CHAPTER 6
MOVEMENT FOR AUTONOMY: THE FINAL PHASE
(1986 -TILL DATE)

The Intermediate Phase of the movement for autonomy which was sparked off by the Language Issue culminated with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the State Government of Assam, Government of India and the Autonomous State Demand Committee, in 1995. The Final Phase of the movement began with the formation of Dimasa Students’ Federation in 1986 but intensified with the disillusionment of the young intelligentsia with the provisions under the MOU, particularly for sidetracking the question of autonomous state under Article 244(A). This phase is significant in that the political demands strongly urged for an entirely separate state of Dimaraji. The young Dimasa intelligentsia focused their attention the issue of the integration of the Dimasa-inhabited areas of Assam. Their main thrust area was the unification of all Dimasa-inhabited areas into a single administrative unit. Since the time of Hamdhanmohan Haflongbar, this issue occupied the central area in the psyche of the Dimasa. The Nikhil Hairambo Barman Samiti was formed to justify this claim.

Officially, only the Dimasa of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts were regarded as the Dimasa. The other Dimasa people living in the districts of Nagaon, Cachar, Karimganj of Assam and Dimapur in Nagaland were officially regarded as the Hojai Kachari, Barman Kachari, Thangmi or Rukmini Barman and Kachari respectively. Though the Dimasa
people have the same language, culture, custom and religion, they were recognised in different nomenclature in different districts as five different tribes. The intelligentsia regarded it as the dividing policy of the Government of India.¹

Therefore, with an aim to unite all Dimasa people, a section of students formed an organisation, called Dimasa Students' Federation in 1986 under the Presidentship of Mohendra Daoulagapu and Secretaryship of Jewel Garlosa. This organisation was later renamed as the All Dimasa Students' Union, (hereafter ADSU) in 1991 at Kherabari of Dhansiri, unifying all the federal bodies belonging to them, in different places like Nagaland, Nagaon, Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills, Cachar and Karimganj. Chanmoni Kemprai and Dilip Nunisa became the President and Secretary respectively.

The ADSU was formed with the aim to struggle for existence, safety and welfare of the Dimasa. The ADSU strongly argued that the reorganisation of Cachar, Karimganj, North Cachar Hills, Nagaon and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam made since independence without keeping in view the predominance and legitimacy of the Dimasa as a last ruling dynasty over the land. This had badly affected them in their existence, safeguard and progress. The ADSU believed that whole Dimasa populated areas of Cachar, Nagaon and Karbi Anglong district adjacent to the border of North

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¹ Documents, Dimaraji Revival Demand Committee to strengthen the Dimaraji separate state movement on 12 & 15 July 2005 at Haflong. This is inserted in Appendix No. 1
Cachar Hills ought to have been included in North Cachar Hills, so as to serve the interest of the Dimasa people but unfortunately, it did not. ²

Moreover, ADSU was of the view that without consideration of all ancient traditional rights, claims and inhabitation of the people, the boundaries between Assam and Nagaland States had been demarcated and settled in. As a result, sizable populations of the Dimasa people were left in Nagaland. Their existence and development, being a minority group there, are jeopardized and ignored.³ ADSU also argued that the Dimasa inhabited reserved Tribal Belt of Nagaon District of Assam had not been protected and devolved during the long sixty-three years of independence. These areas had to suffer infrastructural problems like lack of roads, good drinking water, health centres, educational institution, irrigation and electricity facilities. Even the lands of the Tribal Belts were encroaching by the foreign nationals and non-tribal people.⁴ Based on their arguments the organisation put forward the demand for a separate home land i.e. Dimaraji.

The Dimaraji state must be created by carving out the whole of the North Cachar, Karimganj and Dimapur Sub-division of Nagaland state; demarcating the territories as per our last Kachari Kingdom ruled by the Tularam Senapati till its annexation by the British in 1854, for our self rule.⁵

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² A Brief History of the All Dimasa Student’s Union—a report enclosed in A summary report of the Capacity building/leadership training, Guwahati, 2007, pp.3-4.
³ loc. cit.
⁴ loc. cit.
⁵ loc. cit.
Apart from the demand for Dimaraji, ADSU also raised several demands. One of the demands was to remove non-tribal outsiders from the Tribal Belt and Blocks of Dimasa-inhabited areas. The removal of non-tribals must be made in respect to those who came and settled after the constitution of the areas as Belts and Blocks so as to protect the interest of the tribal inhabitants. Another demand was to recognize all the Barman of Cachar, Rukmini Barman of Karimganj, and the Hojai Kachari of Nagaon district of Assam and the Kachari of Nagaland as the Dimasa Kachari in a single nomenclature, through Constitutional amendments. ADSU also raised the demand to preserve and developed the historical relics of ancient Dimasa Kachari state of Dimapur in Nagaland and Khaspur, Maibang and Mahamaya etc in Assam.

To strengthen the demand of Dimaraji another organisation was formed as Dimaraji Revival Demand Committee (hereafter DRDC) in 1994. Santalal Baderbaiga and Sholbangphar Phonglosa became the President and Secretary of the organisation. The organisation adopted a policy of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle to achieve its goal. Parliamentary struggle, as DRDC meant, was to capture the Autonomous Council, MLA and MP seats. Through these platforms, they were to raise the voice for Dimaraji separate state, grievances of the people and to unite all the MLAs, MPs and anti-ruling Government force in favour of Dimaraji.

6 loc. cit.
7 loc. cit.
8 loc. cit.
separate state. It defined the *extra-parliamentary struggle* as a protest movement demanding Dimaraji separate state through procession, *dharna*, rally etc.\(^9\)

Both the ADSU and DRDC had submitted a memorandum before the Prime Minister of India on 1996. In this memorandum, they demanded the creation or revival of a full-fledged Dimaraji state,

As per the rules provided in the Constitution of India by carving out the territories inhabited by the Dimasa people from the districts of Cachar, Nagaon, Karbi-Anglong of Assam and a few areas of Dhansiri-per and Dimapur district of Nagaland state and the entire area of North-Cachar Hills district of Assam.\(^10\)

They also demanded an autonomous council in favour of Thangmi or Rukmini Barman people in Karimganj district of Assam by carving out the entire areas populated by Thangmi or Rukmini Barman for their protection and development through self rule.\(^11\) They further demanded one Member of Parliament seat for the district of North Cachar Hills as reserved for the Scheduled Tribe (Hill) community in the House of Parliament. It also demanded the amendment of the Peoples Representative Act 1951, section 4 (b) with immediate effect.\(^12\) The demand to recognize the Dimasa of various parts of Northeastern region was also placed in the memorandum.

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\(^9\) Documents, Dimaraji Revival Demand Committee, *op.cit.*

\(^10\) A Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India and the Union Home Minister of India, submitted by ADSU and DRDC, on 12.11.1996. also inserted in Appendix No. 2.

