Chapter - II

Early History of the Kacharis

The place of their ethnic evolution and migration to India

In the fertile river valleys of the Yang Tse Kiang and Hoang Ho of ancient China a Mongoloid culture emerged from obscurities in the past neolithc age.¹ The banks of the twin rivers were the most favoured regions of the earth for human habitation. Agriculture, i.e., paddy cultivation was the prime occupation of the people and basic structure of Chinese economy; Semi-culture or the production of silk from the cocoons which had prolific growth in the mulberry trees of the region supplemented the agrarian economy of ancient China.² This congenial human ecology automatically led to the origin of Chinese script and language from which originated 'Bodo', the language of the Kacharis at a much later date. According to Robert Shafer, Bodo or Kachari language belong to the Baric section of the Sino-Tibetan language.³ In fact, specimens of ancient Chinese language has been discovered from some archaeological ruins of c. 2000 B.C.⁴

Exact reasons are unknown as to why the Chinese mongoloids sought migration to the valley of the Brahmaputra and the foothills of North Bengal in India. It may be attributed partly due to natural calamities and partly due to other factors. Chinese sources reveal, in c. 2297 B.C. a
devastating flood occurred which united the waters of the Hoang Ho and Yang Tse Kiang and submerged the whole intervening country putting a stop to agriculture and industry. Devastations were so severe that there took place a large scale migration of the people to different directions according to contemporary Chinese annalists. It was the compelling circumstances of the purging of the Chinese mongoloids into the bordering regions of the North-Eastern India.

The second factor was commercial. Since very ancient times the sericulture products and handicrafts of ancient China had a wide demand in the markets of ancient India. Chinese silk had extensive demand in the Aryan markets of the Gangetic Valley. A kind of silk was known as 'Chinamsuka' in Sanskrit and the term point out its Chinese origin. Bamboo products of China were exported upto Afghanistan through Assam according to some sources around c. 2000 B.C. Hence, material trade and commerce with the plains of India was another factor of the large scale migration of the mongoloids from China. Even at present Bhutia and Tibetan traders frequent the markets of India for selling their indigenous textile products and other crafts. It is nothing but a regular and traditional feature of the history of South-East Asia.

The third factor was possibly clan feuds. Chinese society was extremely exposed to the rigidity of the clan rules. In ancient China young boys and girls were able to marry only on condition that they belonged to different
Exogamy rules demanded that sons should take wives from their mothers' family only. Violation of such clan rules, therefore, were punishable even to the extent of excommunication. Naturally, a large number of such excommunicated populace branded as out-castes moved to the bordering regions of India by batches at various intervals of Chinese history beginning from c. 2000 B.C. onwards.

Lastly, the mongoloid immigrants of India were an inferior stock of people. Linguistically they were less developed and in the overhaul cultural standard more backward. Although 'Jodo' the language of the Kacharlis is a branch of the Sino-Tibetan speech family its affiliations and links with the Tibetan is intimate than the original Chinese. Certain branches of the 'Jodo' language viz. Garo has much similarity with the Tibetan than with the advanced Chinese tongue which attained a written character as early as c. 2000 B.C. as we have stated before. Till now we have no evidence to authentify that the 'Jodo' (Kacharlis) language had attained a written character in the pre-Christian era. These progenitors of the Kacharlis were mostly nomadic in nature and possibly were branded as 'barbarians' by the culturally advanced ethnic groups of ancient China. So, they were forced to migrate to the different regions of the world and the choice of a considerable section of them fell upon the bordering territories of India. The actual fact is that in ancient China the mongoloid culture had a great deal of gradation - gradations of advanced, less
advanced and backward populace. This has an interesting parallel in the tribal history of the North East sentinel of India. Thus, the Kacharis and the Nagas belong to the same ethnic stock under one broad linguistic group of Chinese origin and both the tribes entered into India in the same age, yet the Nagas remained as a less developed tribe throughout the ages, while the Kacharis figured in history as the builders of an advanced civilisation.\(^3\)

There are numerous such examples and it is quite an absurdity to reproduce all in the present work considering its limited scope of investigation. It appears that the Kacharis of the 'Bodo' group of speech family which migrated into India had vital differences with the main stream of Chinese culture. Had there been a greater degree of similarity that would have been mentioned by the Chinese travellers of India. But so far we have been able to trace no such descriptions from their pens. They had only a broad ethnic similarity with the Chinese people as noticed by Huien Tsang "The men are of small stature, and their complexion a dark yellow."\(^4\)

Notes of Migration to the N.E. India

On their way to India (N.E. region) the progenitors of the Kachari's preferred various routes; but in all cases Tibet formed a stop gap of their journey. We do not know the duration of their stay in that country. But it is certain that they spent much time in Tibet and possibly in the neighbouring regions of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal.
Certain matriarchal traits of Kachari societies confirm our faith to the possibilities stated above. These matriarchal traits must have originated through their contacts with the ancient Tibetan society which was related to them ethnically as well as linguistically. In the Eastern Tibet there was a Kingdom of women (Tung Nu Kuo) where women were rulers, administrators and sovereigns, and the menfolk were meant for fighting and tilling the soil and were regarded as slaves. Further, we have seen before that the word Bodo (name of the Kacharis of the Brahmaputra valley) was related to 'Bodo' the old name of Tibetans. Even to day, a section of the Tibetans call their country as Bodø. Apparently, Tibet was a reservoir of the Mongoloids on their way to India from China.

