CHAPTER 5


The creation of the state of Meghalaya had important implications for the Dimasa. The Dimasa intelligentsia took active participation in the separate state movement for Meghalaya state. However they did not join Meghalaya and opted for integration with Assam. The entire episode of the movement and formation of the Meghalaya state had influenced the Dimasa intelligentsia to raise their voice for autonomy. This chapter would look into the Intermediate Phase of the Dimasa’s movement for autonomy. This phase began with the formation of an Action Committee on the Language issue in 1973 and ended with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Autonomous State Demand Committee, Karbi Students’ Association, Dimasa Student’s Union and Government of Assam in presence of S B Chavan, Union Home Minister of Government of India on 1995. In this phase a new emphasis was given to the preservation of tradition and culture with the formation of several social organisations, based on a fear of losing their ethnic identity, and voices for a separate statehood were also raised in this period. However, there occurred a distinct rift in opinion among the intelligentsia and other political groups, which led the autonomy movement into another phase of Dimasa history.

The issue of Assamese language as the medium of instruction ignited the Dimasa movement for autonomy. A Joint Conference of the leaders of
Mikir and North Cachar Hills District Council was held on 18.2.73 at the Diphu Club under the Presidentship of C.W. Durong with 123 delegates, including one Member of Legislative Assembly and 15 District Council Members, to review the issue of Assamese language as the medium of instruction. The Conference also reviewed the resolutions adopted in the meeting of the leaders and educationists of North Cachar Hills held on 16 January 1973 and 14 February 1973 at Haflong and 3 February 1973 of Mikir Hills District at Diphu.

In those meetings there was vehement opposition against the imposition of Assamese and demand for retaining English as medium of instruction in both university and secondary levels of education and all-round development as assured by the top leaders of the Government of Assam on the eve of the creation of Meghalaya. The meeting regretted that the Government had not taken any action so far.¹

The Conference unanimously resolved to demand from the Government of India, the separation of the two hills districts from the State of Assam, in accordance with the pattern to be adopted by the Action Committee of the Conference, as the best and final solution to the problem.²

The Conference also constituted an Action Committee of the Mikir and North Cachar Hills Leader's Conference (hereafter the Action Committee), with 24 members. Sonaram Thaosen and P.K. Garlosa were selected as the President and Secretary of the Action Committee. The Action

² Resolution No 1, in N. Rongpi, Rajya Dabi Samiti, p.22.
Committee took the issue very seriously and an emergent meeting was convened at the Institute Hall Haflong, on 31.5.73, which was presided over by Sonaram Thaosen. Altogether 14 members were present. The Secretary of the Action Committee, P.K. Garlosa had placed the draft memorandum before the meeting. The memorandum was approved for submission to the Prime Minister of India. The leaders of the Action Committee thereafter met Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi on 9.7.73 and submitted the memorandum demanding a Separate State comprising of the Mikir Hills, North Cachar Hills and the contiguous tribal areas of Assam. ³ This memorandum is an important document, which revealed the growing aspirations of the Dimasa intelligentsia. They not only advocated the cause of the Dimasa and Karbi alone, but also emphasized the demand for the inclusion of the contiguous tribal areas in Assam. ⁴

The contiguous tribal areas in Assam implied the districts of Cachar, Nagaon and Sibsagar contiguous to the two hill districts which were predominantly inhabited by the people of the same tribes living in these districts. Their arguments were based on that;

The tribal people of these contiguous areas have been facing great hardships on account of the fact that, their customs, manners, practices and beliefs are different from those of the majority in the district in which they are and because in the very nature of things, the plain district administration cannot pay that special attention to their problems which again differ from those of the majority. As a matter of fact, there have been numerous


⁴ Ibid, p. 18. (N. Rongpi, Rajya Dabi Samiti,)
complaints that their interests and sentiments have not only been ignored but at times measures and policies which are repugnant to them have also been imposed on them. Moreover they are not regarded as members of the scheduled tribes to which they ethnically and linguistically belong, because they are geographically outside the autonomous areas and this deprives them of the safeguards and advantages which are extended to the scheduled tribes of the autonomous districts.  

The memorandum also dealt with the issues like the transferred subjects to the District Councils, which came out as a result of the Assam Government assurance to the Dimasa leaders. Transferred Subjects in the District Council equated with the conferment of larger powers to the District Councils but in practice, neither the powers of the District Council nor the scope for the development of the area were enlarged. Rather much of the Council’s autonomy was limited as a result of the amendments in the Sixth Schedule. The District Council was sceptical of the success of the scheme at the very beginning but the Government assured them of making suitable changes and improvements of the terms and procedures in the course of actual implementation of the scheme. Hence they decided to give it a fair trial but as apprehended it fell short of meeting even the minimum need of economic development of the people of these hill districts. 