\(^11\) *loc. cit.*

\(^12\) *loc. cit.*
The demand to recognise (1) Barman, Scheduled Tribe (Plains) of Cachar. (2) Thangmi or Rukmini Barman ST (P) of Karimganj, Assam. (3) Hojai Kachari ST (Plains) of Nagaon district of Assam. (4) Kachari of Dimapur and Dhansiriper areas of Dimapur district of the Nagaland as Dimasa Scheduled tribe, by modification of Scheduled lists of the Constitution of India were raised as they were incorrectly identified in different names in those areas where they belong to the same language and culture of Dimasa people.\(^\text{13}\)

Both these organisations were of the opinion that, the long deprivation and exploitation which had brought serious setbacks against the existence and identity of the Dimasa people had badly hurt the sentiment and prestige of the people beyond toleration. Therefore they were determined to move the Government at all costs for the creation or revival of the lost homeland-Dimaraji state, which was the only means for the survival of Dimasa.\(^\text{14}\)

After submitting the memorandum, both the organisations started various programmes to achieve their goal. The ADSU resolved to launch its agitation. It was resolved to launch \textit{dharna} at Guwahati to pressurise the Government, for immediate solution to the Dimaraji issue and other burning problems of Dimasa.\(^\text{15}\) It was further resolved to stage \textit{dharna} at

\(^{13}\) loc. cit.

\(^{14}\) loc. cit.

Delhi to create pressure on the Central Government to solve the Dimaraji issue.16

These resolutions were translated into action by the activists of ADSU. However their activities were confined to the Dimasa-dominated areas only. It was reflected in the Presidential address of ADSU conference also:

This is my clarion call to my Dimasa people, friends, brothers and sisters and neighbouring community, that our struggle has not yet reached its end. We have still to go a long way to achieve our goal— the Dimaraji state and full prosperous life. We are to determine and promise for future struggle in time to come. Many of our people lost their lives, household properties, relatives etc. We express our sympathy for the losses and sorrows. But we are to struggle and struggle.17

On the other hand, the programmes of DRDC had not received popular support and it was aware of it. This organisation had to face several defeats in the District Council, Legislative Assembly and even parliamentary election.18 Moreover, the organisational structure of DRDC was not so strong. They were not able to form a strong village committee or a constituency committee. Without forming these committees, the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle was impossible and the Dimaraji separate state movement would not be possible.19 The weak leadership was the main reason of the failure of DRDC. The members did

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16 loc. cit.
18 Documents, Dimaraji Revival Demand Committee, op. cit.
19 loc. cit.
not pay heed to the fact that the attainment of Dimaraji state would require a strong organisational structure. They were only concerned in winning the election contest with the help of militant organisation.  

Apart from these two organisations, a women organisation was formed known as *Dimaraji Mahila Samaj*. In this regard, it is mention worthy that the Dimasa women enjoy considerable liberty in society. On the very basis of this social position, the Dimaraji Mahila Samaj had also participated in the process of the Dimaraji movement. Likewise, the *Dimaraji Khunang Hosom* (organisation of village headmen) was formed in the year 2000. This organisation also took up the cause of Dimaraji movement.

Meanwhile, sections of the Dimasa youth had lost their faith in the democratic process of movement. That section formed the *Dimasa National Security Force*, an armed opposition group with the demand for the separate homeland. However, soon, this organisation was defunct and some of the leaders had surrendered before the Government. Those who did not surrender later re-organised and styled themselves as the *Dima Halom Daugha* (soldiers of Dimaland, hereafter DHD). The DHD came into limelight with the same demand to create a homeland for Dimasa called as Dimaraji. Prominent leaders of this outfit were Jewel Garlosa, Dilip Nunisa and Pranab Nunisa. Jewel Garlosa and Dilip Nunisa were earlier associated with the student organisation. The DHD from the very beginning was involved with several armed activities. The armed conflicts resulted in the
death of hundreds of people. Moreover the pressure from the Government and the operation of the para-military and military forces of Government of India disrupted the life of the people.

The ADSU came forward with its agitational programmes. ASDU called a 24-hour Dimaraji *Bandh* with effect from 5 am of 8 July 2002, in protest against the atrocities of security forces on innocent people in proposed Dimaraji. ADSU strongly condemned the state-sponsored terrorism in Dimaraji. The *Jawans*, camped at Harinagar Cachar, had tortured the tea tribe, Khasi and Dimasa communities in Khaspur, Goabari area in the Cachar district. The security forces allegedly raped three Khasi girls at the Goabari near Khaspur. They also harassed the Dimasa under the pretext of searching DHD militants in the Indo-Bangladesh border villages like Hawarmah and Khorkhori. The security forces camped at Bamungaon near Udali Block had beaten up the villagers of the Longmailu Dimasa village near Udali, Lanka of Nagaon district. The Black Panther’s jawans were also looting jewelleries, burning the village houses at Manja-Dimasa Belt and Dhansiri area in Karbi Anglong.  

As a part of the peace initiative, the DHD signed the cease-fire agreement with Government of the India on 1 January 2003. Its designated camps were established in several part of Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills and Cachar districts of Assam. After signing the cease-fire agreement the DHD had submitted its formal memorandum before the Home Ministry of

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Government of India, on 23 September 2004, demanding the creation of separate Dimaraji state;

By carving out the lands inhabited by our Dimasa Tribal people in the North East Region, as expressed here in the Memorandum; as per norms available under the Constitution of India, so as to give us the constitutional Rights and privileges of Self Rule availing of other right and benefit and there by develop the backward and illiterate Dimasa tribe in time to come and to bring peace unity and integrity in the Region. 22

The memorandum of DHD had criticized the Government policies related to the Dimasa. It accused the Government of having divided the ancestral territory of the Dimasa into several parts. After India’s independence, several changes occurred in Assam. The new district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills was created in 1952. Mikir Hills district was formed out of some land from the districts of the Nagaon and Sibsagar, the land that belongs to the Heramba Kingdom or Tularam Senapati’s province The North Cachar Hills sub division was separated from Cachar and tagging it with Mikir Hills formed into a district. A separate State of Nagaland was formed in1963 including the Dimapur area of Assam. Dimapur, the capital of ancient Heramba Kingdom was also leased out to Nagaland. The North Cachar Hills sub-division was again separated from Mikir Hills District and formed into a new district in 1970. The Mikir Hills district was later renamed Karbi Anglong district. Therefore the population of Dimasa people

turned out as a minority group in all the remaining districts of Cachar, Nagaon, Karimganj, Hailakandi, Karbi Anglong of Assam and Dimapur district of Nagaland, barring the district of North Cachar hills.\textsuperscript{23}

Moreover, the DHD also reflected its consensus on the issue of the single nomenclature of the Dimasa people with the other organisation like ADSU and DRDC through this memorandum. It also argued that the Dimasa had completely lost the identity and oneness of the community though they belonged to the same language and culture. It had harmed the society in many ways.\textsuperscript{24}

The critical attitude of DHD towards the tribal policy of Government of India was also reflected in the memorandum that, the administrative procedures so reformed and enforced for the protection, growth and peace of the tribal did not work at all. The tribal Belts and Blocks, their Rules and Regulations formed for the protection of tribal interests, could never work perfectly. Even the two autonomous districts of Assam with more autonomous power could not fully serve the interests of the tribals and their districts. The demand for autonomous state under the Article 224 (A) & (B) of the Constitution therefore soon followed. But how long would this autonomous state last even if the centre granted it? Could it fully provide the hopes and the aspirations of the people of the state?\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{23} loc.cit.
\textsuperscript{24} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{25} loc. cit.
The DHD had also submitted detailed descriptions of the boundaries, administrative structure and industrial prospects of the Dimaraji state along with the memorandum. On the basis of the memorandum the DHD had participated in several rounds of talks with Government of India.

