Chapter - I
CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

The southern most part of Assam, commonly known as Barak Valley, comprises of three districts, namely, Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj. However, the administrative scenario of this region was totally different till the first half of 1983 when southern Assam comprised of only Cachar district with its headquarters at Silchar and divided into three subdivisions, Silchar, Hailakandi and Karimganj. The process of bifurcation of Cachar district started in the year 1983 when Karimganj was upgraded as a district on July 1, 1983, vide government notification No. GAG 215/83/1 dated 14-06-1983. On October 1, 1989, Hailakandi subdivision was also upgraded as a district vide Government of Assam’s notification No. A.A.A. 98/89/Pt./1, dated 29-09-1989. It needs mention here that till November 1951, North Cachar Hills was also a subdivision of Cachar district. It was separated from Cachar and tagged to the district of Mikir and North Cachar Hills as a subdivision in November 1951. This North
Cachar Hills subdivision was also upgraded to a district in the year 1971.5

Before the annexation of Cachar by the British in 1832 A.D., the Dimasa-Kacharis ruled over this vast territory of Cachar, both hills and plains. 6 Various historical records reveal 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.

Geographically the entire Southern Assam region is divided into two distinct [divisions – hills and plains.7 Hills portion comprises of North Cachar Hills between latitudes 24° 54' and 26°42'N and longitudes 92° 8' and 93° 53' E (approx.) covering about 4888 sq. km.8], a region which is the continuation of the Assam range of hills.9 On the north, the present North Cachar Hills are bounded by Nagaon, Golaghat and Karbi Anglong districts; on the south, by Cachar district; on the east by Nagaland and Manipur and on the west by Khasi and Jayantia Hills district of the Meghalaya State.10

It needs mention here that the whole North Cachar Hills district is a hilly area. It constitutes the
northern flank of Borail range which forms the water divide between the Dhansiri Valley and the Surma Valley in the north and the south respectively. The high peaks along the range are Jhingubum, Nairkula, Mahadeo, Kaukaha, Kolmbot, Sherpai and Kalangtom, Longmai Laikarang, Deojali Parbat and other north east and south west trending low ranges flank the northern slopes of the Borail range constituting Langting-Mupa reserved forest. The eastern flanks of Jayantia Hills consist of Saipong and Karunming reserved forest hills along the eastern side of the Kapili Valley and Sunngut etc. hills on the North West side of the Kapili river.¹¹

The river Kapili rises in the Jayantia Hills and flows through the Jayantia Hills and North Cachar Hills. The river enters the North Cachar Hills at its confluence with the Wohkyuriam river and forms the boundary between the North Cachar Hills District and Jayantia Hills District till its confluence with the Myntang river, a little above Garampani.¹² Hence upto Diyungmukh it forms the boundary between the North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglog and thence flows towards Karbi Anglong and Nagaon districts. The river Doyang rises near the Mahur station and flows through the North Cachar Hills District upto the
Kapili river which again serves as the western boundary of the North Cachar Hills.\textsuperscript{13}

Doyang, the principal river of the North Cachar Hills area\textsuperscript{14} has its tributaries like Mahur, Mupa, Langting and Lumding.\textsuperscript{15} The Jatinga river which rises from the south of Haflong flows west and south through the hills and reaches the plains at Panighat and ultimately falls into the river Barak. The small rivers like the Jiri, the Chiri, the Madhura etc. (tributaries of the Barak) also pass through the North Cachar Hills and all of these finally fall into the river Barak. The Jiri river serves as the natural boundary between Assam and Manipur.\textsuperscript{16}

Coming over to the plains region, it may be mentioned that present plains of Cachar lies between Longitude 92°15′ and 93°15′ east and Latitude 24°8′ and 25°8′ north\textsuperscript{17} covering an approximate area of 3786 sq.km.\textsuperscript{18} It is bounded on the north by the North Cachar Hills District and Jayantia Hills of Meghalaya; on the east by Manipur; on the south by Mizoram; on the west by Tripura and Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{19} The district of Cachar is bounded by a number of mountains on the northern side. Among those mountains, Borail range deserves special mention. It is the Borail Hill that separates the Barak Valley from the
Brahmaputra Valley. The plains Cachar is surrounded by the Bhuban range of Hills on the south eastern side. It is a continuation of the Lusai Hills that stretches upto the river Barak that flows through the plains of Cachar. In the north south direction, there are two more long ranges of hills – one is the Rengty Hills, another is the Teline Hills. Again, in the western side there is Chhatachera Hills, located in Hailakandi district. The Chhatachera is also known by different local names. Middle portion of the hills is known by Saraspur, and the lower part by Badarpur hills.

