CHAPTER - V

CONCLUSION

The present study under the title “Cachar Under Raja Govinda Chandra, 1813-1830” highlights the history of the then Cachar — its historical aspect, political upheavals, socio-religious conditions and the economic scene, under Raja Govinda Chandra Narayana, the last king of the Kachari kingdom. Before the annexation of Cachar by the British, the Dimasa-Kacharis ruled over this vast territory, both hills and plains. The study reveals that as the Dimasas were forced to shift their capital from time to time, the geographical boundary of the Kachari kingdom also underwent changes several times.

The Dimasa-Kacharis, a branch of the Tibeto-Burman Bodo race, who were believed to be among
the historically earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley of North East India, passed through a checkered history of State-formation processes for several centuries. The study highlights the fact that beginning with a kingdom in Sadiya in Upper Assam in the early mediaeval period, the Dimasa-Kacharis were found ruling in the Dhansiri valley in the 14th century A.D., with headquarters at Dimapur, where the Ahoms confronted them. The North Cachar Hills then became the mainland of their sphere of political control with capital at Maibong. The Dimasa kings then gradually expanded their kingdom towards the southern plains, and finally shifted their capital to Khaspur of the Barak valley, in the 18th century. It was between Maibong and Khaspur that the Dimasa kingdom bloomed into a full-fledged Brahmanical State. In its final phase, the Dimasa-Kachari kingdom was popularly called the ‘Herombo Rajya’, after a character of the Mahabharata, as it is known from their coins, inscriptions and documents. The kingdom in this phase was a union of the Dimasa-predominated northern hills and the Bengalee-inhabited southern plains, and it passed through the noble experience of social harmony and material-cultural reciprocity. According to Heramba Rajmala, Ghatotkach was the first
king and, Govinda Chandra — the last king of the Kachari dynasty. Govinda Chandra was assassinated by a few Manipuri conspirators on April 24, 1830 A.D. After his assassination, Cachar plain was annexed to the East India Company’s territory by a proclamation on August 14, 1832 A.D.

Coming over to the political and administrative scene of Cachar under Raja Govinda Chandra, it is observed that after the death of Raja Krishna Chandra, his younger brother Govinda Chandra Narayana ascended the throne of Cachar in 1813 A.D. Contrary to the expectations of the people of Cachar, Raja Govinda Chandra failed to bring about its all-round development. From the very beginning of his accession to the throne he had to face lots of trouble, both internally and externally. Investigation reveals that he was not a very capable king and that he was tyrannical and avaricious in nature. As a result, he was getting unpopular among his subjects day by day. The common people became very much disgruntled and felt insecure under his rule. The ‘nobles’ were also not at all happy with the king. The dissatisfaction of the ‘nobles’ and that of the common people reached its zenith when Govinda Chandra married Induprabha, the widow of
his elder brother *Raja* Krishna Chandra, so much so, that gradually he lost the co-operation of those holding the various important administrative portfolios of the kingdom. This disturbing socio-political condition encouraged Kahi Das, the Revenue Collector in North Cachar and his son Tularam, the commander-in-chief of the army to revolt against *Raja* Govinda Chandra. When Tularam rose in revolt against *Raja* Govinda Chandra, other officers of the Kachari kingdom helped him.

The internal situation in Cachar took a new turn when Manipuris renewed their hostilities in Cachar which proved advantageous for Tularam. Tularam took the opportunity of such chaotic situation and was determined to establish his authority over Cachar by dethroning *Raja* Govinda Chandra.

To get rid of the chaotic condition, Govinda Chandra sought the help of the East India Company authorities, but the Company authorities, to take advantage from the mess, did not do anything for the improvement of the situation. Govinda Chandra then appealed to the Burmese to rescue him from the clutches of the Manipuri rulers. The Burmese responded favourably to Govinda Chandra’s appeal because they were found to be
interested to establish their control over Cachar. However, the advancement of the Burmese force towards Cachar sounded an alarm to the East India Company. They could realise that if the Burmese succeeded in occupying Cachar, their next attempt would definitely be to extend their authority over the British Indian territory in Sylhet. So, the British made up their mind to protect Cachar from the Burmese attack. When the British achieved success in expelling the Burmese from Cachar, it paved the way for a political settlement between Govinda Chandra and the East India Company over the fate of Cachar. It is pertinent to note here that the Anglo-Burmese War is considered as the turning point of the British \textit{Raj} in the entire North East India.

The study reveals that during the reign of \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra the army was found to be too weak to meet any eventualities. In fact, the army became so weak that it even failed to suppress the incursion of a small group of Kukis. Thus, Cachar became the hot-bed of political rivalries during the reign of \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra due to his administrative inefficiency and lack of political insight which eventually led to his assassination, fall of kingdom and annexation of the same by the British.
Turning to the socio-religious and cultural scene, it is observed that *Raja* Govinda Chandra’s inability to maintain peace, prosperity and security of Cachar notwithstanding, his contribution towards the socio-religious and cultural field cannot be altogether undermined. The beginning of the 19th century India witnessed all the features of social backwardness, but unlike the scene in mainstream India, socio-religious system of the Dimasa kingdom in Cachar was, by and large, free from many social taboos. The unique feature of Dimasa social life was the existence of both male and female clans. Male clans were known as *Semphongs* and female clans – *Julus*.