Dimasa intelligentsia had welcomed the entire process of cease-fire and talk. This attitude was reflected in its activities. The peace rally Group, comprising of Dimaraji Khunang Hosom, Dimarji Mahila Samaji, All Dimasa Student’s Union, Merger committee Bordolong Lanka-bheta Tribal Belt, Scheduled Cast Union, had organised a peace rally at Lanka, Nagaon Assam on 6 March 2003. After the rally they submitted a memorandum to the Home Minister of India through the sub-divisional officer of Hojai sub-division, Nagaon, Assam. In this memorandum the Group opined that, the Dimasa one of the aboriginal people of the North East Region and who ruled for centuries till the annexation by the British administration, had turned homeless, landless, ignored and denied of their everything legitimate and truth. On the other hand, taking advantage of the backwardness in education awareness and economy etc, the other conscious people made several new districts and states in their soil and reducing them to a minority everywhere. Thereafter in consequence the Dimasa lost their rich ancient heritage, ancestral homeland, culture and language etc. and at last being driven out denying all Constitutional privileges and safeguards etc.26

26 Memorandum to the Home Minister of India, through the Sub Divisional Officer of Hojai, Nagaon Assam, submitted by the Peace Rally Group on 6th March 2003.
These circumstances led the people to rise in revolt for the purpose of reconstruction of the fate and future which the people really deserved, in consideration of inheritance and right of claims etc, available under the Constitution of India. Moreover, the memorandum regarded that the armed activities of DHD created a threat to the Dimasa society itself. The armed organisation of the Dimasa youths, the DHD had incurred huge loses to their own people and society, despite bringing heavy loss to others. The loss of human lives, properties, the fear and agony were beyond count and imagination. The peace rally group further requested through the memorandum to initiate immediate talks with the DHD within the cease-fire term for the peaceful settlement of the issue and thereby avoid any break of the cease-fire agreement in time in the greater interest of the people and the nation.

On 3 August, 2005, another memorandum was submitted to the Union Home Minister at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi by fourteen organisations* in support of Dimaraji. The organisations after the joint dharna at Jantar Mantar, submitted the memorandum demanding for:

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*These organisations were ADSU, All Assam Bengali Youth & Student federation, Nepali Students Union, HrangKhol Hallam Committee, Baite Students Association, Jayantia Students Union, Hojai district Scheduled Cast Apex Committee, Dimarji Mahila Samaj, Dimarji Khunang Hosom, All Barak Valley Students Federation, Barak Valley Tribal Right Protection Front, All Assam Rongmai Students Union, Barak Valley Khasi Jayantia Students Union and All Assam SC/ST Unemployed Association.
Immediate creation of a separate Dimaraji state comprising Dimasa contiguous areas in the North East is necessary with a view to providing Constitutional and political right and safeguards to the Dimasa for the progress and establishment of political, economic, social, cultural educational religious identity of the Dimasa people in parallel with what the other neighbouring communities have been enjoying. We feel that Dimaraji separate state is the ancestral and historical right of the Dimasa people which must be given back.  

Moreover these organisations gave emphasis on the cease-fire agreement and the talk between the DHD and Government of India. The DHD had been observing cease-fire with the Central and State Government since January 2003. The tardy progress of the peace talks and the delaying tactics of the Government made the DHD cadres restive. Further the reported stand of the State Government of Assam that there would be no separate state had added fuel to the fire. Therefore in order to established permanent peace and progress, social harmony as well as to avoid further loss of innocent lives and properties in the region inhabited by the Dimasa people, it was decided to expedite the peace talk and a permanent solution to the Dimaraji issue was of utmost necessity.

While these processes of peace were going on, conflict arose in the DHD ranks. Jewel Garlosa the Chairman turned up the cease-fire agreement. He formed a new armed opposition group called Black Widow or DHD

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30 The Memorandum of Joint Mass Demonstration, Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, August 3 2005.
31 loc. cit.
Dilip Nunisa became the new Chairman of the outfit. Fractional clashes between the two groups created panic and several cadres died. The Black Widow demanded Dima-Hasao-Raji for the Dimasa of North Cachar Hills. They became involved in armed conflicts with the paramilitary forces. Hundreds of civilian died. The law and order situation in North Cachar Hills turned into a volatile zone. However in 2009, Jewel Garlosa was arrested at Mangalore. The DHD (J) came into the cease-fire orbit with the Government. Its self-styled Commander-in-Chief, Nironjan Hojai surrendered a huge catch of arms and ammunition before the Government. On the other hand the Government of India appointed P. C Haldar, former Director-General of Intelligence Bureau as the interlocutor of peace process. Though P. C Haldar was appointed and several rounds of discussion held between the parties, the concrete solution of the demand for Dimaraji is yet to be concluded.

Apart from, the activities of afore-discussed groups, a large section of Dimasa intelligentsia involved themselves in various socio-political activities for the uplift of Dimasa people.

The Dimapur area of present day State of Nagaland was once the capital city of Dimasa Kings. The entire area was adjusted in the Naga Hills District Council just after the dawn of India independence of 1947. However the issue of reorganization created several criticisms. Even the issue was raised in the debate of the Constituent Assembly by Kuladhar Chaliha, a member from Assam. He pointed out that, the ruins of Dimapur
showed that at that period, the Kachari had attained a state of civilisation, considerably more advanced than that of the Ahom's. He further pointed out that the inclusion of Dimapur Mouza in the Naga Hills would be the negation of justice. He believes that it would mean subjecting an advanced community to the mercy of Autonomous districts which had primitive rules and Criminal laws.

Despite the strong opposition of Chaliha, the drafting committee included the Mouza of Dimapur in the Naga Hills district. However B.R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the drafting committee explicitly stated that the inclusion of the Dimapur Mouza in the Naga Hills district was for the economic convenience of the Naga Hills Tribes. He further categorically said that the political interest of the people of Dimapur would be safeguarded.

Nevertheless its inclusion was done purely in Naga interests, ignoring Dimasa sentiment. The inclusion of Dimapur area in Naga Hills was a temporary one. It was clear in the statement of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, who told the Naga leaders that Dimapur would be excluded from the State of Nagaland within 25 (Twenty five) years and suggest them to make alternative arrangements of town elsewhere. Moreover the K.B.K Sundaram Committee, which was constituted in 1971

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33 loc.cit. (The Constitutional-legal status of Dimapur under the Indian Constitution.)

34 loc. cit.

35 loc. cit.
to assess the Assam-Nagaland boundary disputes also stated in his report that *Dimapur should be returned to Assam.*

Thus the issue of Dimapur remains a temporary settled one and the Government of Nagaland was bound to protect the interest of non-Naga people specially the Dimasa. Therefore the Dimasa were officially recognized as the Kachari Scheduled Tribe category in Nagaland. Accordingly the Government of Nagaland declared reservation quota in all appointments, under the Government order no APPT/18/16/67 dated the 26th June 1967. The provision for reservation of 80 p.c. of all appointments or posts under the Government of Nagaland had been made for the candidates belonging to (1) any Naga tribe (2) Kuki (3) Kachari (4) Garo (5) Mikir provided such persons were indigenous inhabitants of the state of Nagaland. This provision was further extending up to 100 percent for direct appointment to non-technical grade III and IV posts, subject to the permanent residence category of the State of Nagaland.