Besides Bhuban and Borail range of hills, Cachar is encircled by some other hills too. These are Lusai hills, Kalangtam, Jentahajum, Sherfaisif, Hampeopet and others. Because of the existence of so many hills and mountains, communication system of the region always poses a problem to its inhabitants. However, the region is rich in forest resources. Although, the water resources are plentiful in the region, during the rainy season, most of the rivers become unnavigable. Barak, or the Barabakra as it was called in the past, the principal river of the plains of Cachar, originates from the southern slopes of the Naga hills, Manipur watershed, flows to the south west direction and reaches Tipaimukh. Thereafter, it turns to the north,
forming some areas as the boundary line between Cachar and Manipur. It then joins one of its tributaries Jiri. At Jiribum, Barak again turns towards west, passes through the plains of Cachar and reaches Bhanga, near Badarpur. From Bhanga to Haritikar it serves as the international border line between India and Bangladesh. The Barak is bifurcated into two at Haritikar, viz, Surma and Kusiara. While Kusiara enters Sylhet district of Bangladesh, Surma flows through Cachar upto Jalalpur and then enters into the territory of Bangladesh. Besides Jiri, Barak has its other tributaries like, Chiri, Madhura, Jatinga, Dhaleswari etc. Apart from the river Barak and its tributaries, the plains of Cachar is dotted with haors and beels.

The district of Cachar in Assam owes its name to the Kacharis who ruled over the district before its annexation to British India. It is also possible that the name might have been given to this district by the Bengalees of Sylhet (a district of present Bangladesh, bordering Cachar) because it is an outlying place skirting the mountains. The word Cachar in Sylhet, means a stretch of land at the foot of a mountain. According to E.A. Gait, however, “The word Kachar is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning a bordering region. The district of Cachar
may have got its name directly from this word, or it may have been so-called after its principal tribe.” According to Padmanath Bhattacharjee Vidyavinode, “Mr. Gait is of opinion that the Kacharis have given their name to the district of Cachar. We might as well be told that the Romans gave the name Rome. The fact is that the name has been given to the district by the Bangalis of Sylhet, because it is an outlying place skirting the mountains. The word ‘Kachhar’ is still used in Sylhet in designating a plot of land at the foot of a mountain. It is derived from Sanskrit ‘Kachchha’ which means ‘a plain near mountain’ or ‘a place near water’ whence is the name of the state Katch in Bombay. The ‘Kachharis’ are naturally the natives of Kachar as Bengalees are of Bengal.”

An in-depth study of the history of Cachar reveals that the early history of Cachar is somewhat obscure. Before the 5th century A.D. Cachar was included in Sylhet and in all probability it was a part of the Samatata kingdom. During the 5th century A.D. Deva rulers of Sylhet ruled Sylhet, Maimansingh, Chittagong including Cachar and Tripura. The Bhatera Inscriptions of Sylhet, reveal that the king Kesava Deva granted land in the name of the Lord Vateswara. The area of the donated
land included parts of North and South Sylhet, Habiganj, Karimganj and parts of the plains of Cachar. This suggests that the name of Cachar was known during the 5th century A.D. This is corroborated from the Bhatera Copper plate inscriptions also.

Investigation reveals that so many dynasties ruled over Cachar from time to time. References of Cachar can be found both in the Bhatera inscriptions of Sylhet and Nidhanpur Plates of Bhaskar Varman which were issued in the 5th and 7th century A.D. respectively. The Nidhanpur plates indicate that Sylhet and Cachar in the 7th century A.D. were under the Varman rule. It can be assumed reasonably well that after the death of Bhaskar Varman, Varman rule in Kamrupa started to decline. It is quite likely that during that period Cachar and Sylhet came under Samatata rule.

According to R. C. Mazumder, Sylhet and the adjacent territories were ruled by Harikela kingdom between 7th and 10th century A.D. and perhaps Cachar came under its rule at that time. In the 13th century A.D, the Tipperahs ruled over Barak Valley. The Tipperahs were another section of the Bodo tribes whose territorial boundary included Tripura, a vast portion of Sylhet and
Comillah (two districts of present Bangladesh). Once upon a time the capital of the Tipperahs was at Khalangsha in Cachar. Ultimately in the beginning of the 16th century A.D, Cachar was annexed to Tripura. However, during the last part of the 16th century A.D. Tripuri control over Cachar was released following the invasion of Koch general Chilarai.

Koch control over Cachar continued upto 1745 A.D. and the Koch boundary in Cachar was extended from the North Cachar Hills to the Longai river in Karimganj district.

