youthful girl without marriage at her father's place was socially condemnable. As a girl could earn her selection as a bride mostly for her mother's reputation so also the mother was made responsible for any erring bride.

However, against these benefiting advices, rather the expectations of the society the practice was prevalent even to form a family by the process of छपानीय or धेमानी (i.e., concubinage) even with one woman having a child of her previous marriage, as a maxim indicates —ताक वचन वेदर बाँती / पो लागी तीरता ग्वाराजी नानी। Such children of one father being brought up by another foster father for concubinage are called गुर्गुरिया in the Kamrupi dialect. The currency of the word गुर्गुरिया indicates that the practice had obtained some

41. Dutta, D : op-cit (ch.V), P.27
42. Barua, B.K. : op-cit. P.131
44. Ibid : P. 14 (maxims -20-21)
45. Ibid : P. 28 (Additional maxims: लौँः कौंसिल घोषणा माइ का भाल। ₹ कौंसिल घोषणा माइ का भाल।)
46. Ibid : P. 17 (maxim-41)
sort of social approval. The maxim speaking about *tini tolaniyār po* (a son of three foster fathers) further indicates that a woman at the most could serve three men as wife (rather concubine) one after another although the society looked at it sarcastically.

Although monogamy was clearly advocated (*bihā karibā eke sundari*) in unfortunate compelling situations desertion of wife was also advocated as well. This of course does not mean polygamy since maintenance of only one wife at a time was the obvious consequence of such desertion. However, monogamy being the ideal, the social reality was prevalence of polygamy although rare in practice and much to the disdain of the society as relevant maxims say— _ek tiratār pāj ludur pudur / dui tiratār pāj gātar endur // tini tiratār pāj napāi bhāt / cāri tiratār pāj murat hāt_.

The family was a large household which might be called joint family with members of different generations from grandfather to grandchildren. Several brothers even after their marriage used to reside in the same family along with their children since brother-in-law and sister-in-law are the relationships those existed within the bond of a family. An unruly son and one quarreling with his father has been criticised as liable to punishment while the respectful ones have been praised. Although undesired, the society was aware of distrust and

47. Ibid: P.27 (additional maxim)
48. Ibid: P. 23 (maxim-96)
49. Ibid: Pp: 33,34,36 (maxims- 14,18&35 respectively)
50. Ibid : P. 26 (Additional maxims) Also see P.41 (maxim - 1)
51. Ibid: P.16 (maxims 34-35)
52. Ibid : P.17 (maxim -39)
53. Ibid : P.10 (maxim-24)
54. Ibid : P. 11 (maxim-2) & P. 12 (maxim-6)
disunity among the brothers\textsuperscript{55} instigated by backbiters\textsuperscript{56} leading to separation of families. These are however warnings to the people to remain aware of the adversities.

The society apart from strictly criticising the drunken habit of men\textsuperscript{57} had taken stringent view on sensuous vulgarity\textsuperscript{58} along with conjugal infidelity\textsuperscript{59} and adultery\textsuperscript{60} of both men and women. Although prostitution was a known profession\textsuperscript{61} the society did not look at it tenderly. However strictly criticised, these were the social realities as the maxims represent.

It must be admitted that even though the perversions of family life as well as social life have been mentioned in detail in the maxims of \textit{Dāk}, the main thrust is to set an orderly and peaceful form of social life making people aware of the possible odds.

(IV) : \textbf{Political Life}:

The maxims of \textit{Dāk} devote one small chapter on politics entitled \textit{Atha rājanyādi prakaraṇam} with only nine maxims. However, more political maxims are scattered in other chapters either directly deliberating polity or as similes.

It transpires from the concerned chapter as well as the scattered maxims that there did not exist an well-organised polity. The political system was a monarchy and a king headed the system to rule the
kingdom with the assistance of few royal officers like Baruā, Phukan, Mantri etc, as the maxims go:— *tāti sonāri bicāre nagar / baruā phukanē bicāre jagar / hām phukanē bicāre jagar* and-apattrak mantri nohay bhāl ... Isles. The first maxim indicates that these royal officers attached the foremost priority in the judiciary department, might be for their narrow gains. Other nomenclature for them were Pātra and Dāṅgariyā as few maxims say--

- *apoc pātra nohe bhāl* 64 and
- *nisphal gocar dāṅgariyā nakare kān* 65 etc.