However, despite this provision, the Dimasa people of Dimapur area had nourished a sense of deprivation in other sectors of life. The question of representation to the various electoral bodies was one of such point of dissatisfaction. The Dimasa organisations of Dimapur raised the demand for

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36 loc. cit.
37 Memorandum, Government of Nagaland, Home Department, Appointment (B) Branch, NoAPPT-12/6/67/APB, dated Kohima, the 25th February/72.
38 Office Memorandum, Government of Nagaland, Department of Personal and Administrative Reforms (Administrative Reforms Branch), No AR-8/8/76 dated Kohima, the 19th April/83.
reservation of constituency and creation of District Council for the Dimasa. The most numerically weaker and suppressed section of people in Nagaland were Kachari and Garo, who remained unrepresented in the Legislative Assembly. As a consequence their grievances, problems had remained unheard and unattended.\(^{39}\)

The Dimapur town itself reflected the historical background of Dimasa people. Therefore the Dimasa also raised demand for preservation of historical monuments as National heritage.\(^{40}\) The Dimasa people also felt a sense of threat to the very existence of their life and properties in Dimapur.\(^{41}\)

Under such circumstances, the Dimasa of Dimapur formed organisations like Kachari Tribal Union, Dimasa Public Organisations etc to protect the Constitutional rights of the Dimasa. Kachari Tribal Union advocated the preservation of historical monuments while the Dimasa Public Organisation endorsed in favour of democratic rights.

The Dimasa inhabitant areas of Karbi Anglong district are under the purview of Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Here the Dimasa were recognised in the Scheduled Hill Tribes category. The Karbi Anglong district itself is the homeland of several ethnic groups. Apart from the

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\(^{39}\) Memorandum to Lal Krishna Advani, National President, Bharatiya Janata Party, New Delhi, submitted by the President B. J. P, Minority Morcha, Nagaland State, Dimapur, dated the 15 September 1997.

\(^{40}\) loc. cit.

\(^{41}\) Memorandum to L K Mishra, The Governor of Assam & Nagaland, Rajbhaban, Guwahati submitted by President/ Secretary of Federation of the Minorities, G B and VCMS, Nagaland, dated May 16, 1992.
Karbis, the Dimasa, Kuki, Rengma-Naga, Chakma, Khasi-Pnar, Garo, Man-Tai, Tiwa and Boros are the prominent indigenous groups of the District. However, the Dimasa which took active part in the autonomy movement of ASDC began to accuse the Karbi dominated District Council for its policies. Jadikhe Naiso Hosom (Dimasa Apex Body, here after JNH) submitted a confidential urgent report before the President of India A.P.J. Kalam, regarding the gross violation of human rights as well as the Constitutional rights of the Dimasa in particular and other smaller tribes in general by the authorities. 42

The report observed that the District Council authority rapidly settled the Karbi people from outside the district namely from Bangladesh, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaon, Cachar, Kamrup, Tezpur of Assam in large numbers. As a result the demographic pattern of the said areas also completely changed and the indigenous local smaller tribal groups were a minority in their homeland and deprived of their political share. There were constant social conflicts, tension, group clashes and ethnic clashes mainly due to the policy of population settlement. Another reason of ethnic clashes and social tension, as the report argued, was due to the aggressive policy of the major tribes as well as lack of tolerance. Besides the name of the village dominated by the smaller tribes was frequently changed by the District Council and a number of new model villages and forest villages were established in the areas proximate to the small tribes and non-Karbi areas.

42 A Confidential Urgent Memorandum to Dr A. P. J Kalam, President of India, Rastrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, submitted by Jadikhe Naiso Hosom, Diphu dated 27/01/06.
For example Deopani, Dokmoka, Doldoli, Dhansiri (Adarsha model village) Nambor Adarsha model village under Bokajan Police Station.\textsuperscript{43} There are the Constitutional provisions of District Council, Regional Council and Village Council in the Sixth Schedule area. In case of Karbi Anglong District, the JNH put forth the question of deprivation of self rule and discrimination. There was a:

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deliberate deprivation of Autonomous Regional Council and Autonomous village Council at the intermediate level and village to ensure the political share to the smaller tribes of the Six Scheduled area of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District in accordance with the paragraph and sub-paragraph of the Article 224 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of India.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Apart from this, the JNH pointed out several points of discrimination. First of all, the unfair and discriminatory arrangement of Member of Autonomous Council seats in the share of political powers by the District Council and the State Government which was a kind of imposition of one tribe rule in the multi-tribe dominated Sixth Scheduled area. \textsuperscript{45} Another issue was the deliberate deprivation of the facilities of the primary education in mother tongue and script to the smaller tribes of the Sixth Scheduled area of Karbi Anglong Autonomous District in violation of the Article 350 (A) Article 224 (2) Article 29 (Fundamental Right) and the Charters of Universal Declaration of the Human Rights by the Government.

\textsuperscript{43} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{44} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{45} loc.cit.
of Assam and the District Council.\textsuperscript{46} The JNH also pointed out that there was deliberate deprivation of cultural promotion grant and protection facilities to the smaller tribes of the Sixth Schedule area of Karbi Anglong Autonomous District to promote their colourful culture by the Government of Assam as per the clauses of the Assam Accord and by the District Council Authority in gross violation of Fundamental Right (Article 29) letter and spirit of Article 244 (2) of the Constitution of Republic of India and the Charters of Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\textsuperscript{47} Lastly, the deprivation of jobs facilities by the District Council in the Councils secretariat, L.P and High school teachers and in the transferred departments to the smaller tribes time and again, which was a gross violation of Assam Population Pattern Act 1992, Fundamental Right and the Charters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\textsuperscript{48} The JNH was critical about the political structure of the Karbi Anglong District Council. It demanded a change in the nomenclature of Karbi Anglong. The report argued that, the entire area was earlier under Tularam Senapati's territory and the name of Karbi Anglong was super imposed territory; a total rejection of Dimasa nationalism. The report regarded it as not only a misnomer but also an open encouragement to the communal forces by the Government and total disregard to the historical factors and complete suppression of Dimasa history.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{47} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{48} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{49} loc. cit.
On the basis of these arguments the JNH demanded the immediate change of the name of the district from Karbi Anglong to Diphu in order to remove the name of a particular tribe to maintain the multi-tribe character of the district and for the peaceful co-existence of all tribes in Schedule area.\textsuperscript{50} It also demanded job facilities in the posts of Deputy Secretary, District police force, ASI/SI of schools, cultural officers; clerk in the District Council secretarial and under Government officers to the minority groups to reflect the population pattern and proper representation. As, most of the posts of Deputy Secretary in the District Council were also occupied by the Karbi tribe at the cost of the minority groups like the Dimasa. That was one of the serious matters as it would ultimately push the smaller tribes to nowhere. \textsuperscript{51}

The Dimasa people living in the Cachar district of Barak valley in Assam were regarded as the Barman Kachari Scheduled tribes (plains). Despite this recognition they are facing several socio-economic problems. The most significant problem is the land. In a memorandum to L.K Advani the ex-deputy Prime Minister of India; the \textbf{Cachar District Tribal Sangha} (hereafter \textit{Sangha}) argued that while the Government created Tribal BELTS and Blocks for the protection of the Scheduled Tribes (plains) living in the Brahmaputra valley, no such Tribal Belt or Block had been created for the Scheduled tribe (plains) in Cachar. As a result the tribals of Cachar had been left totally unprotected and exposed to diverse adversities arising especially out of the influx of refugees and increased illegal infiltrators after

\textsuperscript{50} loc. cit.

