Conclusion

Dimasa tribes, which belong to Indo-Mongoloid Kachari group are found in North East region of India. G.A. Grierson in his Linguistic survey of India, Vol. II, Pt. II. classifies Dimasa under the Bodo (Boro) of the Bodo-Naga division of the Assam-Burmese section of the Tibeto-Burman group of the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family. Robert Schefer classifies Dimasa under the western units of Barish branches of Barik division of the Sino-Tibetan family. In the classification given by Paul Benedict (1972), Dimasa is included under Bodo-Garo group of Tibeto-Burman Branch of Sino-Tibetan family.

Dimasa is the name of the language and also the name of the community. Literally the meaning of the word ‘Dimasa’ is ‘the children of the big river’.

Dimasa, belonging to Tibeto-Burman language family is spoken in different districts of Assam namely, Nagaon, North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong, in Barak Valley region of Cachar and Hailakandi district. Besides Assam, Dimasa is also spoken in Dimapur sub-division of Nagaland. The Barak Valley dialect of Dimasa is also known as Hawar dialect.

Hawar dialect of Dimasa has six vowels and all the vowels except /a/ can occur in all the three positions. It has sixteen consonantal phonemes. Syllabic pattern is found up to hexa. Two consonant clusters occur in the initial and medial position. Final consonant clusters are not available. Three consonant clusters are not found in the initial position. The geminates are found with the stops, the nasals and liquid. There are two tones – high and low.

In Hawar dialect of Dimasa, noun can be classified as common noun, proper noun, abstract noun, material noun. It does not have grammatical gender. One of the processes of forming feminine is the replacement /a/ of the masculine noun (the final vowel) by /i/ such as
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/zabla/ ōool man ō</td>
<td>/zabli/ ōool woman ō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/baola/ ōntoxicated man ō</td>
<td>/baoli/ ōntoxicated woman ō</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This seems to be the result of influence of Indo-Aryan language on Dimasa.

It has two types of number: singular and plural. The plural is expressed by different markers. It has seven cases of which dative case is expressed by two markers /-t̕ene/ and /-ne/. When /-ne/ is used, the formation of personal pronoun also gets changed. In Hawar dialect, pronouns can be classified into personal pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, reflexive pronoun, relative pronoun, interrogative pronoun and indefinite pronoun. There is no change in the verb form according to gender, number or person. The three basic tenses in Hawar dialect are affected by using different suffixes to the verb. It makes use of four types of aspects having three markers and each mood is expressed by separate markers. Adjectives can either precede or follow the noun. The comparative and superlative degrees are expressed by post posing different markers to verbal roots. Adverbs can be categorized into simple, derived, compound, reduplicated. It can be further classified into time, place, manner, purpose, quantity, frequency. The cardinal numeral system of the Hawar dialect is substituted by the Bengali cardinal numeral, usually after the cardinal number five. Such tendency is found among the younger generation. The cardinal number /biʃaʃi/ meaning 20 is also influenced by the Bengali cardinal number. Almost all the fractional numbers are expressed by using the Bengali system. Negation is expressed by markers /niya/, /-ya/, /da-/ and negative copula /giri/ which occurs in different sentences. Hawar dialect of Dimasa makes use of some common morphological processes like affixation, compounding, reduplication, etc.

The Hawar dialect of Dimasa maintains the SOV word order. In noun phrases, the head noun can be followed or preceded by one or more modifiers. The verb in verb phrase also can be followed or preceded by the other elements like noun phrase, adverbs, etc. The subordinate clause is marked by conjunction or particle and subordinate clause precedes the
main clause. Conditional clause is expressed by using double conditional particle. Complement clause is expressed by the complementizer /ze/ borrowed from the Bengali. The interrogative sentences of alternative question type are formed by placing the question particle /na/ after the first alternative which is a borrowed Indo-Aryan word.

The Hawar dialect of Dimasa has borrowed a lot of lexical items from Bengali and English. The degree of lexical interference varies on four major axes- (i) the rural-urban distribution, (ii) age, (iii) sex and (iv) education

Lexical interference is highest among the speakers living in close geographical proximity of Bengali speaking areas. While speakers living in rural areas retains much of the native words as interaction with Bengalis is considerably less.

The lexical interference also varies temporally from the older to the younger generation. Naturally, the retention of original Dimasa words is higher in the older generation. The interference of Bengali-English words is higher among the younger generation as they are exposed to these languages in a much higher scale. It happened because of their greater mobility, their eagerness to imitate the modern culture etc.

The sex variable is also equally significant. The Dimasa women living in rural areas retain a higher degree of Dimasa words in comparison to men as they have less contact with the outside world, and hence, function as the preservers and carriers of the Dimasa language. As the men folk are always moving from one place to another either as government servants or as domestic servants or for business purposes, they have to use Bengali as a mode of communication with outsiders as it is used in government offices, also a lingua franca in the Barak Valley region. As a result, it interferes in their day-to-day speech and more and more lexical items belonging to Sylheti Bengali are used by the Dimasa males in their day today life.

Education plays an important role in bringing new Bengali and English words into Dimasa. As Dimasa is not introduced in educational institutions, government offices, Dimasas get education through Bengali medium or English medium. As a result, the
educated Dimasa speakers’s speech is always accompanied by a lot of interferences from Bengali-English words.

But still they are maintaining their native language even though Dimasas are a minority community in Barak Valley. This language maintenance is accompanied by lexical interference. In other words, a lot of Bengali words have entered the Dimasa lexicon and they are nativised. Even in some cases, the original Dimasa words are not to be found anymore and they are lost forever as we have shown above. Roughly more than 1000 Bengali words are used by the Dimasa population of Barak Valley in their day to day life and in case of the younger generation, the number will be much higher as they are constantly in touch with their Bengali friends.

As we have shown above, Dimasa has borrowed extensively from Sylheti Bengali but at the same time, it has not lost out to Bengali completely. It means that the Dimasas are maintaining their language against all odds. It is a well known fact that language maintenance is usually accompanied by interference from the dominant majority community and the Dimasas are no exception in this regard as we have shown in the preceding chapters.