Chilarai came back to Kochbihar as he was directed to do so by the Koch king Naranarayan. In Cachar, he left the Koch army in Brahmapur. For the administration of this territory, Chilarai appointed his brother, Kamalnarayan, the Governor of Kochpur or Brahmapur. Later on, it came to be known as Khaspur. Kamalnarayan was succeeded by two Koch Governors at Khaspur. The third Koch Governor proved to be a tyrant. Conspiracies were made to assassinate him and the plan was implemented successfully. Thereafter, Koch general Uditya became the Raja of Khaspur. The last Koch Raja of Khaspur Bhim Singh had only a daughter and no son. Bhim
Singh arranged her marriage with Lakshmi Chandra, the son of Kirti Chandra. Kirti Chandra was the then Kachari king at Maibong. After marriage Lakshmi Chandra was made the Koch Governor at Khaspur. It was an opportunity for the ruling Dimasa tribes of Maibong to establish their control in Khaspur after the death of Bhim Singh, the father-in-law of Lakshmi Chandra. C. A. Soppitt, in his book, *Historical and Descriptive Account of the Kachari Tribes in the North Cachar Hills*, mentions 1750 A.D. as the year in which the Kacharis migrated from Maibong to the plain of Cachar and this is believed to be the beginning of the Dimasa-Kachari rule in Khaspur.

Regarding the origin of the Dimasa-Kacharis the observation of the historians differs. According to Dalton, the Kacharis, one of the constituents of the Bodo nation, “are one of the most numerous and widely spread of the tribes on the Eastern Frontier”, B.C. Allen, however, observes that from the anthropological point of view, the Kacharis were one of the sections of great Bodo race of Assam. Today, they are known by different names in different areas. They are known as Bodo or Bodosa in lower Brahmaputra Valley. These people are spread over in some other regions like, Nepal, Goalpara of Assam and
Kochbehar of West Bengal where they are known as Mech, in the North Cachar Hills as Dimasa and in the plains of Cachar they are better known as Barman.55

Because of the absence of any authentic historical records, nothing can be said very confidently regarding the origin of the Kacharis. The physical feature and general appearance of the Kacharis are quite similar with the Mongoloids, and this indicates that Tibet and China might be the original home of the Kacharis. 56 These Mongolian tribes belonged to the Sino-Tibetan language speaking group, and might have migrated to Assam during the early part of the 1st millennium B.C.57

The Sino-Tibetan languages have been broadly classified into two major groups – (a) Tibeto-Burman and (b) Siamese-Chinese. 58 The Dimasa-Kacharis belonged to the Tibeto-Barman family of the Indo-Chinese group.59

Regarding the original home of the Kacharis, it is the view of S. K. Bhuiyan, an erudite scholar and historian, that “Some hold Tibet and China to be their original home in view of the preponderance of Mongolian affinities in the Kacharis. There is bound to be diversity of opinion regarding their pre-Assam habitats. About their first
home in Assam the Kacharis themselves believe that they lived originally in a land called Kamruli (Kamrup?) by which flowed a river in a great valley; they were driven out and got to a place called Kundilo (Kundil or Sadiya?). Another renowned scholar C. A. Soppitt opines, “The old legends handed down from father to son would lead one to suppose that the race originally inhabited the hills and slopes to the north of the Brahmaputra, and then gradually extended through central Assam to the Mymensingh district, the headquarters of the Raj being established at Gauhati.” Again, according to Capt. Thomas Fisher, the first Superintendent of British Cachar under the Company’s rule, the Kacharis gradually set up a big kingdom comprising Assam, Sylhet, Tripura and Cachar keeping their original headquarters in Kamrupa. Their kingdom thus comprised of the whole area starting from Kamrupa down to the Bay of Bengal. They were gradually expelled from Kamrupa by the Rajas of Kochbihar and that their kingdom was subsequently divided into two parts. The southern part of the said kingdom came under the rule of a Prince said to be the younger son of the king who established the house of Tripura. It has also been observed that the Tripuris might have been the kith and kin of the Kacharis.
The Kacharis came into prominence in North East India. In the Brahmaputra Valley, still we find the names of some places and rivers beginning with the Kachari prefix ‘Di’ (‘Di’ means water or river), e.g. Dibrugarh, Digboi, Diphu, Dimapur, Dimama, Diju, Dimu, Digarn, Diputa, Dikhaan, Dihing, Dibong, Ditsang, and so on. It may, thus, be reasonably concluded that in course of their migration from Kamrup to upper Assam, some of the Kachari tribes might have settled down on the banks of those river (i.e., Dikhan, Dihing, Dibong etc.) and some other section might have settled down at the hill tops and established matrimonial relationship with the original hill tribes. Although the full history of the Kacharis is almost lost in mystery, it is quite possible that the Kacharis settled down both in the hills and plains of the Brahmaputra Valley.64

Suniti Kr. Chatterjee is of the view that when the Ahoms came to Assam, they were opposed by two powerful groups – one, belonging to the Chutiyas in the extreme east near Sadiya, and the other, to the Kacharis of the Dhansiri Valley.65

A pertinent question may crop up here in one’s mind as to where did the Kacharis first establish their kingdom? To get a plausible answer to this question, one
has to depend on various Kachari traditions. After examining these traditions Laxmi Devi, the author of the book *Ahom-Tribal Relation* opines that there were two branches of the Kacharis; one ruled from Sadiya, their kingdom being known as Chutiya territory. The other branch ruled first from the capital at Dimapur, then at Maibong and finally at Khaspur. Sen observes that it can be ascertained from the Kachari traditions, as hinted above, that in the early part of the 13th century A.D., i.e., before the advent of the Ahoms, the boundary of the Kachari kingdom was extended beyond the river Disang in the east stretching upto Namchang in the Naga Hills.