\textsuperscript{51} loc. cit.
the partition of India.\textsuperscript{52} The Sangha therefore demanded the creation of Tribal Belts and Blocks comprising of Sheoralol, Tribangram, Ganganagar, Dharamnagau, Khaspur, Borkhola and Bikrampur. Moreover it raised the demand for rehabilitation of landless tribals. The tribal people became landless due to the influx of the refugees from erstwhile East-Pakistan. Moreover the new settlers from Sylhet and Bengal swamped in perennial streams in the Government offices, trade, tea-gardens and agricultural fields, taking advantage of the ignorance of the local tribal people and grabbing tribal lands which belonged to their kings and secured settlement to themselves rendering the tribals landless in their own land.\textsuperscript{53} Therefore the Sangha demanded;

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(A)] rehabilitate all the landless tribal people in Cachar by stopping further settlement of land to non-tribal’s in the available Khas-land
  \item[(B)] allot residential land to the tribal residents within the Silchar master plan area
  \item[(C)] issue \textit{Patta} to the reserved tribal forest villagers.\textsuperscript{54}
\end{itemize}

Apart from the question of land, the issue of migration played a vital point of agony among the Dimasa and other tribal groups of Cachar district. It was also reflected in a joint memorandum of \textbf{Indigenous Mongolian and Tribal Organisations} to the Chief Minister of Assam. Though, they were predominant in the district of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi and historically the sons of the soil, the appeasement as well as the open-door

\begin{itemize}
  \item A Memorandum to L K Advani, President, Bharatiya Janata Party, New Delhi, submitted by District Tribal Sangha, Cachar, Silchar dated 12\textsuperscript{th} March 1994.
  \item loc. cit.
  \item loc. cit.
\end{itemize}
policies of the Government have led the entire area to be flooded with refugees. This has endangered the very identity of the sons of the soil. The frequent infiltration from Bangladesh to the Barak valley also completely changed the demographic pattern in the entire area wherein the local inhabitants suffered most politically as well as economically. The cases of repeated atrocities, land grabbing and rape of tribal women by miscreants without any legal action from the authority also created fear psychosis amongst the indigenous people. Therefore the environment was completely antagonistic to the life-styles of the indigenous people, where they were treated as second class citizens, surrounded by people from different cultures. In their opinion, that was an attempt on the part of vested interest group with the tacit approval of the authority acting to drive out the people from their villages and occupy the fertile land. The authority paid no interest on the repeated complaints and allegation for drastic action against the violators of laws which was a gross violation of Constitutional provisions and Universal Declaration of Human Rights.55

This joint memorandum had categorically placed fifty demands relating to the issues of tribal and indigenous people. Among those demands few were remarkable. First, the demand for inclusion of the tribal areas of Barak valley into tribe-wise autonomous region and village councils for the

55 A Joint Memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam, Dispur; submitted by Indigenous Mongolian and Tribal Organisations Silchar, dated 15/7/04. The constituent of organisations are- Khasi-Jayantia Student Union, All Assam Meira Paibi Association& Thaugan Marup, All Dimasa Student’s Union, All Assam Rongmai Naga Student Union, Barak valley Khasi-Jayantia Welfare Association and Hailakandi Khasi-Jayantia Darbar.
protection of their distinct identity and all round development, under Article 224 (2) of the Constitution of India.\textsuperscript{56} Second, they demanded for the introduction of separate census column, tribe-wise instead of simply \textit{Tribal head} in order to reflect the multi tribes, multi communities and composite patterns of the society of the state. Due to a faulty census, the correct population figure of the tribal people of the Barak valley is still inaccurate.\textsuperscript{57} Lastly, they raised the demand for implementation of Land and Forest Environment Protection Act 1980 to evict the non-tribal encroachers from the forest areas and protect the forest areas and tribal-dwelling places of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts. Moreover for taking prompt and strict action against the miscreants involved in illegal forest deforestation and illegal cutting of timber for smuggling in the entire tribal areas of Barak valley was also demanded.\textsuperscript{58} A sense of deprivation had grown in the field of job and other service sectors also as the departments and establishments in Cachar had ignored the provisions for reservation by not implementing the Assam Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Vacancies in Service and Posts) Act 1978 and rules 1983.\textsuperscript{59}

The same concern was echoed in the joint memorandum of Indigenous Mongolian and Tribal Organisations, where the demand for proper implementation of Assam ST/SC Reservation Act 1979 and extension of

\textsuperscript{56} loc.cit.
\textsuperscript{57} loc cit.
\textsuperscript{58} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{59} A Memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam, submitted by Tribal Sangha, \textit{op. cit.}
employment opportunities in the district offices to ensure the representation of the tribe in the district administration was raised.  

The ADSU observed that as many as L.P school stipendiary teachers had been appointed in the year 1992 but only two (2) ST (p) candidates figured in the list. A simple calculation 10% of 368 would amount 36 as reserved for the ST (P) candidates. Moreover the reservation quota was not to be worked out at 10% of the total number of the new appointments but at 10% of the total number of post in the cadre of L. P. teachers existing in the entire district. Thus they believed that it exposed the narrow sectarian attitude towards the cause of the tribal people and sabotaging their interest.  

The ADSU further raised its voice to call for the records from the appointing authority of the various departments of State as well as in the Central Government and take effective steps to fill up all the vacant posts against reserved quota meant for the ST (Plain) candidates. Apart from these issues, other issues like preservation of Dimasa historical movements, promotion of culture and literature etc occupied the interests of the Dimasa intelligentsia of Barak valley. The activities of *Nikhil Hairambo Barman Samiti* had reflected this viewpoint.  

The Dimasa people of Hojai sub-division of Nagaon district, Assam were officially recognized as the Hojai Kachari Scheduled plains tribe.  

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60 A Joint Memorandum, *op. cit.*  
61 A Memorandum to Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India, through the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar, Assam, dated the 4th March 2004, submitted by Cachar district Circle, ADSU.  
62 *loc. cit.*
Accordingly, the Bordolong Lankabheta Tribal Block was constituted in 1-2-1950, comprising the 52,176 Bighas of land. Another Tribal Sub-Plan area was constituted to protect and promote the interest of the Hojai Kachari. However, here also the question of land and migration played a vital role of discontent. In a joint memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam, by the Merger Committee, ADSU and Dimaraji Khunang Hosom, it was argued that, without the proper implication of the Clause (X) of Assam Land Revenue Regulation 1886, the flow of non-tribal immigration would be increased. Moreover, the organisations further demanded the closure and cancellation of the distribution of settlement deeds to the non-tribals in the Tribal Belt area and provision for permanent Patta to the tribal people, who had been living within the Belt since the time of Indian independence. It was further argued in the memorandum that, the inhabitants of the Tribal Belt had been deprived of the high school level education, water supply, road communication, electric facilities etc. Even there was a siphoning of Government allotted funds in Padumpukhuri Gaon Panchayat and in Integrated Tribal Development Projects. Therefore, it had demanded the creation of a Zila Parisad called

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63 A Memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam, submitted by ADSU, Merger Committee and Dimaraji Khunang Hosom, dated 20/9/ 2004. (In Assamese)
64 loc. cit.
65 loc. cit.
66 loc. cit.
*Alonkha-Dibabong* comprising the areas of Bordong, Lanka-bheta Tribal Block area.\(^{67}\)

Thus all these socio-economic issues of Dimasa-dominated areas of Dimapur in Nagaland and Karbi Anglong, Cachar and Hojai, gave birth to a comprehensive base of the Dimaraji separate state movement. The young Dimasa intelligentsia had conceptualized the entire issue and placed it as the demand of the people.