Meanwhile, the Academic Council of Gauhati University decided to introduce the Assamese language, as the medium of instruction in higher educational institutions in Assam. The memorandum also responded to the issue with strong reservation. It regarded that, the Assamese junta were determined to

---

6 Ibid, pp. 16-17.
Assamise the tribal people of the hill districts along with other sections of linguistic minorities by forcing Assamese language and culture upon them. This attempt would wipe out the language and culture of the tribals, which they too cherish to develop. The hill people were neither willing to tolerate the attempt of the imposition of Assamese language nor were they prepared to lose their distinct identity as a tribe. They believed that the Assamese people had gone too far to withdraw, and that there is no meeting point of the two. The only solution for the hill people was the separation from Assam. They were determined to acquire their own state at any cost.7

The memorandum also reflected a sense of deprivation. It stated that despite the differences in languages, cultures and traditions; the Mikir and Dimasa Kacharics of Mikir Hills District and Dimasa Kachari, Jeme Naga, Hmar, Kuki and Mikir tribes of North Cachar Hills District shared a common characteristic of backwardness - educationally, economically and politically.8

On the very basis of these arguments the Action Committee strongly forwarded their cause of separation from Assam.

Considering all these points there is an in disputable case for constitution for a separate state for Mikir and North-Cachar Hills, together with the contiguous tribal areas. Only by this means, they will be able to exist unhampered, preserve and develop their entities, their languages culture and ways of life, to run their own affairs and at the same time to be in tune with the main stream of national life, to sail in the wide ocean that is India and not to be restricted to the backwards of the Brahmaputra valley. They

7 Ibid, pp.17-18.
8 Ibid, p.14
are convinced that their remaining in Assam would defeat all these purposes. The only solution is to have separation.⁹

But the effort of the Action Committee did not receive any significant response from the Government. Moreover, the Action Committee never tried to mobilise the people for the support of their cause. Therefore it remained an intellectual effort only. The Government did not show any interest. Rather it paid more emphasis on the administrative development which was assured earlier. Accordingly the Government of Assam had issued two office Memoranda through the Hill Areas Departments on 3rd February 1976 and 25th August 1976. This office Memoranda had brought some changes on the administration of District Councils:

By virtue of the powers conferred by the paragraph 6 (2) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India as amended, the State Government have decided to entrust to the North-Cachar Hills District Council and the Mikir Hills District Council with immediate effect functions in relation to Sericulture & Weaving. The details of the plan schemes relating to these functions, which have been transferred, are annexed. The non-plan schemes relating to that subject are also to be transferred to the North-Cachar Hills District Council and the Mikir Hills District Council with immediate effect except for schemes of a highly technical nature and schemes requiring centralized control owing to their being common to more than one district or for other reasons. These functions have been entrusted to the North-Cachar Hills District Council and the Mikir Hills District Council with their consent.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid, p. 20.
But few conditions of the Office Memoranda were objected to by the concerned District Councils. Therefore, the representatives of both the Councils demanded a joint meeting before the Government of Assam to re-examine the conditions relating to the subjects like finance and personal departments. Accordingly a Committee was constituted with Development Commissioner for Hill Areas as the Chairman, Representative of finance and personal department, two Chief Executive Members and Secretaries of the concerned Councils as Members. The Committee recommended that the special advance of development fund should henceforth be released on half-yearly basis instead of quarterly basis. Moreover it also recommended for adopting necessary steps to ensure that such Special advance would be received by the District Councils from all concerned departments by the first fortnight of April and the first fortnight of October in every year. 11

However the Committee further stated the responsibilities of the District Councils. Accordingly the District Councils were made fully responsible to the State Government instead of the State Legislature in all matters relating to the funds transferred to them. The Principal Secretary and other Secretaries of the Executive Committee were answerable to the Public Audit Committee and other Committees of the State Legislatures as and when there was a necessity for examination. 12 On the basis of the recommendations of the Committee, the State Government had revised the financial aspects of District Council. Accordingly:

(i) It shall be the duty of the District Council to ensure that monthly accounts with supporting vouchers are submitted to the Accountant General regularly. (ii) The State Government will pay to the District Council as administrative charge, a fixed account for meeting the expenditure incurred by the District Councils for implementation of the entrusted functions. The exact quantum each of the District Council on the basis of actual expenditure incurred by the two District Councils for the past years on a year wise basis on administering the entrusted functions. Further the District Council shall not create any new posts, emoluments of which are liable to be met put of the administrative charge to be paid by Government without prior approval of Government.\textsuperscript{13}

While these administrative procedures were going on, a section of Dimasa intelligentsia engaged them in forming various socio-economic and cultural organisations. In 1972 \textit{Dimasa Jalairaoni Hosom} was formed at Haflong to protect and promote the cultural identity of the Dimasa. Dimasa historical monuments of Dimapur and Maibang were in deplorable condition. Therefore they raised the demand for the preservation of Dimasa historical monuments and the adoption of Dimasa language at the primary level in North Cachar Hills. In 1978, the District Council allotted land to a few non-tribal outsiders. The educated Dimasa youth were very agitated on this point. Hence, Dimasa Jalairaoni Hosom passed a resolution to move the appropriate authority to stop allotment of land to outsiders in its annual general meeting on 24.6.1979. Moreover the annual conference of Dimasa Jalairaoni Hosom was organised in various places of the district and organisational branches were introduced in almost all the Dimasa villages. The branch committees had arranged traditional folk art and culture programmes. Besides intellectual deliberations