The routes were numerous. North East Assam was an important gateway. From China there were five routes upto Sadiya (in N.E. Assam) through Tibet. These were mostly mountain passes viz. the pass of Dibong, the Mishmi route, the Phungan pass, the route by Manipur to the Irrawaddy, and the Patkai pass to Bhano on the Irrawaddy. The modern district of Darrang in Assam was connected by a number of routes with China and Tibet. These were Booree Gooma Duar and Kullung Duar; duar means gateway. Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that Dalailama escaped to India from Tibet on the wake of the Sino-Tibetan war of 1962 through this Darrang out let. The modern district of Kamrup had atleast five outlets from China through Tibet and Bhutan.
These were Ghur Kolan Duar, Banska Duar, Chapaguri Duar, Chapakhamar Duar and Bijn Duar. Through these routes hordes of mongoloid immigrants entered into India and the routes subsequently began to be used for purposes of material trade and commerce. Assam thus was connected suitably with Tibet and China.

North-Bengal also had a number of routes leading unto Tibet and China in addition to the outlets of the Kamarupa district stated above. In all, these were eleven such routes all leading to the plains of Northern Bengal where rivers like Tista, Dharala, Sankosh etc take their courses from the hills.20

With ease, these waves of mongoloids entered into the North Eastern India simultaneously from North Bengal and Assam and at once embarked upon a new career of extending their thrusts to all directions.

Rushing of the Kacharis to all directions of the North East India

They were active in extending the areas of their hold since the first day of their advent in this ancient land. A wide area of the North East from Sadiya to North Bengal came under the sphere of their influence. It is evident from the fact that the Kachari word for water, Di forms the first syllable of the names of most of the rivers of upper Assam, such as Diputa, Dihong, Dibong, Dibru, Dihun, Dibang, Dikhu, Dikrong, Diphu, Digaru etc. Most of them are in the vicinity of Sadiya.
which had easy out lets to China and Tibet as we have noticed before. Similarly, the veneration of the Kacharlis to a number of rivers, all in the North Bengal also suggest their early hold in the tract. In the bygone days they were the worshippers of a number of river deities and still now this practice is not totally extinct. These rivers are Dharla, Dud Kosi, Tista, Kangkai, Menchi, Torsha, Mahananda and many others, all in the North Bengal. They regarded these rivers as "Modelis" or evils spirits as these were and still are, a source of terror to the people of their valleys for devastating floods. Hence to overcome such misfortunes rivers took the status of idols.

From these two remote corners of North Bengal and Assam the tribe gradually got hold of the vast plains of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The Austric speaking mongoloids, Dravidians and Negritos were the earliest settlers of the North-East India prior to the advent of the Bodo speaking Kacharlis. A number of neolithic stone implements have been duggedout in the districts of Darrang, Goalpara and in other places of Assam. These were crude implements and though uncertain still the authorship of those may be assigned to the neolithic ethnic stoks such as the Negritos and the Dravidians, who are now extinct almost totally. Evidently there was a contest between these mongoloids of the 'Bodo' group of speech family and the Negrito-Dravidians for the mastery of the land resulting into the triumph of the former. The negrito although extinct, they left their mark in the veins of the Naga tribes of the neighbouring hills illustrating firmly that they were drive to the hills by the immigrants.
Then there ensued another round of contest between the Bodo speaking Kachari settlers and the Austrict speaking tribal groups of mixed Dravidian and Mongoloid ethnic stocks. Such a conclusion is based upon a number of findings.

The plains of Northern Bengal and the neighbouring regions of Assam were the abodes of the Austrict speaking tribes. They were the worshippers of snakes, trees etc. as it is evident from the interpretations of certain sculptured figures found in the North Bengal representing Manasa, the Hindu deity of snakes, serpents etc. and the representation of trees along with the deity. The worship of snakes, trees etc. are identical and were associated behind the evolution of the cult of Siva, testified by another stone figure unearthed at Mohenjo Daro in the Indus valley. It is universally believed that these usages of snake and tree's worship was initiated in India by the progenitors of the present Austrict speaking tribal groups. Even today the Austrict Khasis worship a gigantie snake which they call Thlen. In a subsequent stage the Kacharlis evolved the cult of Siva Simu (Euphorbia plant) as an emblem of the Hindu god Siva or Mahadeva after the manner of the Austricta, on which more details are stored for the subsequent chapters.