During the reign of *Raja* Krishna Chandra, the number of *Semphongs* and *Julus* rose to 40 and 42 respectively. There is no record to suggest that this number changed during the reign of *Raja* Govinda Chandra Narayana. It is also observed that the restrictions on marriage among the members of different groups of *Julus* and *Semphongs* continued during the time of *Raja* Govinda Chandra. As a matter of fact, during his tenure as a king, no change is noticeable in the traditional social life of the Dimasas. Investigation reveals that Govinda Chandra least interfered in the traditional culture and customs of various
ethnic groups of the then Dimasa society. The study also reveals that although caste system existed in Cachar during Govinda Chandra’s regime, it did not have any impact on the Dimasas. The Dimasa society was generally considered a mono-caste society.

The birth of a baby, either boy or girl, was regarded as a very joyful occasion in the Dimasa society. The funeral rites of Dimasas during the time of Raja Govinda Chandra were performed in conformity with the Brahmanical ways of the Hindu creed. The Dimasas used to burn their dead; and the family members and near relatives of the deceased person were found to observe mourning for 12 days. It is pertinent to emphasise here that in most cases the legacy of the socio-religious conditions, as existed during the Dimasa rule, continues even today among the Dimasas.

An important feature of the social system of the Dimasas was the setting up of a Nodrang, a bachelor’s dormitory for the boys in the villages, which served as a social institution for giving preparatory training to them in all aspects of their lives. On the food front, rice was the staple food of the Kachari people during the time of Raja Govinda Chandra. Regarding dress materials used by
the Dimasas, it is observed that they used to wear their traditional dresses. Adoption of a child was permissible according to Dimasa customs and traditions. But interestingly, Govinda Chandra did not adopt any child in spite of the fact that he was issueless.

The Bengalee subjects under Kachari kingdom were found to face various difficulties in judicial matters after the settlement of the Kacharis in the plains land in a big way. To tide over these difficulties legislations were proclaimed by Raja Govinda Chandra on the basis of two legal books written in Bengali, such as Herombo Rajyer Dandabidhi and Herombo Rajyer Rinadanbidhi. On the basis of such legislations, Rajguru used to help the Bengali subjects to mitigate their legal difficulties. However, no practical applicability of the Dandabidhi and Rinadanbidhi is noticeable, because these two legal books were not written by taking cognisance of the social background of that time.

The study on cultural and religious aspects reveals that during the regime of Raja Govinda Chandra, two distinct cultural traditions were found to exist — one, traditional culture of the plains Cachar and the other, Dimasa culture, maintained by those who migrated to plains
Cachar along with the king. It is on record that many religious rituals were performed under the direct patronage of the king. Discovery of coins has helped the historians to ascertain the fact that the influence of Hinduism on the Dimasa royal family was operative since early part of the 16th century. Kacharis were found to follow some of the Hindu rites and rituals in their religious functions. The study also reveals that the process of transformation of the society of the Kachari people was influenced by the process of Sanskritisation. Influence of Sanskritisation is also evident from the change of names of the Dimasa kings that started from the early part of the 16th century. Ranachandi, the Goddess of Shakti Cult, was the traditional deity of the Kacharis, but they were also found to be respectful towards Vaishnavism. The study of life-style of Raja Govinda Chandra reveals that like his immediate predecessor, he was also a religious-minded king. The list of religious expenditure incurred by Raja Govinda Chandra suggests that a huge amount of money used to be spent by him on various religious functions.

Dimasa kings were also found to patronise literary and cultural activities in Bangali and Sanskrit languages notwithstanding the fact that they were not
Bengalees. Since the time of shifting their capital to Maibong in North Cachar Hills during the middle of the 16th century, they started using Bengali language extensively in their administrative works. Raja Govinda Chandra himself was a Sanskrit scholar and a poet of high calibre in Bengali language.

The ruins of the buildings constructed by Kachari kings at Khaspur reveal that the Kacharis had remarkable contribution in the field of architecture. When the Kachari kings shifted their capital to Khaspur, they designed their capital beautifully. However, since the period of Raja Govinda Chandra was marked by political unrest, it is unlikely that he had any notable contribution in the embodiment of those beautiful pieces of architecture.