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, p. 371.
it provided a common platform to the Dimasa youths to share their hopes, aspirations and apprehension. The first newsletter, *Waiminjing*, received active patronage from this youth organisation.\(^{14}\)

With a view to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Dimasa people, another organisation called *Dimasa Sanskriti Parishad* was formed in 1974 at Silchar in Cachar District. This organisation paid more interest to preserve the archaeological heritage of Dimasa Kingdom in Barak valley and initiated to construct a cultural centre at Silchar. A cultural organisation was formed on 1975, namely, 'Karbi Anglong District Dimasa Association' at Diphu with a view to focus on various cultural activities. The following year, the *Dimasa National Organisation* was formed at Diphu to preserve the archaeological heritage of the Dimasa people. The first resolution passed by the general session of the organisation on 11.3.79 demanded proper preservation of ancient relics and monuments of the Kachari Kings lying in various places of Assam and other part of India, especially at Dimapur, Maibang and Khaspur.\(^{15}\)

This organisation also advocated for the social and cultural unification of all the Dimasa people living in the different parts of Assam. This principle was manifested in its executive structure and delegate sessions, where the Dimasa people were largely represented.

On the same lines, another organisation emerged at Cachar called *Nikhil Hairambo Barman Samiti* in 1980. This organisation strongly believed in political unification of the Dimasa people. To quote:

---


\(^{15}\) loc. cit.
This organisation believes in the concept of greater Dimasa nationality and opines that the existence of the Dimasa will be in danger unless all the Dimasas are brought within a single administrative unit. The members of the Samiti claim that, their demand is based on government documents, historical and geographical facts. They said that southern part of Nowgong district, including Howraghat, Jamunamukh, Dabaka, Lanka, Hojai, Namati, Jogijan and the area from Dimapur to Dhansiri should be included in the proposed administrative unit.16

The nature of the demand was apolitical. Though the organisation threatened to launch an agitation programme, it did not materialize. However, demand itself influenced the Dimasa people, and it resulted in a series of movements at a later period.

Meanwhile on 20 August 1978 the political leaders of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills assembled at Diphu for a meeting. In this meeting the leaders formed an organisation called, All Party Peoples Conference, to launch a movement for a full- fledged separate state. G. C Langthasa, the Chief Executive Member of North Cachar Hills District Council and Debinchan Hanse, member of Karbi Anglong District Council were selected as President and Secretary of the organisation. The meeting resolved that the separation from Assam would solve the political aspirations of the two districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. With the demand for creation a separate full fudged state it was further resolved to launch a movement within the legal and constitutional framework.17

16 ibid, p. 197.
17 B. Rangphar, Karbi Anglong Rajnaaic Itihas, Diphu, 2005, p 103.
In 18 September 1979 the Separate State Demand Committee was formed at Diphu. Sonaram Thaosen and P. K. Garlosa were the President and General Secretary of the organisation. In 15 July 1980, another meeting was held in Diphu. Here also an organisation styled as **Separate State Demand Committee** was formed under the Presidentship of Barlong Terrong. Khorshing Bey and Roy Inghi were selected as the President and General Secretary of this organisation. The leadership resolved to move the issues in the 121th session of Karbi Anglong District Council. Debinchan Hanse, the General Secretary of All Party Peoples Conference and member of District Council tried to move the in 121th sessions. The resolution stated that,

Let this Karbi Anglong District Council be pleased to decide by this solemn resolution in this session of this August District Council be constituted an Autonomous state within the state of Assam as per the provision given in Article No 244 (A) of the Constitution of India.\(^\text{18}\)

However the Deputy Commissioner of Karbi Anglong disallowed the resolution to move in the session. He argued that the constitution of Autonomous state as contemplated in Article 244 (A) of the Constitution of India did not fall within the jurisdiction of the District Council. He rejected the notice on resolution given by Debinchan Hanse, Member District Council by virtue of power conferred on him under section 95 (2) of the Assam Autonomous Districts (Constitution of District Council) Rules 1951.\(^\text{19}\)

The Members of the District Council never accepted the stand of the Deputy Commissioner. They again took a bold decision to move the resolution on

\(^{18}\) Ibid, p. 110.

122nd session of Council. Accordingly Khorshing Bey, the Chairman of the Council wrote to the Deputy Commissioner that, the resolution was a matter of request to the Government of India to form an Autonomous State within the State of Assam as per the provision of the Constitution of India, and that it was of general public interest. Moreover he was of the opinion that the resolution may be moved and discussed in the District Council Session, as it was proposed to be moved by the Chief Executive Member himself.\(^{20}\)

Ultimately, the resolution was moved in 126th session of Karbi Anglong District Council held on 28th December 1981. The resolution stated:

Karbi Anglong District Council feels that by living in a Separate State the people of the two Autonomous Districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills will find more scope of development and self determination. It is further felt that by living separately people will find better scope for preservation of their identity, culture, tradition, language and genius. In view of the above consideration this District Council in their 126th session resolves that the Government of India be requested to create a separate state comprising the two Autonomous District of Assam viz. Karbi-Anglong and North-Cachar Hills with immediate effect.\(^{21}\)

This resolution was passed on 29th December 1981 at the same session.