These maxims indicate that the officers were not people-friendly and the people had unpleasant experiences in obtaining service from them. Otherwise there would not have been the maxims telling about the officers looking for frequent litigation and about unresponsive officers. This is obviously a picture of a corrupt administration. The nomenclature of the officers particularly, Baruā, Phukan, Pātra and Dāṅgariyā remind us of the Ahom regime.

About the King it has been said that to maintain his subjects was his religion.66 He therefore, needed to be kind and affectionate to his subjects 67 as well as benevolent in grants and assistance to them 68. The king undertook judiciary quite impartially 69 unlike his officers

62. Ibid : P. 26 (Additional maxim / unnumbered)
64. Sarma, N.C. : op-cit, P. 12 (maxim-8) also see P. 24 (maxim-102)
65. Ibid ; P. 21 (maxim-76)
66. Ibid : P. 5 (maxim-4)
67. Ibid : P.12 (maxim-10)
68. Ibid : P.22 (maxim-84)
69. Ibid : P.7 (maxim-2)
known as *Pātra* and *Ḍāṅgariyā* as discussed above. It can be understood that while judiciary was undertaken by the king himself in the capital, his subordinate officers were engaged for the same service in the far flung areas of the kingdom and behind the knowledge of the king, they indulged in corruption. The king paid highest regards to the Brahmins among his subjects as he would execute a *śūdra* who committed the crime of killing a Brahmin. The efficiency of a king however was determined by his capability to expand his kingdom by aggression even by killing people of alien countries.

The king as the monarch was ideally beyond any criticism or comment of his subjects. A maxim unequivocally speaks that one who cuts grass for no reasons, one who sets a blacksmithry with no iron and one who observes the conduct of a king — all three are liable to punishment. The last part of the maxim sounds synonymous to the English saying - "king can do no wrong." Hence the will of the king was the polity. However, the people were not all blind, deaf and dumb about the king's conduct. The maxims like — *nṛpati hajyā prajāk hiṁse* -- and *rājāk cinibā dānat* etc. are the critical comments about a king. Further in case of necessity, desertion of a king has also been advocated as — *parihara nṛpati jār nāi guṇ*.

These political teachings were aimed as at the common people so also at the monarch and his officers. Modern polity enriched by

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70. Ibid : P. 10 (maxim-25)
71. Ibid : P. 12 (maxim-6)
72. Ibid : p. 18 (maxim-49)
73. Ibid : P. 12 (maxim-100)
74. Ibid : P. 22 (maxim-84)
75. Ibid : P. 42 (maxim-6)
politico-legal concepts like *Human rights, Equality, Democracy* etc. did not evolve by then and therefore it was confined only to a rudimentary polity like monarchism with the common people's involvement only in humble submission to it.

The specific chapter on politics, instead of explaining polity has advised about how to serve a king to the best interest of self. The sole objective of the chapter is how to earn the good grace of the king. In different terms sycophancy and cunningness\(^{76}\) have been upheld as the main tricks to achieve this goal. Nowhere any greater ideal or interest of the country or of the people like patriotism, economy, foreign relations etc. have been spoken of. Having to regard the king as the supreme power and to keep him always satisfied for personal gains, the servile attitude coupled with sycophancy could develop as political principles for those who worked with or under the king. It can therefore be concluded that politics, howsoever low in standard was in fact a royal concern and not a people's concern.

(V) **Religious Life:**

It has already been mentioned earlier\(^{77}\) that the religious elements inherent in the maxims of *Dāk* have confused many a scholars. While a group of Assamese scholars like D. Neog, P. Goswami, S.K. Bhuyan etc. along with some non-Assamese scholars\(^{78}\) claim Buddhist influence upon the maxims with some examples and arguments, K.R. Medhi

\(^{76}\) Ibid : P. 28 (maxims- 1,2,4,6 etc)

\(^{77}\) Supra : Introduction : Importance of the study.