But according to S. Endle, the Kacharis of Sadiya and the Kacharis of Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur were the same group of people. To quote Endle, “... the earliest historical notices of the eastern branch of the race show that under the name of Chutiyas they had established a powerful kingdom in the eastern corner of the province, the seat of Government being at or near the modern Sadiya. How long this kingdom existed it is now impossible to say; but what is known with some degree of certainty is, that they were engaged in a prolonged struggle with the Ahoms, a section of the great Shan (Tai) race, who crossed the
Patkoi Hills from the south and east about A.D. 1228, and at once subdued the Morans, Borahis, and other Kachari tribes living near the northern slope of these hills. With the Chutiyas the strife would seem to have been a long and bitter one, lasting for some 150 or 200 years. But in the end the victory remained with the Ahoms, who drove their opponents to take refuge in or around Dimapur on the Dhansiri at the foot of the Naga Hills. There for a time the fugitives were in comparative security and they appear to have attained to a certain measure of material civilization, a state of things to which some interesting remains of buildings (never as yet properly explored) seem to bear direct and lasting witness. Eventually, however, their ancient foes followed them upto their new capital, and about the middle of the sixteenth century the Ahoms succeeded in capturing and sacking Dimapur itself. The Kachari Raja thereupon removed his court to Maibong (“much paddy”), where the dynasty would seem to have maintained itself for some two centuries. Finally, however, under pressure of an attack by the Jaintia Raja the Kachari sovereign withdrew from Maibong to Khaspur in Cachar (circa 1750 A.D.).”
S. K. Bhuiyan observed that the kingdom of the Chutiyas was bounded by Sadiya on the east, the river Dikhau on the west, the Dihing on the north and Kenduguri on the south. According to, E. A. Gait, “In the thirteenth century it would seem that the Kachari kingdom extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhau to the Kallang, or beyond, and included also the valley of the Dhansiri and the tract which now forms the North Cachar subdivision.”

As observed by Sen, evidently before the arrival of the Ahoms, the Kacharis already established a powerful kingdom in Assam. But the battle between the Ahoms and the Kacharis for supremacy in the region continued and subsequently the latter was dislodged from upper Assam and forced to come down to the plains of Cachar where they built up their last capital at Khaspur in the second half of the 18th century A.D. Here the Dimasa-Kacharis ruled up to 1830 A.D. and in 1832 A.D, the plains Cachar came under the control of the East India Company.

It may now be appropriate to throw light on the origin of the term Dimasa. The investigation reveals that different scholars have given different views regarding the origin of the term Dimasa. Mrs. Nirupama Hagjer, in her
book *Dimasa*, opines that it is the traditional system of the Dimasas that they always introduce themselves as ‘sa’ which means children of the place where they lived. Mrs. Hagjer is also of the view that the term Dimasa has been derived from ‘*Dimapursa*’. Dimapur was the old capital of the Kacharis on the bank of the ‘Dima’ (Dhansiri). But this view of Mrs. Hagjer has been contradicted by B. N. Bordoloi. He observed that had it been the tradition of the Dimasa, as claimed by Mrs. Hagjer, that they call themselves as the children of the place of their habitation, they would have called themselves as Maibongsa, or Khaspursa when they shifted their capital from Dimapur to Maibong and then from Maibong to Khaspur.

The views expressed by N. K. Barman over this debate are no less important. According to him, Hidimba myth of the origin of the Dimasas, goes to the extent of saying that the inhabitants of this eastern region were unknown to the Aryans of Aryavarta. It was only after exploration of this region by the Pandava brother, it found a conspicuous place in the Sanskrit literature and particularly in the mythology. Meghavarna, son of Ghatotkacha and grandson of Bhima and Hidimba ruled this part of Aryavarta and thenceforth this ruling family of the Kachari
nation assumed the aristocratic distinction as ‘Hidimbachha’ since the days of antiquity. It was contorted into Dimba-Chha and subsequently as Dimachha (Dimasa). In this connection, an interesting point has been noted by B. N. Bordoloi. He opines that if the term Dimasa has been derived from Hidimba, then why the other branches of the Kacharis living in the Brahmaputra Valley call themselves as Bodo or Bodosa or Bodofisa? Again, if we turn our eyes towards Cachar, we find that in Cachar district the Dimasa-Kacharis introduce themselves as Barmans. Thus, it is clear that the Kacharis living in different parts of Assam are known by various names. To quote S. K. Barpujari, “A great portion of the so called Kachari population now settling down mostly in the district of North Cachar Hills call themselves ‘Dimasa’, while they are known to their neighbours as ‘Hill Kacharis’. They constitute an important ethnic group in Assam. Besides North Cachar Hills, they are found also in its adjoining areas in Nagaon and Cachar. The Barmans of Cachar are also Dimasas. The origin of Dimasa is shrouded in mystery due to the non-availability of historical records.”