Moreover, ADSU which was very vocal regarding these issues had started its agitational programmes. The attitude of ADSU was also reflected in its memorandum to Justice Kuldip Singh, the Chairman of Delimitation Commission. ADSU stated that:

> Even after the 58 years of Republic of Indian Independence, the Dimasa tribe of State are facing major political problems and deprive of M.L A. and M. P seats by the authority. In fact, we are always subjected to humiliation of justice, discrimination economic and cultural exploitation under the successive Government.\(^{68}\)

It further opined that, the treatment to the Dimasa was as to second class citizens in their homeland. The House of Parliament as well as the State Legislative Assembly also completely overlooked the genuine political aspiration of the aboriginal Dimasa. Therefore, through the delimitation of the Constituencies Act, they requested to accommodate the Dimasa’s

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\(^{67}\) loc.cit.

\(^{68}\) Memorandum to Kuldip Singh, retired Judge and Chairman, Delimitation Commission, submitted by ADSU, dated 1/1/2005.
opinions and views in the political decision-making process in the platform of State Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha. The system was more favourable to the non-indigenous refugees and outsiders, who were over represented in the State Legislative Assembly, whereas, the aboriginal Dimasa were allowed a little share of political power in the State Legislature but completely denied of Lok Sabha seat. On the basis of the population relaxation clause of the Delimitation Act and the Assam Accord, they demanded the creation of Legislative Assembly constituencies for Dhansiri, Parokhoa, Rengma, and Maibang areas of Diphu, Howraghat, Haflong and Bokajan Assembly constituencies. They also demanded the reservation of the Hojai Legislative Assembly constituency for the Scheduled Plain tribe category including adjoining the areas of Hamren Assembly and Doyang valley and the creation of a new Lok Sabha constituency comprising the Haflong Assembly area. The ADSU felt that, the arrangements of new constituencies would, ensure political justice and equality to the downtrodden Dimasa of North Cachar Hills as well as Karbi Anglong and Nagaon, for all-round development as well as protection of their distinct identity.

The *Dima Halom Daugha*, on the other hand tried to reflect the aspirations of Dimasa intelligentsia in the form of Dimaraji state. As the rights of the Dimasa people were not protected and given no safeguards under the Indian Constitution, the Dimasa in the form of DHD were compelled to take up

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69 loc. cit.
70 loc. cit.
armed struggle for their identity, economic and political rights. The armed struggle started since the 1990s for the creation of a full-fledged separate Dimaraji state demanding the ancestral land of the people of Heramba Kingdom.\textsuperscript{71} The DHD further claimed that, the Dimasa had never been under the political domination either of the Ahoms or Nagas in their history. They had enjoyed their own sovereignty. Hence they did not want to live under any political authority. As during the rule of the Dimasa Kings, many tribes thrived in the state of Dimaraji and lived in peaceful co-existence with all the neighbouring ethnic groups. Therefore, they believed that their struggle for the Dimaraji state was a fight for their ancestral homeland based on genuine, legitimate, constitutional and historical rights.\textsuperscript{72}

While the movement for the Dimaraji state was going in the Dimasa areas, the Naga outfit, \textbf{National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Issac-Muivah)}[hereafter the NSCN (IM)] posed a new threat to the Dimaraji demand. The NSCN (IM) published its map of Nagalim including vast areas of Dimasa-dominated Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills of Assam. In this regard, the question of \textbf{Atur Kimi} village of Mishibilan at Dhansiri area of Karbi Anglong district drew attention. The NSCN (IM) made inroads into Assam and established this village with the help of some people. The self styled \textit{office memorandum} of NSCN (IM) had certified that the establishment of a

\textsuperscript{71} Press release of DHD, issued by Deoraja Dimasa, Publicity Secretary, D.H.D, Haflong dated 1.2.05.

\textsuperscript{72} loc.cit.
new village, named Atur Kimi model village, Dhansiri under Jamunapur Mouza, covering an area of 2500 (two thousand and five hundred) hectares covered by village permit power, No KAAC/KEV/L Allotment 153/93/16/1028-34 dated the 12th August 1999 of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, had been initiated, pursued and obtained by Jeeten Ingti and party on one side and Vremo Omang Lotha and party on the other. In the full knowledge of the NSCN (IM), the parties had spent several years of hardship and incurred huge expenses to obtain the new village permit by all the necessary formalities through proper channel of the KAAC administration. Moreover, the outfit made an appeal for co-operation to all section of the people in the area to extend support to the persons authorised for the successful establishment of the village without further delay.

The Dimasa people raised their voice of protest against the designs of NSCN (IM). In a memorandum to the Chief Executive Member, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, the Dimaraji Khunang Hosom, opined that, the proposed village was well within the area allotted to Mishibilan village which was established in 1971. This arrangement had been made without the consent or any form of intimation to the village community which was highly objectionable and was a sheer case of violation of public interest.

73 'Office Memorandum', Office of the Secretary, Steering Committee NSCN, issued by A Z Jami, Secretary, Steering Committee, dated Oking, 4th March 2004.
74 loc. cit.
They further demanded the cancellation of the allotment order and the process of the proposed village.\textsuperscript{75}

Under this situation, an Executive Magistrate of Government of Assam was allegedly killed by the NSCN (IM) militants while he was leading a force for eviction in the encroached area on 4\textsuperscript{th} July 2004 at Mishibilan of Dhansiri, Karbi Anglong, Assam. The Karbi armed opposition group, \textit{United Peoples Democratic Solidarity}, (hereafter UPDS), on the other hand claimed a self-rule institution called \textit{Hemprek Kangthim} for the Karbi people. The UPDS demanded:

\begin{quote}
grant of political self-rule by creating an institution for self-determination for the Karbi people of Karbi-Anglong and its contiguous Karbi-dominated areas of Assam and Meghalaya under Article 3 of the Constitution with additional powers under Article 371 and similar to Article 371 (A) and 371 of, thereby ending the colonial-like rule of Assam.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

Thus, both the demands for Nagalim by NSCN (IM) and Hemprek Kangthim by UPDS posed as a threat to the demand of Dimaraji of DHD. The three demands are negotiating for political space within the same territorial areas of Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills and Nagaon district of Assam.

\textsuperscript{75} A Memorandum to the Chief Executive Member, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu, submitted by the Dimaraji Khunang Hosom, dated 14\textsuperscript{th} June 2004.