\(^{78}\) Supra : Introduction : Kindly see the references on Foot Note No. 6
even leaning to the aforesaid claim has however seen the Islamic influence more prominently on the strength of the use of some Arabic and Persian words in the maxims. Again, while D. Bharali emphasises more on the pre-vaishnavite Hinduistic features of some religious doctrines indicating revival of Hinduism, also sees some similarities of some maxims in regard to sarcasm to women with the ideals of moral looseness of the Sahjiya Buddhist cult professed in the caryyāpadas. This opinion stands almost identical to that one of P. Goswami. On the other hand quite a good number of maxims unambiguously profess monotheism exhibiting the Neo- Vaishnavite faith. It is therefore a complicating problem to determine the religious ideal of the maxims of Ṛk.

The serious complaint lodged by D. Neog about Hinduistic rather more specifically speaking, Brahmanical tampering of some Buddhistic sayings appears untenable. According to him, the Buddhistic Bengali saying -

\[
\begin{align*}
bhāl \ drābya \ yakhana \ pāba / \\
kālikare \ tuliya \ nāthoba // \\
kālikāre \ bāṭ \ nā \ cāhe / \\
māthār \ upare \ yam \ dādiye //
\end{align*}
\]

— On getting some good things not to be kept aside by the ladle. On unwillingness of the cook to distribute it by the ladle, Yama (the God of death) stands over his/her head.

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80. Ibid : Pp. 71-72
82. Folk Literature of Assam : P. 77
83. Supra : Introduction : Kindly see the references on foot Note No. 10
has been deliberately tampered in Assamese as —-

bhāl drāhya yetiyā pāba /
devatā dvijak tetiyyā dibā //
kālir bhāgak rākhe yijane
praśāṅge tāk rabinandane //

—On getting some good things it is immediately to be offered to the Gods and the Brahmins. One who keeps for tomorrow is praised by Rabinandan—

Because of the use of the two words *devatā* and *dvijak* in the Assamese saying, the author thinks it as a deliberate Hinduistic (or Brahmanical) tampering. But one must take note of *Yama* the Hindu god of death standing over head in the pre-tampered so called Buddhistic saying. Moreover, the Assamese saying assumes basically a different character encouraging thriftiness of people. Appearance of someone *Rabinandan* admiring the thriftiness is another point to take note of. We believe, both are Hinduistic sayings evolved in two different communities with different attitudes and therefore with variation of text, which is a natural characteristic of folk literature.

Similarity with some Buddhistic ideals of *Sahajiya* cult in regard to treatment accorded to women as pointed out in the contentions of some maxims otherwise prove the philosophical originality of the maxims since similarity can exist between two different things only. It is an acceptable fact that a society's attitude to its womenfolk is more

85. Neog, D: op-cit. P. 45
dependant on its evolutionary stage than any religion. Moreover, the 
maxims of Дак are popular even in areas where tantric Buddhist 
influence never spread. 86 Therefore, it should not be held as a pointer 
of Buddhism. In one place rather, we find one saying of Дак passing 
intolerably bitter remark about Buddhism as ----

\[yadi candra sehi thāne karay basati /
mahāpāpī sito hoy buddha bēṣyāstrīr pati I/87\]

—if the moon settles down there (i.e., in the tenth place 
of the birth circle) the man will be an worse sinner, a
Buddhist and husband of a whore —

In want of any explicit profession of or implicit tender attitude to 
Buddhism, such a saying is enough to negate all speculations of the 
sayings having any relation to or influence of Buddhism. The mode 
of religious works described by some maxims like plantation, digging 
of ponds, construction of religious shrines, offering of meals etc. 88 cannot 
be held as specifically Buddhistic since such philanthropism happens 
to be the essence of all the Indian religions 89 but certainly of an auxiliary 
nature only.