The origin of the word ‘Dimasa’ is associated with the Bodo formations ‘Dima’ and ‘Fisa’ meaning ‘great
rivers’ and ‘children’ respectively. The compound word ‘Dimasa’, therefore, means the ‘children of the great river’. On the other hand, ‘the children of the great river’ mean permanent inhabitants of a great river valley. However, we have difficulties in identifying the great rivers referred to — whether it is the Brahmaputra, Dhansiri, Mahur or even the Barak river, because it is a fact that they inhabited and established their political authority over these river-valleys in stages. It is no longer a disputed fact that the Kachari people were the original autochthones of the Brahmaputra Valley known as ‘Kamruli’, i.e., Kamrupa in ancient times and ruled over different states under different names at different times in different parts of the valley.  

The discussion on the origin of the Dimasas cannot possibly be complete unless we take into consideration the views expressed by J. B. Bhattacharjee over the issue. According to him, the people although originally lived in the Brahmaputra Valley they might not have acquired the name ‘Dimasa’ from this river. On the other hand, one is inclined to say that their name may not be associated with any particular river, and that they are called by this name because they lived on river valleys all throughout. First, they were established in the Brahmaputra
Valley, began State-building process at Sadiya where their kingdom was bounded by the Dikhow and Dihing rivers, and then at Kamrupa from where they were pushed back, then in the Dhansiri Valley (Dimapur), next in the Mahur Valley (Maibong) and finally on the valley of the Barak known as the plains of Cachar with Khaspur as their capital. The continuous process of State-building on river banks might have perhaps led them to be termed as Dimasa.  

The original homeland of the Dimasa-Kacharis may be traced in various folklores, legends and epic traditions. 

According to Dimasa traditional folklore Dilaobraha Sangibraha, the Dimasas migrated to Cachar from North West India. In favour of this view, some scholars have cited the reference of Kabya Mimamsa, a book of literary theory written by Rajshekhar in the 10th century A.D., where reference of the river ‘Hidimba’ that flows through the ‘Hidimba forest’ is found in western India. At Shimla also, there exists a temple known as ‘Hidimba temple’. Welknown Dimasa scholars like J. L. Thaosen, U. C. Barman and others are the supporters of this view.
According to the Dimasa Rajmala, the first king of this dynasty was Ghatatkach, the son of Bhima (second Pandava brother) and Hidimba of Mahabharata.\textsuperscript{82}

In the Mahabharata, southern Assam was known as the Hairambadesha.\textsuperscript{83} According to the Mahabharata, the forest where the tired Pandava brothers along with Draupadi and their mother Kunti took refuge after being fled from the ‘house of lac’ (Varanabat), was the habitat of Hidimbo demon. The sister of Hidimbo was known as Hidimba. Under the instruction of Hidimbo, Hidimba arrived at their shelter to kill the five Pandavas. But the appearance of Bhima attracted her and she offered to get married to him. After killing the demon Hidimbo, Bhima (the second Pandava brother) married the demoness Hidimba, and Ghatatkach was the son of Bhima and Hidimba.\textsuperscript{84}

Some scholars have however refuted this view. According to them, during the ancient period, when the means of communication were so poor, it was next to impossible for the Pandavas to reach at the north eastern part of India from Varanabat within one night.\textsuperscript{85}

Again, going by the Skanda Purana, it appears that the present North East India was the original home of Hidimba. The description of Ghatatkach’s marriage is
recorded in the 59th episode of the *Kumarika* part included in *Maheswara* part of the *Skanda Purana*. Yudhisthira (the eldest Pandava brother) solicited the advice of Lord Sri-Krishna in the matter of selection of a good match for Ghatatkacha. As such, Sri-Krishna considered Kamakatankata, the daughter of Muru *Danav* (demon Muru) of Pragjyotishpur as the perfect match for Ghatatkacha. She was so brave that she dared to enter into a war against Lord Krishna. However, ultimately the mediation of Goddess Kamakshya was instrumental in bringing this war to a halt.²⁶ Citing this episode Lord Krishna uttered the following *shloka*:

\[ \text{evameśocitā dārā haiḍamvevidyate subhā//} \\
\text{kāmākhye ca raṇe ghorā yā vidyudiva bhāsate//}^{87} \]

Meaning, this good looking brave lady is the best match for the son of Hidimba. She travels like electricity at the battle field in the province of Goddess Kamakshya.