Turning over to the economic scene it is observed that the economic condition of the Kachari kingdom improved remarkably within 25 years of shifting of the capital from Dimapur to Maibong. The process of economic transformation continued even after shifting of the capital from Maibong to Khaspur. In Khaspur, the agricultural land was found to be exceptionally fertile that helped high growth of agricultural production. Famine was something unknown to the people of Cachar at that time,
because yield of paddy was very high, fishes were found in abundance in the rivers, and forests were found to be rich in numerous forest resources. People were so self-sufficient in essential commodities that there was no necessity of buying or selling any food item. However, in view of the deteriorating mutual relationship with the British centering round external trade, the Kachari kingdom had to face crisis in the economic front from the time of Raja Krishna Chandra. The expenditure incurred by Raja Krishna Chandra on his repeated pilgrimages deepened the crisis. The study reveals that this economic crisis continued during the time of Raja Govinda Chandra. In fact, when Govinda Chandra assumed power as a king, the economic condition of his kingdom was found to be far from satisfactory. The chronic political crisis, additional expenditure incurred on shifting of capital from Khaspur to Haritikar, and the extravagant attitude for performing religious rites were responsible for the economic crisis during the time of Raja Govinda Chandra. His endeavour to tide over the situation by selling titles, leasing salt wells, selling of forest products, elephant catching, imposing tax on trade and commerce, custom duty on river ghats and duty on transit of timber and other forest products, etc. proved futile. To these problems
was added the annual tribute of Rs. 10,000 to be paid to the East India Company following the Treaty of Badarpur. The economic crisis of the kingdom after the Burmese invasion became more acute, because agricultural production was badly affected due to the mass exodus of the people from the kingdom during and after the Burmese invasion. Again, on regaining the power as the king, Govinda Chandra frantically endeavoured to raise his revenue without considering its pros and cons. As a result, the situation on economic front worsened. His subjects strongly reacted and resented his action. It is believed that failure on all fronts and more particularly on economic front, was one of the dominating factors that helped his conspirators to hatch a plan to assassinate him. He was eventually assassinated, marking the beginning of the end of the Kachari kingdom. The British annexed Cachar on the pleas that there was no descendant of the late king and that they had to comply with the frequent and earnestly-expressed wishes of the people of Cachar. But these are believed to be not the actual grounds behind the annexation of Cachar. To quote Rhodes and Bose, “In fact, the British Authorities, either at Fort William or at Sylhet, once become aware of the economic potential of Cachar, wanted to take the country under their control.
This is very much clear from the correspondence exchanged between George Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Government, Fort William, Charles Tucker, the Commissioner of Sylhet and David Scott, Agent to the Governor General between 23rd November, 1827 A.D. and 20th July, 1829 A.D. The higher amount of annual tribute, i.e. Rs. 10,000, stipulated in the treaty of Badarpur signed in 1824 A.D. caused great harm to a kingdom which was devastated by invaders and just trying to recoup the situation. Despite various ups and downs, the Dimasa-Kachari Kingdom was able to survive as an independent Kingdom for over three hundred years, due to contributions of the common people. The qualities of the Dimasa-Kacharis, as observed by E. C. Stuart Baker in 1907 A.D., can be summarised as a race that kept their promises, never stole, seldom lied and could be trusted. Such people, as and when needed, were employed by the king as his soldiers in the royal army."

Historians not only blame the British for the downfall of the Kachari kingdom, they also equally blame Govinda Chandra’s blind belief in fortune for his own downfall. According to U. C. Guha, as Govinda Chandra believed that he was destined to be assassinated as
per his horoscope, he never personally ventured to fight any war against his adversaries and preferred to live like a coward. But, in spite of that he was unable to save his life and eventually succumbed to the conspiracies by his assassinators.

The study of the political, socio-cultural and religious as also the economic history of Cachar during Raja Govinda Chandra’s rule, before the British annexation of Cachar is very much a rewarding experience in so far as it reveals what kind of people lived; what standard of culture they nourished, and what level of intellectual and moral life they attained much before the entry of the fruits of the inventions of science and technology; and in those days of exclusiveness and intolerance in Cachar, shut out from the 18th century liberalism, industry, science and technology, how the Kacharis first came in touch with the legacy of Sanskrit, the store house of ancient wisdom, and culture, through carriers of Vedic culture and way of life in such personalities as the Brahmins and Pandits from the then Bengal especially of Surma Valley, who by their command over the Sanskrit texts could cast the hypnotic spell of the Aryan culture and Vedic wisdom over the ruling king and his court. The effect of this spell was not
temporary but deep and penetrating into the social fabric of
the later half of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th
century in Cachar. This was the first ray of light which soon
grew into full-fledged morning sunrays to dispel the age-old
seclusion and isolation, and heralded the dawn of a new era
of unity and integrity with the mainstream India.

Another profitable aspect of the study is
that the age-old culture of the inaccessible hilly terrains of
the north east region blossomed into different kinds of
natural flowers hidden from the eyes of the plains people
with Aryan culture. The culture of the Kacharis is found to
have such distinctiveness which has retained its original
ferver and singularity even today declaring that the culture
of the plain tribes is ever-new. It flourishes only in such
topographical conditions peculiar to the region; and within
such topography they are the most beautiful, invincible and
original. As such, we find that the Kacharis have
assimilated with the national culture without sacrificing
their own. It is the duty of all of us, including the
Government, to formulate appropriate policies for bringing
out socio-economic transformation of the Kacharis, keeping
in mind their historical background.