Linguistic evidence further confirm that the Kacharlis got hold over the plains of Assam and Northern Bengal after a contest with the Austrict speaking ethnic stock of both mongoloid and Dravidian origin. Dr.B.K.Barua writes, They re-christened the names of the rivers of earlier Austrict origin by prefixing them
with their own equivalent for water, i.e. 'Dr' before the
Austrian word for water "Hong" = Dibong, Dihong etc. Thus
the Austrians failed to make a stand before the waves of the
Kacharis of the Bodo group of speech family and many of them gradu-
ally moved to the hills of the North-west Assam, now known as
the province of Meghalaya. Those who preferred to remain in
Assam got themselves assimilated with the Chutiyas or the Eastern
Kacharis.

The entire Brahmaputra valley became a cradle of Kachari
culture and civilisation. Here they introduced paddy culture
and sericulture after the Chinese pattern. The plains of the
Brahmaputra valley was extremely suitable for the purpose. It
is possible that the name Assam is traceable to the Kachari
word Ha Com, meaning, low or level country, which name was
first used by the Kacharis to their new abode of Assam. According
to eminent artist Bishnu Prasad Rabha, the word Brahmaputra is
a Sanskritised form of a Bodo i.e., Kachari expression "Nilung
Bathur" meaning a "great river of bubbling water". He further
suggests that the Assamese people use the word "Luit' for Brahma-
putra in poetry and songs and it is only a corrupt form of Kachari
(Bodo) expressions like 'Laoti', 'Tilao' and 'Dilao'.

A similar extension of Kachari culture to the plains of
Eastern Bengal from their strong holds in the North also followed.
Their early settlements in the North Bengal and Western Assam
served the purpose of a wide gateway leading to the rich valley of
the Brahmaputra and Padma in the Eastern Bengal. Wherever, they settled they brought with them the methods of paddy cultivation and sericulture. Present North Bengal and the adjoining areas were probably the first area of wide and vast plain they settled in. They therefore, perhaps called the country Ha (land) Bang (plenty) La (Big, wide) meaning plenty and wide land, and it is likely that the present name of the country Bangla (Bengal) is derived from its ancient Kachari name, as suggested by R.N. Nath.

As in the North Bengal and Assam so in the Eastern Bengal the Bodo speaking Kacharis got hold over the land over coming stiff oppositions of the Austric speaking tribes and the Negritos. Entire North-East India was once a cradle of the Negritos. From the coastal belt of Eastern Bengal the Andaman and Nicobor islands of the Bay of Bengal are not too far. If it is suggested that a section of the Negritos reached in those islands sailing through the Bay of Bengal will it be cent percent wrong? Those who failed to cross the sea might have got themselves mixed up with the new Kachari immigrants of the land, only a detailed anthropological survey of the present ethnic composition of the eastern Bengal can help us to arrive at a scientific conclusion in this regard.

So far as the struggle between the Kacharis and the Austrics for the mastery of Eastern Bengal is concerned we have meagre evidences at disposal. Still a Khasi legend throw a ray of light in this regard. According to this legend the Khasis migrated to
the Eastern Bengal from North, i.e. the valley of the Brahmaputra through the hills and Sylhet was the terminus of their wanderings from which place they were ultimately driven back into their present hill due to a severe flood after a more or less peaceful occupation of the plains. Perhaps it was part of a continuous process of migration to the hills from the plains of Eastern Bengal which was first emerging as a predominantly 'Bodo' i.e., Kachari populated tract with a scattered admixture of Austrof Khasis and Negrito ethnic elements.

Perhaps it was part of a continuous process of migration to the hills from the plains of Eastern Bengal which was first emerging as a predominantly 'Bodo' i.e., Kachari populated tract with a scattered admixture of Austrof Khasis and Negrito ethnic elements.

Pushing of the Kacharis in the Southern Assam perhaps commenced at a later date. Like the Brahmaputra Valley South Assam also witnessed a struggle between the Kacharis and the more primitive tribes which got hold of the region before formal appearance. In southern Assam, comprising Nowgong, North Cachar, Cachar, and the adjoining areas of Sylhet (Now Bangladesh) the Negritos and Dravidians had their settlements in the Neolithic age. It is evident from neolithic stone implements unearthed in Cachar and in its vicinity.

It is difficult to ascertain the authorship of the Negritos with those stone implements, but from the fact that an amount of Negrito blood detected in the ethnic set up of the Angami Nagas, the next door neighbour of the Dimasa Kacharis it can be conjectured that the Negritos were driven out by the Kacharis to the Naga Hills, the abode of the Angamis. Extension of Kachari settlements to further south, i.e. in Cachar and Sylhet was noticed by Ptolemy and he termed these localities as "Kirrhadia"
or the land of the Kiratas, a term which invariably denotes the Kacharis.