In 1982, the **Central committee of the Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar Hills State Demand Committee** met Prime Minister of India. Leaders like S.R. Thaosen, K. K Hojai, D. K Rongpi, P K Garlosa etc. had submitted memorandum, demanding a separate state comprising the Karbi Anglong and

---


North Cachar Hills and contiguous areas, inhabited by the tribal people of Nagaon, Sibsagar and Cachar District. The arguments in favour of the demand were also almost same with the earlier memoranda. Only the political atmosphere of Assam Movement and the Medium of Instruction issues were new. Regarding the Assam movement (1979-1985) the memorandum opined that, the Assam agitation in the name of foreign nationals had created panic in the minds of linguistic minority communities and tribal people. It posed a threat to the very existence of tribal and minority communities of the two hill districts of the state. Due to the agitation, the academic atmosphere remained uncertain and their children had to lose one academic year.22

Moreover the Assam Movement jeopardized the parliamentary election of 1980 and census of 1981 in Assam. The election in the reserved parliamentary seat comprising the two hill district could not be held in 1980. For the same reason the census could not be done in these two hill districts also, though they have no objection of holding of census operation of 1981 as the same would have focused the vital statistics necessary for laying out the developmental schemes of these districts. Moreover the Assam agitation leaders had openly declared that, they would not allow revision of electoral roll and census operation unless and until settlement of the foreigner question. The memorandum reflected its reservation.23

The fear psychosis of imposition of Assamese language was another central point of the memorandum as at that time, the Board of Secondary Education

---

22 Memorandum demanding creation of separate full-fledged State, comprising the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills Autonomous District including contiguous areas inhabited by the tribal people of Nagaon, Sibsagar and Cachar districts, in N. Rongpi, Rajya Dabi Somiti, Samu Itihakh, Diphu, 2001, p.50.

23 Ibid, p. 51. (N. Rongpi, Rajya Dabi Somiti, Samu Itihakh.)
of the State had declared the Assamese language as a compulsory subject in all non-Assamese Secondary Schools in the State. Even no grant would be given to those schools, which have no Assamese language teachers. This had added to further injury in the tribal mind. Especially the tribal people of these two hill districts did not like to be confined within the sphere of Assamese language alone; they wanted to educate their children in English and Hindi medium to maintain a link with the rest of India and outside world. And for this purpose the two autonomous District Councils had wanted to join North Eastern Hill University established in Shillong, which was meant primarily for the benefit of all the hill people of North Eastern Region. However, the Government of Assam did not allow them to join in North Eastern Hill University.24

On April 1982 the state demand day was observed at Diphu. The resolution was sent to Prime Minister, Home Minister and other Central Ministers of Government of India. On 13 December 1985 the then Prime Minister of India, Rajib Gandhi visited Haflong. On his visit, G. C. Hojai, Chief Executive Member of North Cachar Hills District Council had submitted a memorandum, demanding the larger autonomy for people of North Cachar Hills. Elaborating the circumstances of the re-organisation of Assam, the assurance of the leaders of Assam Government and the financial hardship of the District Council for meeting the additional expenditure of District Council, the memoranda expressed that;

As a result a sense of disillusionment of the people particularly the younger sections is growing day by day. On the whole, we cannot resist the feeling

24 loc.cit.
that our credulousness has been cheaply exploited. I am afraid, unless the grievances are redressed in good time; the hill people will ultimately have to part company with the rest of Assam and go it alone to seek their own future. Therefore, in the greater interest of all concerned, I make this request to you to give your personal attention in getting the issues settled in its right perspective and in the true spirit of the promises made by the Assam leaders on the eve of the Assam re-organization, at an early date. I humbly suggest that the best solution for us in this district is granting us an Autonomous state as contemplated in Article 244 (A) of the constitution. 25

This memorandum was important for two reasons: First, it spoke only for the people of North Cachar Hills while its counterpart Karbi Anglong District Council was advocating for the people of both the districts. Second, it spoke about the Autonomous state under Article 244 (A) of the Constitution, while its counterpart was speaking about the separate state.

On 5th March 1986, a joint meeting of different political parties of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills held at the Cultural Hall at Haflong. In that meeting it was argued that, the solution lay in the separation of the hill areas from Assam. That would enable them to solve their economic, educational and employment problems and to fulfil their political aspirations and to maintain their distinctive identity. This meeting therefore, unanimously resolved to reiterate their demand vigorously for separation of the hill areas from Assam which had been started as far back as 1973. The meeting further resolved to depute a delegation to meet the Prime Minister of India and other

leaders of the Central Government in New Delhi and to submit memoranda and to press their demand for creation of an Autonomous State.\textsuperscript{26}

A new Committee called **The Central Autonomous State Demand Committee** was formed under the Presidentship of Sonaram Thaosen with Thingu Nampui as General Secretary. This committee had submitted a memorandum before the Prime Minister of India, Rajib Gandhi on 9th March 1986, demanding the creation of an Autonomous state comprising the Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar Hills Districts of Assam under the provision of Article 244 (A) of the Constitution. This memorandum also carried the arguments of former memoranda.