This lady was not only brave but learned too. She declared that she would marry that person who would be able to defeat her in debate. Ghatotkach married that lady after defeating her in the debate. That the present north
east India is the background of this plot is supported by the various quotations of Lord Sri-Krishna. Kamakatankata was the contemporary of Bhagadatta. Lord Krishna uttered the following shloka while blessing her

\[
\text{mayā devyā prthivya ca bhagadattah kṛto nṛpaḥ}
\]

\[
sa te pujāṁ vahuvidhāṁ karisyati svasuryathā
\]

\[
vasantī cātra tāṁ haiḍimbaṁ parimāpsyasi
\]

\[
evamāśvāsyā tāṁ devīṁ maurvī cāhaṁ vyasarj hayatam/}
\]

The above shloka may be explained thus. Both me and Goddess Earth were instrumental in giving settlement to Bhagadatta at the Naraka kingdom. As such he will look after you as his sister. You can hope to marry Hidimba’s son only if you stay here.

The references of Pragjyotishpur, Kamakhya and Bhagadatta (all belonged to North East India) prove beyond doubt that Hidimba used to live in North East India.

North East India is the home of tribal population, most of whom belong to the Mongoloid group. As hinted earlier, from the anthropological point of view, the Dimasas also belong to the Mongoloid group. Therefore, it can be concluded reasonably well that the original homeland of the Dimasas was in North East India.
The political history of the Dimasa-Kacharis also deserves special mention. Various authentic historical records confirm that the Kacharis had established their authority over Assam before the advent of the Ahoms. To quote B. C. Allen, “The first collision between the Kacharis and the Ahoms is said to have taken place in 1490 A.D., on the banks of the Dikho river. The Kacharis were victorious and killed 120 of the enemy, and the Ahoms offered a girl, two elephants, and twelve slaves to induce them to make peace. In 1524 A.D., the Kacharis again raided into Ahom territory, but were repulsed, and the Kachari Raja gave his sister in marriage to the Ahom king. There was little loss of life on this occasion, but an expeditionary force sent up the Dhansiri two years later succeeded in killing upwards of 1700 of the Kacharis. In 1530 A.D., Detsung, the Kachari Raja, is said to have offered his sister in marriage to the Ahom king, and to have sent with her as dowry an elephant, 500 sword and clothes, 1,000 napkins, 100 doolies, and Rs. 1,000 in cash; but it was evident that there could be no permanent peace with such an aggressive neighbour. In 1536 A.D., hostilities again broke out. Detsung was defeated and his capital was sacked, and the Kacharis were shorn of all their possessions in the valley of the Dhansiri,
and north of the Kalang in Nowgong." Initially Detsung himself escaped, but was captured at Jangmara, where he was executed. To quote B. C. Allen again, "Raiding parties continued to be sent into the Kachari country and it was probably about this time that the king decided to abandon Dimapur, and moved his capital south west to Maibong on the Mahur river, in the hope that the Ahoms would be unable to follow him through the jungle covered hills to his new abode."

Nirbhoy Narayana (1559 A.D.–1563 A.D.), the son of Detsung, who led the Dimasas to Maibong, became the first Dimasa king of Maibong. The other hill tribes who settled in the surrounding hills of Maibong had readily surrendered to the Kachari king. They agreed to pay annual revenue in the form of house tax, not in cash but in kind and to render martial support as and when necessary. But they continued to maintain their own customs and traditions and other social forms of justice in settling their disputes. An important point to be noted here is that the son of Detsung, i.e., the first Dimasa king of Maibong took the Hindu name of Nirbhoy Narayana. This tradition of taking Hindu name among the Dimasa rulers continued till the last king of this dynasty, i.e. Govinda Chandra Narayana.
There is controversy regarding the tenure of Nirbhoy Narayana as the Dimasa king of Maibong. While Rhodes and Bose have specified his tenure sometime between 1559A.D. and 1563A.D, Amalendu Bhattacharjee has put it as 1536A.D.—1550A.D.94

Nirbhoy Narayana was succeeded by Durlabh Narayana in 1563A.D. But he was humiliated by Naranarayana of Kochbehar.95 No further information is known of his tenure as a king. In the case of Durlabh Narayana also Amalendu Bhattacharjee differs regarding his tenure as the Dimasa king. According to him, Durlabh Narayana ruled from 1550A.D. to 1576A.D.96

Durlabh Narayana was succeeded by Megha Narayana. The numismatic evidences strongly point to the fact that Megha Narayana ascended the throne in 1566A.D. and ruled up to 1583A.D. 97 This date is also contradicted by Amalendu Bhattacharjee who mentions 1576 A.D. as the date of Megha Narayana’s accession to the throne.98

King Megha Narayana was succeeded by king Yasho Narayana. On the evidence of the coins, Rhodes and Bose suggest that Yasho Narayana had ascended the throne in the year 1583A.D, and continued to rule upto
1601 A.D. The war between the Ahoms and the Dimasas (1606 A.D.) was the significant event during the reign of Yasho Narayana. He won the battle and celebrated the victory by changing his name to Pratap Narayana and also by changing the name of his capital from Maibong to Kirtipur. Here also controversy regarding the date continues. According to Amalendu Bhattacharjee, Yasho Narayana ruled upto 1613 A.D. and not upto 1601 A.D, as suggested by Rhodes and Bose.