Thus the early Kachari settlements of the North-East India was scattered from Sadiya in the East to North Bengal on the West and from Kamarupa district on the North to the extreme corner of Cachar district on the south. Sanskrit literature and other ancient chronicles serve the purpose of a search light to enter into the hidden history of these areas, still buried in darkness. We can now conveniently turn to this phase of their culture with profit.
Emergence of Culture

River Valley Civilisation: A mongoloid culture thus steadily emerging in the North-Eastern India with a predominantly Bodo (Kachari) background had only minor points of similarities and contrasts with the contemporary seats of world civilisations. The valleys of the Hoang Ho and Yang Tse Kiang of China, Nile in the middle East, Rhine and Tiber in Europe all were forward regions of the world as base grounds of advanced cultures. In India, the river valleys of the Indus, Ganges and the Brahmaputra also showered immense blessings and plenty amenities to the fore runners of the Indian civilisation. While in the valleys of the Indus and the Ganges the Aryans and their cognates were associated with those enterprises, in the valley of the Brahmaputra the mongoloid ethnic groups were the builders of civilisation. These authors of the river Valley Civilisation of the North East India though were identical with the people of the south East Asia and the far East had their distinctiveness as we have seen in the preceding pages. The term Indo-Mongoloid has long been in use to distinguish them from the mongoloids of the South East Asia and Far East. In India too, ancient chroniclers indiscriminately used several terms such as Danavas, Asuras, Vlechhas, Kiratas etc. to differentiate them from the plainsmen of the Gangetic valley. Uses of such terms show that they were known to the ancient chroniclers, and lexicographers. But they were more widely known by the appellation of 'Kirata' to the Aryan world of
In the Ramayana the Kirat as were referred as "Yellowish in complexion and heartiful in appearance", an adjective which appropriately affiliate them with the mongoloids of India now represented mostly by the Kacharis and their cognets. Evidently, the term Indo-Mongoloid (includes all tribes of mongoloid group) is a broader one than Kirata. Those Kiratas (under a broader ethnic name of Indo-Mongoloid) were the initiators of a river valley civilisation in this part of India.

We have seen before that the fertile plains of the Brahmaputra valley was extremely suitable for paddy cultivation and sericulture. Here primary needs of life could easily be procured from the river irrigated land with less hardship and toil. This congenial ground of human enterprises coincided well with the clannish tribal society of ancient times where the clan chiefs had absolute authorities over their groups. This led to the idea of state system which was at once feudal and monarchical in pattern having foundations on the clannish tribal society.

**State System**

A number of small kingdoms sprang up in the Brahmaputra Valley under various clan chiefs. We can now usefully turn our attention to their exploits and achievements. Kirata(Kachari) kingdom of Pragjyotisha :- The Ramayana, older of the epics, states that the city of Pragjyotisha (identified with Gauhati) was built on a mountain called 'Varaha' which was sixty four yojanas in extent. Varaha mountain was a sanskritised form
of 'Bodo' (Kachari) The earliest known Kirata king of Pragjyotisha was one Mahiranga Danava. It further appears that Mahiranga was a Sanskritised form of a Kachari (Bodo) expression 'Mairang'. The Kacharıs were a dominating race in Pragjyotisha and their king Mahiranga was a powerful ruler. Mahiranga was succeeded by Hatakasur, Ratnasur and Ghatakasur. Much details are not known about these early kings of Pragjyotisha. According to Kalika Purana the last of these kings, i.e., Ghatakasura was ever thrown by the Aryan conqueror Narakasura who hailed from Videha in the North Bihar. After a fierce and bloody battle Narakasura killed the formidable Kirata chief Ghatakasura and established an Aryan kingdom in the ancient land of Pragjyotisha. The exploits of Narakasura has also been found recorded in the Sargaon copper plate Grant of Ratna Pala (c. 1035 A.D.). It thus appears that the traditional history of Pragjyotisha under Kirata (Kachari) Kings and the subsequent conquest of the land by Narakasura were historical facts.

The Kirata Kingdom of Sonitapura (in the modern Darrang District of Assam):

In the neighbourhood of Pragjyotisha there was another Kingdom Sonitapura by name ruled by a Kirata King Bana. Bana's father Bali was referred to as a demon in the Mahabharata. After the death of Bali, Bana became the king of Sonitapura. Bana was a contemporary of Narakasura. He was a formidable king and his capital Agni Nagar (modern Tezpur town) became the focal point of his strength and power, and the neighbouring
king Naraka learnt to appreciate his ways and manners, records Kalika Purana. Kumara Harana the celebrated Assamese poetical work of Chandra Bharati contain a story of a secret and romantic love affair between Aniruddha, a grandson of Srikrishna, and Usha, daughter of Bana which resulted in the capture and confinement of Aniruddha at Agni Nagar and his subsequent release by Srikrishna.