In the meantime, another Convention was held on 30 March 1986 at Diphu Indoor Stadium. Here, the **Autonomous State Demand Co-ordination Committee** (ad hoc) was formed. Roy Inghi and Bijoya Phongso became the President and Secretary respectively. This committee convened a meeting on 20 April 1986, wherein the ad hoc committee was dissolved. The **Karbi Adarbar** and **Peoples Democratic Forum** became the new convenors.

Accordingly on 17 May 1986, both the organisations convened a meeting at Diphu Indore Stadium. The representatives of **Karbi Anglong Student's Union, Karbi Lameit Amai** (Karbi Literary Assembly) **Karbi- Risho-Adarbar, Karbi Anlong Tribal Youth Organisation, Karbi Anglong People's Conference, United Communities Convention, Adibasi Council, Janata Party. Lalung Darbar Karbi- Risho- Nimoso- Asong** (Karbi Women Society) **Karbi Karmachari Santha, Karbi Nibanua Santha,**

\textsuperscript{26} Extract copy of the resolution of the joint meetings of different political parties, in N. Rongpi, *Rajya Dabi Somiti, Samu Itihakh*, Diphu, 2001, p. 69.
Karbi Cultural Society, Man-Tai bhasi Student Union, Man-Tai Pabao Pachao Union, and Karbi Anglong Karwang Community were present.

Except, Karbi-Lamet Amai and Karbi-Risho Adarbar; the entire organisations gave their consent to form the Autonomous State Demand Committee. Accordingly Autonomous State Demand Committee (hereafter, ASDC) was formed with Bharat Timung as President and Babu Rongpi as General Secretary. On the other hand the Karbi-Riso Adarbar convened another meeting on 25 May 1986 wherein the Karbi Anglong Autonomous State Demand Committee (here after KAASDCOM) was formed with Rupam Ranghang as President and Ajit Timung as General Secretary.

After its formation, the ASDC launched an agitation in favour of the demand. The KAASDCOM also organised a peace march at Diphu on 17-6-1986 and submitted a memoranda to the Prime Minister of India, through the Deputy Commissioner of Karbi Anglong District. The memoranda also carried the viewpoints of their predecessors and demand for an Autonomous State for the people of Karbi Anglong. Again, on 22-7-1986, KAASDCOM sent its delegation to New Delhi to meet the Prime Minister and submitted another memorandum to the Prime Minister following the same spirit.

In the very initial stage, the entire agitation was divided into three parts. Its part was lead by the Central Autonomous State Demand Committee, the ASDC and the KAASDCOM. Though their aim was to acquire autonomy, but the difference of opinion was visible. Therefore, on 18 August 1986, a meeting was held to bring the agitation under one umbrella but the attempt failed. Again, on 30August 1986, another meeting was held under the Presidentship of Sonaram Thaosen at Diphu, between Central Autonomous
State Demand Committee and KAASDCOM. A new committee, comprising the both districts was formed. On 7 September 1986, the meeting held at Haflong, under the Presidentship of Sonaram Thaosen and a new organisation was formed as **Karbi Anglong North Cachar Hills Autonomous State Demand Committee** (hereafter KANCHASDCOM). Sonaram Thaosen and Rupan Ranghang became the President and General Secretary respectively.

This organisation had submitted another memorandum to Buta Singh, Home Minister to the Government of India on 30 December 1986. Though the memorandum was a supplementary memorandum of the earlier one, i.e. 9 May 1986; it opposed a point, raised by the Government of Assam, on the basis of Assam Accord 1985. The sixth provision of the Assam Accord 1985 deals with the constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards of Assamese people. The Government of Assam put forwarded a proposal for the reservation of seat in State Assembly and Parliament for the Assamese people on the basis of this provision. Therefore, the memorandum gave emphasis on the issue of Assamese language which the Government of Assam tried to declare as the sole official language, applying the special provision under Article 347 of the Constitution. Criticising the Government policies, the memorandum argued that, the hill people of Assam were in fear of an uncertain future involving their political status, their cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage as they had no working knowledge of Assamese language. As a result, the four language policy of the State Government making Assamese a compulsory subject would be a stumbling block to the progress of education among the hill people. Moreover, the employment avenue in the State Government had been blocked as proficiency in Assamese
was required which made the reservation of posts for Scheduled Tribes meaningless.  

The memorandum further said that, they were convinced that any arrangement within Assam would not be workable. Therefore the creation of the Autonomous State under Article 244 (A) was the only solution which would remove political frustration from the hill people and safeguard the culture, language and identity of the people.  