Next to king Udayaditya, it was Tamradhvaj Narayan (1697 A.D.-1708 A.D.?) who ascended the throne of Maibong. During his period Ahom king Rudra Singha attacked Maibong. Tamradhvaj Narayana was forced to flee towards Khaspur. Meanwhile, the Dimasa king appealed to the Jayantia Raja Ram Singha to help him in this critical
situation. Here incidentally a large number of Ahom soldiers fell sick and they were forced to leave Maibong. When the news reached Tamradhvaj Narayan that the Ahoms had retreated, he informed Jayantia Raja Ram Singha that he no longer needed his help. Taking advantage of the weakness of Tamradhvaj, Ram Singha captured him and took him to Jayantiapur.

Queen of Tamradhvaj, Chandraprabha then sought the help of the Ahom king Rudra Singha and the latter responded favourably to the former's appeal. Tamradhvaj, having been released, expressed allegiance to the Ahom king and promised to pay an annual tribute to the Ahoms. But, soon Tamradhvaj fell ill and died in 1708 A.D.\textsuperscript{102}

The controversy regarding date persists here also. While the date of assumption of Tamradhvaj Narayan as king is 1697 A.D. according to Rhodes and Bose, it is 1699 A.D. according to Amalendu Bhattacharjee.\textsuperscript{103}

After the death of Tamradhvaj Narayan, his minor son (only nine year old) Suradarpa Narayana (1708 A.D. – 1727 A.D.) ascended the throne. As Suradarpa was minor in age, his mother Queen Chandraprabha acted
as guardian until he was old enough to rule the kingdom himself. Queen Chandraprabha was a patron of literary and cultural activities. Under her patronage Bhubaneswar Bachaspati Bhattacharyya translated the *Brihannaradiya Purana* in Bengali. As no coin was found in the name of Suradarpa, controversy remains regarding the period of his rule. According to J. B. Bhattacharjee, “The date of Suradarpa’s accession to the throne appears to be well founded, but there is much confusion about his last regnant years. A number of Sanskrit works were translated into Bengali during his reign in the *Rajdarbar*, the most remarkable of them being *Naradiya Rasamrita* by Bhubaneswar Bhattacharyya Bachaspati. U. C. Guha read the year of translation to be 1652 *Saka* i.e. 1730 A.D. On the otherhand, according to *Deshavali*, a Sanskrit work, written in 1650 *Saka* (1728 A.D.), Ramchandra, a descendant of Surdarpa, was the reigning prince. This suggests that the reign of Suradarpa Narayana ended before 1728 A.D. And that the date of the translation of *Naradiya Rasamrita* has been wrongly deciphered.” So, J. B. Bhattacharjee, on the basis of several evidences, has expressed the opinion that Suradarpa ruled upto 1720 A.D. Amalendu Bhattacharjee also supports this view.
Suradarpa Narayana was succeeded by Dharmadhvaj Narayana.\textsuperscript{108} But according to inscriptions and numismatic evidences, \textit{Raja} Harish Chandra (1720A.D.–1728A.D.) ruled during that period.\textsuperscript{109} J. B. Bhattacharjee also holds the same view.\textsuperscript{110} After undergoing a thorough study, historian S. K. Barpujari observes, "... it may be accepted that Harish Chandra is probably another name of Dharmadhvaj."\textsuperscript{111} Virtually nothing is known about king Dharmadhvaj\textsuperscript{112} or Harish Chandra except that he had reigned for a very short period.

According to \textit{Deshavali}, Rama Chandra Narayana was the king in 1728A.D. Rhodes and Bose mention that he ruled from 1728 A.D. to 1737 A.D.\textsuperscript{113} However, an enquiry over this episode by Amalendu Bhattacharjee reveals that a stone inscription relating to Rama Chandra Narayana was discovered at Khaspur. According to that inscription, the capital \textit{Pat} was set up by the king and Queen Lakshmi Pravabati in the month of \textit{Kartika}, Saka 1669 i.e. in the month of October/November, 1747 A.D. If this be the case, then Rama Chandra Narayana’s reign had continued at least up to 1747A.D, if not later.\textsuperscript{114}
Next king was Kirti Chandra Narayana (1737 A.D.–1745 A.D.)\textsuperscript{115} Amalendu Bhattacharjee observes that Kirti Chandra’s accession to the throne was in the year 1735 A.D. \textsuperscript{116} Two \textit{sanads} of the \textit{Raja} were found in the year 1736 A.D. By the first \textit{sanad}, he appointed one Maniram Laskar of Barkhala, as \textit{Ujir}, and the second \textit{sanad} proclaims him as both a \textit{Hakim} and \textit{Zamindar}. But if the dates on the newly discovered inscription of Khaspur are correctly read, the authenticity of two \textit{sanads} issued by Kirti Chandra becomes doubtful. C. A. Soppitt opines that during the reign of Kirti Chandra, the centre of administration was moved from Maibong to the plains of Cachar.\textsuperscript{117} But according to the newly discovered stone inscription at Khaspur, the capital \textit{Pat} was constructed in 1747 A.D.\textsuperscript{118}