\textsuperscript{76} Charter of Demands of the United Peoples Democratic Solidarity, placed before the Government of India, through the Union Home Minister Sri L K Advani, New Delhi, submitted by Chairman and General Secretary, UPDS, dated 23.02.03. Also inserted in Appendix No. 3
In such a critical juncture the Dimasa-dominated Executive Committee of North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council adopted a resolution on 8 January 2003, to change the name of the district from North Cachar Hills to **Dima Halali** which means the land of Dimasa or the golden land of Dimasa. This resolution created a panic among the other indigenous groups of North Cachar Hills. The representative organisations* of indigenous people had submitted a memorandum before the Governor of Assam on 22 January 2003. In this memorandum, the groups opined that, the district of North Cachar Hills was inhabited by various hill tribal communities since pre-colonial times. The district had been the ancestral home for Jemi-Naga, Hmar, Kuki, Beite, Vaiphe, Hrangkhol, Khelma and Jayantia besides the Dimasa Kachari. In fact, the Dimasa Kachari form only one-third of the tribal population of the district and it would be a great injustice and insult to the non-Dimasa tribes if the name be changed to Dima Halali. They further said that, the name of North Cachar Hills appeared because no single community or linguistic group settled there. The move to change the nomenclature of the district therefore came as a great shock to all concerned. The move had hurt the sentiments of all non-Dimasa tribes and was likely to lead to disharmony. The decision appeared to be the outcome

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* Memorandum submitted to His Excellency General S K Sinha, Governor of Assam on 22nd January 2003 by the Leaders of the Indigenous Tribal Groups of North Cachar Hills, Assam.

of immature and emotional thoughts of certain section of extreme groups of Dimasa.  

On the very basis of the aforementioned arguments, the indigenous groups had submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Assam. It stated that:

It will be a great injustice to all other tribes and communities of the district if the decision of the Executive Committee of the Autonomous Council is approved. We would to your Excellency not to pursue such a thoughtless proposal as like this and we would fervently request you to reject the proposal outright for peaceful co-existence of the indigenous tribes in the district.

After submitting the memorandum, the indigenous groups assembled at a meeting on 21 February 2003 at Lodhi. They formed an organisation called Indigenous Tribes Front (hereafter ITF). I. Jeme and V. Changsan became the President and General Secretary respectively. The ITF called its second meeting on 11 March 2003. In this meeting, it was resolved that, the ITF would like to request all existing Member of Autonomous Council whether elected or nominated to abstain or boycott the ensuing Autonomous Council Session which was to begin from 20 March 2003. They made it clear that only a concerted effort would prevent the introduction of a Bill advocating Dima Halali. The ITF further appealed to all the non-Dimasa M A C to take

78 loc. cit.
79 loc. cit.
suitable action not to change the name of the district considering the interests of the communities in the district.\textsuperscript{80}

Obviously, the atmosphere was a chaotic one. Meanwhile, the DHD, which had signed the cease-fire agreement with the Government of India on 1 January 2003, tried to establish its designated camp at Haflong. But, the attempt of DHD was highly objected by another armed opposition group Hmar Peoples Convention with alleged instigation of NSCN (IM).\textsuperscript{81} It was also revealed that three armed cadres of DHD were kidnapped in North Cachar Hills in 2003, at the hand of NSCN (IM) headed by Thangkul Nagas, in connivance with Hmar Peoples Convention (Democratic). This was one of the reasons for the Hmar-Dimasa clash of 2003.\textsuperscript{82}

The clash between two armed groups turned into an ethnic clash between the two communities, which resulted in the death of common people, loss of properties etc. On 1 April 2003, the attack of Hmar extremists from neighbouring Hmar village began and they demolished the villages of Chkerchan, Mathnertal, Turhal Terring. They also attacked the villages of Lodi Kacharis, Diphucherra, Kalinagar and Guabari villages subsequently.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{80} Copy of the Proceedings of the Indigenous Tribes Front of North Cachar Hills held on the 11\textsuperscript{th} March 2003, in the Songpijang Youth Club, Songpijang, N C Hills, Assam.

\textsuperscript{81} Memorandum to Shivraj Patil, Home Minister, Government of India, North Block, New Delhi, submitted by Janajati Faith& cultural Protection Forum, Guwahati, dated 27/11/2005.

\textsuperscript{82} The Memorandum to Shivraj Patil, Home Minister, Union Government of India, Submitted by ADSU, Karbi Anglong district Committee, Diphu, Assam, dated 22nd July 2007.

\textsuperscript{83} Memorandum to AtalBihari Vajpaie, \textit{op. cit.}
On the other hand, the Hmar people regarded the clash as the result of the 
narrow and selfish politics of the Dimasas of N C Hills. In a 
memorandum the Hmar Peoples' Union accused the DHD for undertaking 
the Hmar cleansing operation. They regarded for the outbreak of the 
Hmar-Dimasa clash as the outcome of the peculiar and strict customary 
laws of the Dimasas and their self-esteem, Dimasas strong resentment of 
the Hmar. The bitter episode of the ethnic clash between the Hmar and the 
Dimasa had claimed the lives of 100 people and displacing more than a 
thousand people. The general people denounced the clash. R Khozol, Vice 
President of Hmar Students Association stated that:

We faced some of the most bitter moments in our lives during the Hmar-
Dimasa conflict. We resolved that such incidents should not reoccur. 
Ethnic clashes will not bring development. We have joined hands to 
forget the bitter past and work for peace.

The Government of Assam institute an enquiry commission under Justice P.
C. Phukan by a Notification No P/Com/1/2003/17 dated Dispur the 11th 
July 2003 under the Section 3 of the Commission of Inquiry Act 1952.

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85 loc.cit.
86 loc.cit.
88 loc.cit.
The episode of clashes between the Hmar and the Dimasa led to the demand for a separate administrative unit in the North Cachar Hills. In a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam, the Hmar Peoples’ Union demanded for a separate administrative unit for Hmars and other indigenous minority tribes in North Cachar Hills under the provision of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. They argued that:

Taking into account the current plight and political fate of the Hmars under the present political setup of N C Hills, creation of a separate administrative unit under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India is felt to be the only answer to rescue the ill fated and discriminated Hmars from being put into a slave like state of being under the tyrant and power-lust Dimasa. ___Further we would pray that all the areas of other indigenous minority tribes maintaining close ethnic affinity with the Hmars like-Kukis, Bietes, Hrangkhols, Vaipheis, Khelmas etc. also be included within the purview of the proposed administrative setup in the greater interest of the security of their political rights in future.89

Though the demand for an administrative unit did not get any political mileage, but the demand of Dimaraji received a serious challenge from the major component of its territorial jurisdiction.

In the clashes of Hmar and Dimasa, the demand for Nagalim by the NSCN (IM) played a certain role. The Janajati Faith and Culture Protection Forum opined that, the demand for greater Nagaland by NSCN (IM) was in

89 Memorandum submitted to Sri Tarun Gogoi, Chief Minister of Assam by the Hmar Peoples’ Union, dated 5th August 2005, Haflong.
conflict with Dimaraji (Dimasa Homeland) of DHD and Karbi separate state of UPDS. Initially NSCN (IM) armed and gave training to DHD cadres but on refusal to pay taxes and toe the NSCN (IM) line of carving out greater Nagaland, their ties were snapped and DHD the one time friend turned into a foe.\textsuperscript{90}

The ADSU also argued that the forceful land occupation and claims over the land of neighbouring State of Assam, Manipur etc. for the greater Nagalim had caused heavy loss to the neighbouring States making all the innocent and simple indigenous settlers, landless and panicky.\textsuperscript{91}

The issue of Nagalim was also opposed by the civil society groups of Assam. Opposing the issue a team of general people of North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong apprised the Home Minister of India, in a memorandum that, the people of North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong District of Assam were apprehensive about the Centre’s final settlement of the Nagalim issue and that the Government of India should be careful while taking a decision on Nagalim issue, in the interests of the two districts bordering Nagaland.\textsuperscript{92}

However, the issue itself turned into a confronted one. The Nagaland Assembly moved a resolution supporting the stand of NSCN(IM) which was passed unanimously on December 2009. The Government of Assam, on the other hand, confirmed its position regarding the geographical

\textsuperscript{90} Memorandum, Janajati Faith & Culture Protection Forum, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{91} Memorandum to Shivraj Patil, by ADSU Karbi Anglong district Committee, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{92} The Memorandum, the Joint Mass Demonstration, \textit{op. cit.}
integrity of the State of Assam, in a unanimous resolution of its Assembly session.