The Autonomous State Demand Committee on the other hand sent its delegates to meet the Prime Minister of India in Delhi on 1987 along with its ally Karbi Student's Association. 

The team had submitted a memorandum before the Prime Minister for the creation of an Autonomous State comprising Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. The memorandum reflected the agony and the sense of deprivation of the intelligentsia as:

Politically, culturally and also economically the thickly populated and more advanced plain of Assam has always dominated the ignorant, poverty stricken and very thinly populated Assam hills. The people of the Assam plain have always felt and acted superior to the hill men and having been looked down upon are obliged to feel neglected, distant and inferior.  

It also accused the plain people of Assam for exploitation of the hill areas which, according to the memorandum, has been turned into a haven for the

---

28 Ibid, p. 94.  
inflow of jobseekers, contractors and other businessmen of the Assam plains. This was often the result of the fact that the appointment and the contract allotment authority wrested with the bureaucrats of the Assam Government and hence the Assamese got preferential treatment in the appointment of jobs and in the allotment of works. As a result, over 90% of all Government and Semi-Government employees and about 95% contractors and businessmen in the hills were from the plains of Assam. As a result the less educated hill men and few business conscious hill men remained jobless.30

It also pointed out that the natural resources of the two districts had been incessantly and indiscriminately exploited which resulted in untold miseries to the hill men. The unplanned and anti-native oriented tea industry which brought about a new dimension of influx, had deprived many tribal families of their livelihood, on one hand, and had also disturbed the demographic balance in the hill. Again their natural resources were drained out without any economic benefit to the native.31

The land policy the Government of Assam was also criticised in the memorandum that, notwithstanding Para 3 of the SixthSchedule with regards to the allotment, occupation or use or the setting a part of land, by the same Para, the State Government was given absolute power in the use and control of land in reserve forests. It also granted the power to the State Government through which the District Council could not prevent the compulsory requisition of any land for public purposes, whether occupied or unoccupied. Acting on this provision, the Government of Assam was expending reserve forest in name of plantation, capitalising on the hill men’s practices of Jhum

31 loc. cit.
cultivation. This expansionist policy of the State of Assam was bound to retrieve all powers of land controls from the District Council which had decreased the autonomy of the hill men.\textsuperscript{32}

The memorandum reflected its reservation on the administrative policies of the Government of Assam towards the District Councils. As a demonstration of the attempt to fulfil its unwritten commitment by its Office Memoranda, No HAD 218/77/155 dated 14th November 1979, the Government of Assam had merely entrusted certain administrative functions of at least 16 (Sixteen) departments to the District Councils. However certain flaws were consequential to the revival of the movement for separate statehood. While appearing to be granting autonomy to the hill people, the Government of Assam had tactfully retained control of the departments by enumerating conditions to the entrustment of the department. This arrangement created only more complexities in the administration of the departments.\textsuperscript{33}

Regarding the financial policies of the Government of Assam the memorandum accused that, the Government of Assam had received the central grant–in-aid on behalf of the District Councils. It planned the schemes of the development for the hill areas and its officials undertook to implement the schemes on behalf of the District Councils. This planning and budgetary exercise was reflected in the budget discussion of the Karbi Anglong District Council for 1987-88 session, when a member of the Council pointed out that discussion on the budget was useless as the Council could not do anything to change it and the State had not honoured the opinion of the Council nor had the Government sought the advice of the Councils on this matter. Depended

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, p.111.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p.112.
on the political mood of the Councils vis-à-vis the State Government, the latter took a long time to channel the funds to the District Council.

This resulted in the excessive control of the State Government on all aspects of the District Council’s administration, which only created unwanted hurdles in the process of development.\textsuperscript{34}

Conceptualising all of these arguments, the memorandum raised its demand to create an Autonomous State for Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills of Assam in accordance with the provisions of Article 244 (A) of the Constitution, in upholding the freedom and unity of the country and cherished democratic traditions.\textsuperscript{35}

This memorandum carried strong sentiments. During the last decade, the people of the hills made several representations for the right to self-government and had waited upon the Government patiently. However due to the negative responses from Centre, the patience of the people was wearing out and desperation creep in. Therefore they asked to take serious note of the urgency of the matter and take courageous and prudent steps towards meeting this demand of the people without delay. Further delay would only worsen desperation in their minds which could then drive them hard to lose faith in democracy.\textsuperscript{36} This underlying frustration was an important plank for the rise of extremist organisations in the later phase of autonomy movements.

Apart from submitting the series of memoranda, the ASDC and KANCHASDCOM, had launched a series of agitational programmes

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, p. 114.
\textsuperscript{36} loc. cit.
including total strikes, sit-in demonstrations etc. Their programmes had paralysed the day-to-day life of the concerned districts. In some cases, both parties had to face police atrocities and such incidents made the atmosphere volatile. In the midst of these incidents, ASDC participated in the electoral process of District Council. On 7 January 1989, ASDC obtained 22 seats out of 26 seats of District Council. Jayanta Rongpi became the new Chief Executive Member of Karbi Anglong District Council.