Soniapura lost its splendour and glory after Bana and nothing is known about his successors. We have noticed before that the Bodo Kacharis of the districts of Darrang, Goalpara, Kamarupa and upper Assam trace their ancestry from this traditional king.

Tradition says, Bana's fortress stood on the site now occupied by the Deputy Commissioner's office at Tezpur, and that he built the magnificent temples the ruins of which are still to be seen in the vicinity of the town. Two large tanks in the neighbourhood are said to have been constructed by Bana, and one of them still bears the name of his prime minister Kubhanda.

The Siva temple built by Bana at Agni Nagar was known as Mahabhairab Mandir. On the relics of this site a new temple of Siva has been raised some years back.

The Kingdom of Kundila Nagar

The kingdom of Kundila Nagar flourished in the neighbourhood of Sadiya, in the North-Eastern corner of Assam. The vicinity of Sadiya was the earliest stronghold of the Kacharis. The kingdom was also known as Vidarbha and its king was one Bhismak as
we have seen in the Chapter I. The Chutiyas or the Eastern Kacharis claim their ancestry from this mythological king Ahismak. On the ruins of this ancient kingdom they raised the foundation of a powerful Chutiya Kingdom in the thirteenth century A.D. No connecting link between the great gap of more than one thousand years that witnessed the fall of Kundila Nagara and the rise of the Chutiya kingdom has yet been established. It is sure that this kingdom collapsed by a process of natural decay and on its ruins the Chutiyas raised their capital in the thirteenth century A.D. A small stream Kundila by name near Sadiya still bears the memory of this mythological kingdom.

K.L. Barua opines that Kundila Nagara was initially a Dravidian kingdom which was in course of time, wiped out by the mongoloid invaders. It seems that this hypothesis is problematic.

Aryan Conquest of the Brahmaputra Valley and the Emergence of the Hidambial Kachari Kingdom in the Southern Assam

The Kingdoms of Pragjyotisha, Sonitapura and Kundila Nagara were formidable and strong adversaries of the Aryan culture of the Gangetic valley. The terms Asuras, Danavas, Kiratas etc. used in the ancient chronicles to the builders of these kingdoms only justify that most of the rulers and the ruled of these principalities had demonic capabilities in the arts of peace and war in strange contrasts to the Aryan ideal of culture and polity. Although nothing is recorded in the chronicles about the hostilities between these mongoloid states of Eastern India
and the Aryandom of the Gangetic Valley, it seems very probable that there were sufficient provocations on both sides to measure their swords in open contest for the mastery over the country.

Hostilities broke out when Ghatakasur was the king of Pragjyotisha. Narakasur, a prince of the Aryan kingdom of Videha (in modern North Bihar) led an exterminating expedition against the Kirata Kingdom of Pragjyotisha. Fierce and bloody encounters followed and the brave Kirata chief Chatakasur met his end in the battlefield in the hands of the Videhan prince Naraka. Kalika Purana records thenceforth Naraka exterminated the Kiratas from the entire Brahmaputra valley from Pragjyotisha in the west to the river Dikhow in the North-Eastern Assam and encouraged the Aryans to settle in this stretch of territory. The king of Kundila Nagara gave marriage of his daughter Maya with Naraka and apparently welcomed the victory of the Aryans by a show of submission. Kalika Purana further records that thenceforth the vanquished Kiratas sought migrations to the sea shore regions of Eastern Bengal (present Bangladesh) by batches. The valley of the Brahmaputra thus became Aryanised and only the loyal Kiratas were allowed to stay there. The Kiratas thus lost their hold in the Brahmaputra Valley.

But all was not over. Sana, the king of Sonitapur was still surviving as a great champion of Kirata culture. He by a stratagem courted friendship with Naraka and instigated him to defy Aryan ideals. Naraka though was an Aryan conquer, he himself belonged to a Non-Aryan community of Videha. Yogini
Tantra confirms his low origin by depicting him as a son of god Vishnu through the mother earth, i.e., Bhumi. Videhan king Janaka brought him up in an Aryan atmosphere. Naraka's attachment to Aryan culture was only apparent and his inborn demonic nature was inflamed as soon as he came into a friendly term with Bana. He began to oppress the Aryans of Pragjyotisha, who were once settled here by him, and he also began to defy the Hindu deities, the mother goddess Kamakhya in a perfect barbaric manner. Kalika Purana says, his father Vishnu disapproved such activities and out of anger slain his son (Naraka); he then installed Bhagadatta, son of Naraka as the new king of the Aryanised land of Pragjyotisha. In the Bargaon copper plate grant of Kamarupa king Ratnapala there is a mention of Bhagadatta, son of Narakasur, and thus it seems that the accounts of the Kalika Purana are historical facts.