After Kirti Chandra, Gopi Chandra Narayana ascended the throne. During his period, a chronicle was written entitled \textit{Gopi Chandra Panchali}, which gives detail information regarding Gopi Chandra’s administration.\textsuperscript{119} The most important event that took place during his period was that matrimonial relationship was established between Lakshmi Chandra, the \textit{Hairamba} prince and Kanchani, the only daughter of the Koch King of plains Cachar, Bhim
Singha. Bhim Singha had no male issue, and the process of transfer of Kachari capital from Maibong to Khaspur was initiated on the basis of this matrimonial relationship. Ultimately, such shifting took place in 1750A.D.\textsuperscript{120}

Successor of Gopi Chandra Narayana was Harish Chandra Narayana II (1757A.D.–1772A.D.).\textsuperscript{121} A number of stone inscriptions of Raja Harish Chandra have been discovered from which we can learn his involvement in various public works. Investigation reveals that Harish Chandra Narayana was a very religious minded person and preferred to remain absorbed in religious thoughts. This state of mind forced him to abdicate his throne in favour of Lakshmi Chandra Narayana in the year 1772 A.D. to enable him to concentrate fully in religious activities.\textsuperscript{122}

Lakshmi Chandra’s (1772A.D.–1774A.D.) reign was too short, and he died within a year of his accession to the throne without leaving any successor.\textsuperscript{123} According to Amalendu Bhattacharjee, Lakshmi Chandra died in the year 1773A.D.\textsuperscript{124} Raja Harish Chandra was still alive when Lakshmi Chandra died, but Harish Chandra refused to reascend the throne. As such his minor son Krishna Chandra Narayana was made the king of Khaspur.\textsuperscript{125}
While Rhodes and Bose observe that Krishna Chandra ascended the throne in 1774 A.D., it is 1773 A.D., as estimated by Amalendu Bhattacharjee. During Krishna Chandra’s reign Aga Mahammad invaded Cachar in the year 1799 A.D. Having failed to repulse this aggression, Krishna Chandra sought the help of the British. The British, in 1801 A.D., had arrested Aga Mahammad and sent him to Calcutta. During Moamaria rebellion against Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha some rebels took shelter in Cachar. As a result strained relationship developed between Krishna Chandra and the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha. Krishna Chandra married Induprabha, daughter of the Manipuri Raja Madhuchandra. Krishna Chandra was a pious and religious minded king. He undertook pilgrimages to holy places in northern India overlooking the poor condition of the exchequer of his kingdom. So, to raise the revenue of the State he decided to offer titles to some of his subjects against money. But before implementing this idea, he died in 1813 A.D.

Krishna Chandra Narayana was succeeded by his younger brother Govinda Chandra Narayana (1813 A.D.–1830 A.D.). Govinda Chandra was the last king of this dynasty. He was assassinated by a few Manipuri
conspirators on April 24, 1830 A.D.\textsuperscript{129} After his death, plains of Cachar was annexed to the East India Company’s territory by a proclamation, issued on August 14, 1832 A.D.\textsuperscript{130} In the following chapters an attempt will be made to throw light on the political, social, religious, cultural and economic condition of Cachar under the rule of \textit{Raja} Govinda Chandra Narayana.
Notes & References:

2. Ibid., p-6
5. Ibid., p-1.
6. The Dimasa-Kacharis ruled over Dimapur, Maibong and lastly at plains of Cachar. Both Dimapur and Maibong are the hill places.
11. Ibid., p-2.
12. Ibid., p-2
13. Ibid., p-3
16. Ibid., p-3
27. Ibid., p-2.
30. Ibid., p-3
41. Gupta, Kamalakanta, op.cit. p-7
42. Ibid., p-5
45. Bhattacharjee, J.B., no.7, p-3.
49. Ibid., p-23.
53. Ibid., p-81.
63. Ibid., p-11.
64. Ibid., pp-11-12.
68. The race refers to the Kachari race.
73. Ibid., p-13.
83. Bhattacharjee, J.B., no.7, p-10.
84. Bhattacharjee, Amalendu (ed.), *Sri Naradi Rasamrita*, translated by Bhubaneswar Bachaspati Bhattacharyya, Agartala, 2007, p-ii;
87. Skanda Purana, 59/58.
88. Bhattacharjee, Amalendu (ed.), op.cit. p-iii
89. Skanda Purana, 59/55-56.
113. Ibid, p-43.
114. Ibid., p-43.
115. Ibid, p-44.
119. Ibid., p-45.