On 7 March 1989, the Executive Committee adopted a resolution in favour of Autonomous State demand. It resolved that,

The Executive Committee (EC) resolves to perform its role of a leader in initiating discussion with both the State and Central Govt. and shall take steps through parliamentary as well as democratic methods of fulfilling the demands of the implementation of Article 244 (A) of the Constitution of India.  

KANCHASDCOM, on the other hand resolved not to participate in the electoral process. Rather it gave emphasis on the continuance of the agitational programmes.

United Peoples Conference, a regional political party took a different stand on the demand of Autonomous State under Article 224 (A). Demanding for creation of a new state in lieu of implementations Article 224 (A) of Indian Constitution, the United Peoples Conference was of the opinion that, the provision of Article 224 (A) of the Indian Constitution had proved to be baseless and fruitless while Assam was re-organized by this clause for the purpose of creation of Meghalaya Autonomous State in the year 1969. But

---

37 B. Rangphar, op. cit. p. 173.
just after obtaining Autonomous Statehood of Meghalaya, next phase of movement was launched by the All Party Hill Leaders Conference for complete separation and subsequently, separate statehood was conferred to them in the name of Meghalaya in the year 1972 as per the North-East (Reorganisation) Act 1971. The main factor for not remaining content with the provisions of Article 244 (A) was that, there were no such constitutional provisions which could provide facilities for all-round development for fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the tribals. Therefore tribal people of Meghalaya had rejected this provision. United Peoples Conference therefore demanded for abolition of the provision of Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution without delay.\textsuperscript{38}

Therefore the Conference stressed on creation of a new State.

\begin{quote}
In lieu of Article 244(A) the United Peoples Conference demands for creation of a new state under the provision of Article 2\&3 of the Indian Constitution comprising remaining two Autonomous hills district of Assam.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

On the basis of these arguments the United People Conference submitted a memorandum before the Prime Minister of India on 1991.

The movement had to face a setback due to the different stands on the same issue. On the other hand, the Government of Assam and the Government of India, which took a strong decision against the territorial division of Assam, were adopting the policy for bringing peace. Accordingly in 4 January 1992 a two-member committee was constituted with Hill Areas Development

\textsuperscript{38} N. Rongpi, \textit{op. cit.} p. 149.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, p. 149.
Minister G.C. Langthasa and Member of Parliament, Jayanta Rongpi as the member. On 2 February, the members submitted a report for holding tripartite talk. The preliminary talk was held at the same day. On 27 March the tripartite talk among the ASDC and Government of Assam and M. M. Jakob, State Home Minister of Government of India was held at Delhi. On 7 July, the ASDC gave their consent to the Government’s proposal for upgrading the District Council into an Autonomous body.

As a result of the series of talks, a Memorandum of Understanding (hereafter MOU) was signed on 1 April 1995 in presence of S.B. Chavan, the Home Minister of India, Hiteswar Saikia, Chief Minister of Assam and Dharam Sing Teron President of ASDC Jayanta Rongpi and Holiram Teron of ASDC Other signatories included Robindra Rongpi, President Karbi Student Association, Prakanto Warisa President North Cachar Hills Students Federation, Jaithon Longmaile President Dimasa Student Union. The MOU read:

keeping in view the strong commitment of the Central Government, the Government of Assam and organisations signatory to this MOU, to uphold the integrity of the State of Assam and not to take recourse to any further reorganization and division of the States, efforts continued in the direction of finding a solution within the framework of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.\(^{40}\)

On the basis of this understanding the signatories come to the following conclusions. First of all, the Autonomous District Councils of Karbi Anglong

\(^{40}\) Ibid, p. 153.
and the North Cachar Hills District would be renamed as Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council.  

Secondly, the jurisdiction of the two Councils for the exercise of executive powers would extend to the subjects/Departments.*

A resolution to this effect was to be passed by the State Legislature and the executive powers of the State would be delegated to the above Councils.  

It also stated that before the beginning of the financial year, the State Government would give an indication to the Councils of the overall financial allocations. The Councils had therefore to prepare and pass their budget and forward it to the State Government for being including in the overall State budget. Ordinarily, no change would be made in the budget as proposed by the Councils. However, if for any reasons it would be necessary to do so, the Councils would be consulted.  

An urgent action would be initiated for amendment of Para 3 (1) of the Sixth Schedule for transferring legislative powers to the Councils.  

---

41 Ibid, p. 154.


42 loc.cit.

43 loc.cit.

44 loc.cit.
As a result of this clause the Council would exercise legislative power on the subjects like Industries, Communication, Veterinary, Primary and Secondary Education, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, Social Security, Flood Control, Theatres and Dramatic performance, Public Health and Sanitation, Minor Irrigation, Trade and Commerce, Libraries etc; with some administrative limitation.