Then came the turn of Bana and he also met his end in the hands of Vishnu. In the Kumara Narayana Kavya of Chandra Bharati the story of a secret and romantic love affair between Aniruddha, a grandson of Srikrishna and Usha is the main theme. Bana disapproved his daughter's love and consequent secret marriage with Aniruddha and by his order Aniruddha was confined in Agni Nagar, the capital of Bana. This event again brought Vishnu in the picture and he released his grandson by killing Bana.

With the death of Bana, the prospects of the Kiratas in the Brahmaputra Valley was finally doomed. We have seen before that most of the Kiratas by the time had migrated to the seashore
regions of Eastern Bengal. It appears that after the end of Sana his Kirata followers had either acknowledged the overlordship of the Aryan king Bhagaddatta or became active for establishing another kingdom at a safer place away from the valley of the Brahmaputra. This episode of the Brahmaputra valley was coincided by the emergence of another Kachari Kingdom in the southern Assam in the vicinity of the twin valleys of Kapili (in modern Nowgong district of Assam) and Dhansiri (now largely in Nagaland).

The emergence of a Kachari Kingdom on the banks of the Kapili and Dhansiri rivers was basically connected with the Aryanisation of the Brahmaputra valley. It appears that considerable number of Kiratas instead of migrating to the sea shore regions preferred to take shelter in this part of the country considering the geographical isolation of the tract from the Brahmaputra Valley. The tract was safe from enemy attacks and thus provided them an ideal shelter. In the Mahabharata we find the story of the second Pandava Bhima's sojourn in the Hindimbho kingdom. There Bhima came into conflict with Hidimba Raksasa, the ruler of this kingdom and subsequently killed him. The story goes in saying that therewith Bhima married Hidimba Raksasi, sister of the deceased Rakshasa, and a son Ghatotkacha was born out of this union. This kingdom of Hidimba pura was located in the twin valley of Kapili and Dhansiri. The Dimasa Kacharis are known as Hedambials, because they are the descendants of Ghototkochas son of the epic hero Bhima and Hidimba Raksasi - and in later epochs the kingdom came to be known as the
Ghatotkocha the Hidimbo chief was a contemporary of the Pragjyotisha king Bhagadatta. This further suggests that the Hedambial kingdom emerged at a time when the valley of the Brahmaputra was Aryanised. Ghatotkocha took part in the Kurukshetra war as an ally of the Pandavas, where as Bhagadatta took the side of the Kauravas. Illuminating account of the encounters between these two kings of the North-Eastern India in the battle ground of Kurushetra is the main theme of the Bhishmaparva part of the Mahabharata. Ghatotkocha fought with bravery with Duryodhana, Sinduraj, Avanti Raj and Sailya. After a long and witty battle Kaurava general Karna ultimately killed Ghatotkocha.

Nothing is known about the history of the Hidimbo kingdom after Ghatotkocha’s death. According to the compiler of the Deodhai Asom Buranjí his successors ruled in the Hidimbo country for several centuries since then. On the basis of the account of the Deodhai Buranjí Padmanath Gohain Barua in his Asomor Buranjí opined that the successors of Ghatotkocha continued to rule there till the thirteenth century A.D. the epoch which witnessed the Ahom invasion of Assam. Through out this period the venue of the Hedambial Kingdom was confined in the twin valley of the Kapili and Dhansiri. More details in this regard is planned in the Chapter IV.
Character of the Early Kachari Civilisation -
A Political and a Socio-economic Survey -

The Kirata kingdoms of Pragjyotisha, Sonitapura, Kundila Nagara and Hidimboyoura had all India importances. In the realm of politics and diplomacy their alliances and hostilities were counted as valuable by the Aryan kings of the Gangetic valley. It appears that at times the rival political aspirations of the Gangetic Valley sought to embroil the states of the North-Eastern India with their destiny. Thus in the great battle of Kurukshetra the Hidimbo-Chief Chhatotkocha took the side of the Pandavas and fought against Bhagadatta, the Aryanised king of Pragjyotisha. Bhismak, the king of Kundila Nagara gave one of his daughter Rukmini's marriage with Srikrishna, master of the kingdom of Dwaraka, and thereby rose to power and strength. The ancient Kiratas were not always looked down upon. In the immortal poetical work Kiratarjuniyam of Bharavi we find the third pandava Arjuna learning archery from the Kirata warriors of the North-Eastern India. After the Kurukshetra war when the Pandavas raised their new Capital at Indr-prastha (modern New Delhi) artisans were brought from distant places for construction works. Maya Danava, the Non-Aryan architect who built the Assembly hall at Indraprastha was probably a mongoloid Kirata. After the construction of the Assembly hall it looked so beautiful that Arjuna appreciated “It is not an illusion Maya?”