About the Islamic link, the use of few Arabic and Persian words 
as contemplated, can not be held a tenable ground, because such words 
are very few in number and very rarely used. For example, K.R. Medhi

86. Sircar, D.C. 'The Sayings of Dak' (Reproduced in Дакar vacan 
edited by D. Dutta, P. 162)
89. Sarma, S.N. : Asanīyā Sāhityar Samīkṣātmak Itibṛtṛva (Guwahati, 1984), P. 51
cites the Persian word bazār along with some other words. We find it in a maxim \( \text{strī nānībā bazār lūtā} \) \(^{90}\). We are not aware of the same word being used in more occasions. But the indigenous Assamese word hāt equivalent to bazār, has been used in plenty\(^{91}\). Another such composite word "hārām-khor" has been used only figuratively and seems to be out of context \(^{92}\). It can therefore be held that these alien words very casually crept into the text of the maxims running till then in oral transmission as into the common parlance of the people after the Islamic culture spreaded much later. Interpolation here can not be ruled out. The notable point is, beyond the mere use of the words in question, no Islamic faith has been professed and the people professing this religion has not been mentioned with reverence \(^{93}\). Therefore, the proposition of Islamic influence on the maxims does not hold good.

The religious situation of the society has been discussed in some detail above while discussing the population structure that basically the society was an unireligious Hindu society with prevalence of its different cults and professional casteism. While Neo-vaishnavism and Saktism were simultaneously running, the remnants of old vedic religious practice in the form of observation of yajña (sacrifice) also had some place for it.

The book contains a specific chapter on religion named "Dharama prakaran" out of which only a few maxims speak about religion in true sense. What transpires from the maxims is that the best

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91. Ibid : P. 16 (maxim-38), P. 41 (maxim-4), P. 42 (maxims -12,13) etc.
92. Ibid : P. 25 (Additional maxim - jākaruva khaliha hārāmkhor II)
93. Kindly see the contention indicated by the Foot Notes no. 7 & 8 in this chapter.
form of religious performance considered was a holy dip in the Ganges, *Brahmā Viṣṇu Rudra devā /sakale kare gaṅgāk sevā* \(^{94}\) and the subsequent maxims can very well justify the contention. This performance can save one from the consequences of all the worse kind of sins committed in life. The second form in priority order was pilgrimage to the holy places like Gaya, Prayag, Benaras etc.\(^{95}\). The formal worship of different Gods and Goddess has not been explicitly prescribed. However mention of their names indicate that people believed in these supernatural entities and their worship even if at all occurred, was in the third order if not lower. Occassionally, indifference to material prosperity has also been preached in conformity to Vaisnivite faith like - *anitya dehāt nāhike āś / dhan jan hastre kibā biśwās* \(^{96}\) (nothing can be hoped of the transitory life. So also of the wealth, relatives and apparels etc). We say it 'occassional' since the main thrust of the sayings in other chapters is the material prosperity and it is marked with a very practical outlook. The concept of Heaven and Hell and also of the Next world (paraloka) influenced the people to do good works and abstain from sin\(^{97}\).

It is furthermore important to discuss the very concept of religion what transpires from most of the maxims in the concerned chapter that generosity of the followers could only make the religious performances

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94. Sarma, N.c. : op-cit. P. 6 (maxim-17)
95. Ibid : Pp! 6-7 (maxims 18 & 22)
96. Ibid : P.5 (maxim -8) comparable to –

\[ \text{athira dhana jana jīvana yovvana athira ehu sanisāra ....} \]

(Bargeect/Madhabdeva)
97. Ibid : p. 9 (maxims - 14,15,17 etc) & P. 5 (maxim-7)
meaningful or complete. Other than the scriptural dictates or ritualistic formalities whatsoever, mainly service to humanism or in other words, philanthropic works like digging of ponds, plantation, construction of religious shrines (without any mention of any particular religion, sect or cult), offering of meals to the needy ones etc. have been held as the pious works of high order. It is therefore, benevolence and philanthropism were the two main canons of religion as envisaged, for which the society simultaneously upholding two different cult faiths of Hinduism in the form of Saktism and Neo-Vaisnavism along with some old vedic practices, could uphold religious liberalism the most. Consequently the society did not have to witness any religious conflict.