Again, an action would be initiated for necessary amendment of the Sixth Schedule to provide for exercise of discretionary powers by the Governor of Assam in respect of matters specifically indicated or entrusted to the Councils in the manner provided for in Paragraph 20 BB of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. However, the formulation in Paragraph 22 BB might be modified to provide that in addition to the Council of Ministers, the Governor should consult the District Council by omitting the words and if he thinks it necessary. Additional provisions viz. Paragraphs 2 (6), 2 (6A) excluding the first provision there under, 8 (4) and 10 (3) might also be brought within the purview of Para 20 BB. 45

The MOU also stated that para 14 (2) of the Sixth Schedule will be modified by omitting the words, with the recommendations of the Governor with report there to.46

The State Government would propose to the Central Government to examine the feasibility of bringing Paragraph 4 (3) 4 (5) 12 (1B) and 17 of the Sixth Schedule within the purview of Paragraph 20 (BB).47

46 loc.cit.
47 loc.cit.
Though law and order would continue to be the responsibility of the State Government, a mechanism would be evolved for consultation with the C.E.M of the Council concerned regarding the posting of senior police and law and order officers i.e. the Superintendent of Police and below the rank and the Deputy Commissioner and below the rank in the area of the Councils. Similarly, the State Government would also evolve a mechanism for associating the C.E.M of the Council concerned in the performance appraisal / recording of confidential report in respect of the above mentioned officer’s in accordance with the procedures being followed by the State Government.48

According to the MOU, officers of the Councils would be included in the State delegation in the finalisation of the annual plan and for the discussion with the Planning Commission.49

The feasibility of separate funds meant for the areas of the Councils in the releases made by the Union Government and the modalities for the same would be examined urgently.50

Lastly, a suitable mechanism would be evolved to monitor the adequacy and promptitude in release to the Councils by the State Government of funds meant for the Councils.51

After signing the MOU, the Assam Legislative Assembly, adopted and approved it on 12 April 1995:

The House resolved further the jurisdiction of Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council and North-Cachar Hills Autonomous District Council for

49 loc.cit.
50 loc.cit.
51 loc.cit.
The exercise of executive powers would extend to 30 (thirty) subjects / department.\textsuperscript{52}

The Chief Minister of Assam officially declared and handed over 30 departments to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council at Diphu and North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council at Haflong on 12 January and 13 January 1997 respectively.

Thus the Intermediate Phase of the agitation for the demand of an Autonomous State comprising of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hill District, under Article 244 (A) came to an end. The leadership gave their consent for the integrity of the State of Assam on one hand, and agreed to earn more autonomy in the field of administrate, legislative and financial aspects on the other. However the aforesaid MOU was not wholeheartedly welcomed by the other components of agitation. KANCHASDCOM showed its utter dissatisfaction. By opposing the MOU, it sent a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India on 18 April 1995. It also demanded Autonomous State instead of more power. The All Party Forum, a conglomeration of political parties vehemently criticised the MOU. The Forum opined that, the arrangements envisaged in MOU, signed between ASDC and the Narasingha Rao, Hiteshwar Saikia regime, seeking to fulfil the political aspiration of the hill people as expressed in the demand for Autonomous State, had been arbitrarily planned, grossly inadequate and did not reflect the realities of the society. It did not address the distinct problems of the ethnic groups and had attempted to permanently close the doors for future negotiations to find just political solution based on the ground realities. This was so because the

\textsuperscript{52} Office Memorandum, Government of Assam, Hill Areas Departments, No HAD 57/95/309, 31\textdegree December 1996, Dispur, also in B. Rangphar, \textit{op. cit.} p. 390.
people of the two hills districts were grossly unrepresented during the negotiation process. It was the natural and Constitutional rights of each ethnic group to be heard in a common forum or individually to ensure that any political dispensation truly reflect their aspirations. Therefore they wanted that they be given the opportunity to talk to the Government to enable them to put forward their views freely and peacefully. This would go a long way in framing a just and realistic political solution for the hill people.\footnote{B. Rangphar, \textit{op. cit.} p. 218.}

The \textit{Intermediate Phase} of the autonomy movement had some special significance. First of all, the young Dimasa and Karbi intelligentsia joined hands for acquiring autonomy. Their rift with counterpart Assamese middle class had reflected in the various stages of the agitation. Moreover, the intelligentsia could motivate masses. With the mobilisation of masses the agitation turned into a form of mass movement. While they attained the mass support, they began to play the bargaining game with the ruling elite. Again the intelligentsia could open a new chapter of awakening in the field of culture and literature. This consciousness led to the formation of nationality aspirations among the Karbi and Dimasa people.

But despite these significance, this phase had some shortcomings. The theoretical foundation of the movement was very weak. It even failed to create a consensus among the agitational forces. Therefore, while, a section was demanding a separate statehood under Article 2 & 3 of the Indian Constitution, the others were advocating autonomy under Article 244 (A). Moreover, though it could mobilise the masses, it failed to address the basic socio-economic issues of the mass people. Lastly, the entire movement could
not create an emotional unification of various ethnic groups of the two hill
districts. Even, the division of Karbi and Dimasa became very distinct, which
opened a new chapter of autonomy movements in the two hills districts of
Assam, which we have termed as the *Final Phase.*