Thus the ancient Kiratas of the North-East India were widely known to the Aryan world for their manifold qualities.
Economically, the ancient Kirata settlements were flourishing and prosperous. The river irrigated soil of the Brahmaputra Valley was extremely suitable for an advanced agrarian civilisation. At the same time the people had a taste for urban culture and this aspiration led to the foundation of a number of well-planned towns in many places of the Brahmaputra Valley. Pragjyotisha, the capital of the Kirata king Ghatakasur was well known for its architectural splendour. Agni Nagar, capital of Bana was famous for its fortifications, temples and palaces. On the ruins of these two sites grew up the modern city of Gauhati and the beautiful town of Tezpur. The agrarian culture was supplemented by sericulture and forest products. Silk culture became popular in Assam due to the efforts of the ancient Kiratas who were the intermediations between India and China at a very early stage commencing from c 2000 B.C. Silk cocoons had extensive growth in the Brahmaputra valley and the manufacturers of silk clothes were mostly those Kiratas from whom the Assamese people learnt the art at a much later date. It is possible that the sericulture products of Assam had a wide demand in the markets of Aryan India.

The entire North Eastern India was a botanical garden of valuable plants and trees. According to Aitareya Brahmana it was from the Kirata settlements of Eastern India the Aryans used to procure Soma plants. The Soma plants was useful as drug as well as intoxicant. Atharva contains references about the
The climatic and physical features of Assam was conducive for the enormous growth of this plant. In the modern epoch this factors encouraged the European capitalists to invest capital in tea plantation and manufacture. Incidentally it may be mentioned here that longtime before the manufacture of tea in the factories, the juice of the green tea leaves had been in use as an energy giving drink among the tribals of Assam. Not only tea, the plantation of opium was also carriedout mostly the tribals of Kachari origin till the fifties of the last century when the British Government took measures to prohibit its plantation. It thus seems that the consumption of intoxicating plants was a favourite luxury of the tribals of the North Eastern India, and the wide demand sheltered the plantation of such forest products. Not only Soma, tea and opium, Malabrum (Tespat)also had tremendous growth in the foot hill of the Khasi-Jaintia hills bordering modern Bangladesh. Tespat had wide demand among the rich people for its delicious taste in curries served as items of standard dishes. According to Babu Bangalal Banerjee ancient Kiratas were the traders of "Chireetta" a medicinal creeper used in minor ailments like stomach troubles and liver pains. He says, this plant had abundant growth in the lower ranges of the Himalaya, the abode of the Kiratas. It is not possible to append a full list of other such forest plants here, and the remaining informations in this regard are planned to enlist in the Chapter III.
The river beds of Assam were rich with enough gold resources and the Kiratas were proficient in the art of gold-washing from the sands. As gold was available only in the Kolar mines of Mysore, it is possible that the Assam gold considerably catered to the needs of the neighbouring kingdoms after meeting the home demands. Kalika Purana records that the uniforms and weapons of the Kirata king Ghatakasur were precious and hence were embroidered with gold not to speak of ornaments and jewellery. This conclusively warrants the opinion in favour of an extensive supply of gold from the rivers of Assam. Gold washing from the rivers continued to serve as source of livelihood to the Kacharis till the downfall of the Ahom kingdom in the nineteenth century A.D. Kalika Purana contain references to the use of implements made out of iron. Hence the Kiratas were aware of the procurement of this metal and associated craftmanship necessary for manufacture of iron implements.

The standard of society was drastically different from the late ancient and medieval Kachari society. Clannishness was extremely marked and was a sole factor responsible for the emergence of a Kirata civilisation from its neolithic stage. Even to this day most of the Kachari communities of the North East are well known for their clannish spirit. Matriarchal aspects of the society was the order of the day. Women had extensive liberty in social set up. Citrealekha, friend of Bana's daughter Usha went to distant Dvaraka to negotiate the marriage between Aniruddha and Usha. Hidimba Raksasi, tendered her love and
affection to the epic hero Bhraga and subsequently married him. All this show that women had a place in the public life. The cult of the mother Goddess Kamakhya according to certain sources also evolved in Assam in recognition of this matriarchal leanings of the society. According to some, the goddess was a deity of the Kiratas who were matriarchal in those days.90

Even after the Aryanisation of the Brahmaputra valley a fair number of the Kiratas continued to stay in the land as they had agreed to remain loyal to the Aryans, But it seems that the waves of Hindu culture failed to produce lasting effects upon their traditional life pattern which was mostly animistic. The Aryan conquest of the land only brought them under a political subjugation. It was partly due to their numerical superiority. The Aryan settlers were few in Assam in the days. The evolution of the Assamese speaking people had just commenced from the frayed and scattered groups of Aryan, Dravidian and mongoloid ethnic stocks, by a number of medias viz., a common language which was steadily emerging due to practical needs and marital ties among themselves. This was the genesis behind the formation of the Assamese speaking people.91 The mongoloid (progenitors of the Kacharlis) intruders into the rank of this emerging Assamese community were to adjust themselves with their new status and so psychologically they were very near to the animistic Kiratas who still formed the bulk of the population. This state of affairs arrested the notice of the celebrated Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang and he observed - "The manners of the people simple and honest. The men are of small stature, and their complexion a dark yellow."92
1. MYM. p.226.
2. Ibid. p. Ibid.
4. BH. IT. p.75.
6. Ibid. p. Ibid.
8. Referred in F.I. No.151 of Chapter I.
10. Ibid. p. Ibid.
11. According to one source Bodo had his script but the writer
of the article concerned has not mentioned its date and
12. For details. cc. p.139.
13. KJK. p.4.
15. Garos. pp. 165-166. It appears from the said work that Garo
an important member of the Bodo language has a wide range of
similarities with the Tibetan so far as vocabulary is con­cerned.
17. HOA p.273.
18. ROB. p.679.
20. ROB. p.679.
23. JASB. New Series Vol.IX. July 1913 pp. 291-293; and
24. KJK. p.7.
25. BKM3B. p. Introduction
26. Ibid. p. Ibid.; and WD and IVC Vol.I. pp. 52, 53-64 there in
the writer refers to an image found in the Indus Valley which
is identical with Siva, representation of a tree along with
the deity was its special feature.
27. Khasi, p.98.
29. IVC.p.135.
30. F.L.O./. p.5
31. Ibid. p. Ibid.
32. EGOAC p.17.
33. KJK-7.
34. Khasi p.10.
35. JACE Vol.IX.July 1913 No.7 pp.291-293.
36. KJK. p.7. Sema Nage pp 378-379 ; Angami p.3.
37. The term Asura has been found in the Atharva Veda, Kalika
Purana, Kamarupar Saranji etc.
A.V.C. Vol.II. Boo II. 113. p.41 ; K.J.Konchattrungso
The term Banavs has been found in the Mahabharata, Kamarupar
Saranji etc. Mahabharata- pp.87-88 K3. pp 1-3.
Kishkindhya vanda p.510.
39. Referred in Chapter I.
40. Ancient tribal societies were extremely clannish in India-
China everywhere vide c.c. pp 152-156 ; and Kachari p.1-5.
41. Ramayana - Chapter XXY. p.120.
42. FOK p.1.
43. - K3 pp 1-3.
45. K3 pp.1-3.
47. I.O.A.A. pp 160-166. the grant records, "He (Naraka resides in the
best of the cities Pragjotisha which seemed to have many
moons because of (the presence of) the faces of the beautiful
damsels and seemed to have many suns due (the presence of)
the illustrious warriors, moving along with the glory of
his arms in this city he(i.e.Naraka) earned the (royal)
fortune in a more beautiful manner."
J.A.I.H.C.U. Vol.I Parts 1-2, 1967 pp.17-21 states that Diksunadi mentioned in the K. is not the river Dikhow of N.F. Assam. It seems that the identification of Diksu with Dikhow is problematic.

58. Ibid. 112, 122,123 Astotringso Adhyaya pp.320-323
61. KP. 42 Astotringso Adhyaya p.311.
64. I.O.A.A. pp.160-166.
66. This tract at a distance from the valley of the Brahmaputra in surrounded by mountains Naga hills to the East, Barail ranges to the south, K & J. Hills to the West.
67. KDMB. Hidimbo vadha part of the Adinarva p.p.312-314.
68. Ibid. p. Ibid.
70. Mahabharata of Siingha Shishna Parva pp.837-838.
73. DAB p.177.
74. AB. p.142.
76. Mahabharata pp.87-88.
77. It appears from K.P. that there were well built forts and palaces in Pragjyotisha vide KP. : 143 Astotrin-so Adhyaya p.323 ; IIII and I.O.A.A. pp.160-166.
78. K.P. 3;4 Ekonoottaringso Adhyaya p.326. Besides the ruins of Bana's establishments still survive near Tezpur as stated earlier.
79. Mon-Silk. p.9. Also refer Chapter VII of the present work.
82. DAA. p.133.
84. EOK p.6; and Manuscript Record pp.2-3.
85. JASB. January 1874 pp.7-16.
86. DAA. p.36 ; SHK Vol.I pp.92-100.
88. Ibid. 100:101, p.313 records that Ghatakasuma fought with arrows against Naraka, evidently those were iron made.
89. The Dimasa Kacharis are extremely conservative in clan regulation even at present. Many Dimasa Kacharis had violated clan rules in marriages and so were excommunicated about eighty years back. The village Kalachand in the N.C. hills to formed by them vide DAO pp.53-54
90. MGK p.16.
91. POACHI pp.9-10.
92. CAI p.401.