Similar circumstances of clashes occurred in the Karbi Anglong District of Assam. An incident of killing three youths of Dimasa at Rongkimi, under the Howraghat police station of Karbi Anglong sparked the entire episode of killing, burning of villages etc, during the last part of the year 2005. The incidents turned into ethnic clashes between the Karbi and Dimasa people, which lasted for more than two weeks.

While around 80 people lost their lives, over 1,014 houses belonging to both the communities in 43 villages have been torched and more than 50,000 people took shelter in the relief camps of North-Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong and Nagaon districts.93

A fact-finding team, called Civil Society Mission for Peace in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills, (hereafter the CSMPKAN) prepared a detailed dossier on the entire episode of the ethnic clash. The dossier explained that, there were four phases in the violence in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. The first phase was the period before the 26 September 2005, where violence involved were scattered incidents involving threats, extortions, tortures, physical assault and even murder. These incidents were very few for the larger civil society to take serious note. The second phase began on 26 September and included incidents, in which it was believed that a third party was involved in the violence. The third phase was marked by the increasing evidence of the involvement of armed groups especially

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93 *The Times of India*, 17 November, 2005.
the UPDS and DHD. The fourth phase was marked by the widespread violence leading to torture and burning of nearly 2000 houses in the two districts which had led to the displacement of nearly 50,000 people.\textsuperscript{94}

There were a lot of allegations and counter-allegations regarding the sources of violence. The \textbf{Joint Co-ordination Committee}, comprising of several elderly citizens of Karbi Anglong argued that, from 2003 the demand for Dimaraji had led to ethnic cleansing by the DHD The Dhansiri Dillai Border Areas Welfare Society was a Karbi group that had been actively working for peace and was set up to highlight the atrocities by the DHD. It had found that Karbis were being physically tortured. There were many incidents of genital mutilation of Karbi men and women. On October 14, 2003, seven villages were attacked. Heavy taxes were imposed by DHD on Karbi people-5 rupees for every one kilo of ginger they produce, the ritual of offering liquor, a Karbi custom, had been banned by DHD. The killing of three Dimasa youth led to retaliation immediately.\textsuperscript{95}

\textit{Jadikhe Naiso Hosom} (Dimasa Apex body) on the other hand regarded the entire episode of violence as the \textit{ethnic cleansing policy} of Karbi militant. The cases of burning of houses and killing of innocent Kuki, Dimasa and Khasi-Pnar pregnant women, young children, male members and also burning the houses and destruction of properties in large extent in a most cruel and barbaric way by the UPDS and miscreants belonging to the major


\textsuperscript{95} Ibid, p. 14.
tribe. In fact, this was a planned ethnic cleansing policy against the minority tribes in the most inhuman way under a democratic Constitutional Government.  

Likewise, the Karbi Anglong Women Forum submitted a memorandum to the Chairman of National Human Right Commission, stating that the setting up of the unguarded DHD designated camp in Karbi Anglong in 2003 became a contentious issue to the public. By setting up of the camp at Dhansiri, it became convenient for the DHD to carry on their operation in Karbi Anglong district. Activities like extortion of money from local traders, businessmen and officers etc. moving freely with their weapons and creating social tension became regular activities. It is also pertinent to mention that, although there is substantial Karbi population in Umrangso, there was no designated camp of the UPDS within the North Cachar Hills. Simmering tension had built up between the two outfits as well as between the Karbis and Dimasa on the issue over the year and only a small spark was needed to ignite a full-scale ethnic conflict. Therefore, the 26 September killing of three Dimasa youth whose bodies were found near a Karbi hamlet Rongkimi, 32 km from Diphu, implicitly suggesting a Karbi hand in the killing, was only a small spark generated by unknown force taking advantage of the sensitive situation. However, the 26 September incident was not the beginning of the full-scale ethnic conflict. As

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96 *A Confidential Urgent Memorandum to President of India*, op. cit.
mentioned earlier the unguarded DHD designated camp was the root cause of the crisis.97

The ADSU explained the conflict, before the Home Minister of India through its memorandum, as the result of a ceasefire agreement signed between the Government of India, Assam State Government and the DHD on January 2003 the establishment of the camp designated to the DHD. They pointed out that Karbis shifted the Dhansiri camp as a prerequisite for peace with an ulterior motive of isolating the poor Dimasa villagers, who have been feeling safe since the camp was set up there as the area has a large number of Dimasa whose main occupation is only cultivation in the fertile land of Dhansiri river valley. That fertile valley had been target of both the Karbis and Nagas and many attempts had been made to evict these poor Dimasa farmers from their own land. The demand for removing the DHD camp from this area had its genesis in the greed of the Karbis to grab the land of the Dimasa.98

Amidst these contradictory statements, the *Karbi Lammet Amei*, a literary body regarded that:

> The present imbroglio where miscreants killed many innocent Karbis and Dimasa and burnt their houses is because of the demand for the inclusion of some parts of Karbi Anglong in the proposed Dimaraji demanded by the DHD and Dimaraji Revival Demand Committee (DRDC) and the


98 Memorandum to Shivraj Patil by ADSU, Karbi Anglong district Committee, *op. cit.*
opposition to the demand by the United Peoples Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) and others along with the demand by the UPDS and others to relocate the designated DHD camp situation near Dhansiri village to a place outside Karbi Anglong and the opposition to the shifting by the DHD and others.  

Moreover, the fact-finding team CSMPKAN was formed to trace the roots of the conflict. The team reported that the conflict over territories, identity, political space and socio-economic issues exist in most parts of North East, and as such the conflict among the communities in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills was no different. While that violence too had a history, the conflict had gone beyond the history of violence in the two districts.  

According to the CSMPKAN there were several factors for the violence which led to the conflicts between two indigenous groups, Karbi and Dimasa. First of all, the ASDC movement, which began in the mid 1980s, sought to fight against Assamese and Indian hegemony in the two districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. Among the various arguments forwarded by the ASDC movement in Karbi Anglong was that the people of the two districts were hill-tribes as different from the plains-tribe like the Bodos, Mishings, Tiwas and so on. The movement got the Karbi, Dimasa and other tribal people a political space of their own, where the leadership to a great extent was in the hands of the local people unlike the national and

99 A Press Release of Karbi Lammet Amei(Karbi Literary Assembly), issued by Sing Kro, General Secretary, Diphu dated 16/11/05.  
100 An independent fact findings teams report, Conflict and Violence in Karbi Anglong & North Cachar Hills, op. cit. p. 34.
political parties of Assam. The rise of the armed movements and violence were the result of the apathy of the Indian state to the legitimate political aspirations of the people of the region. The armed groups while using the identity and historical issues to strengthen their claims have also used dormant inter-community conflicts for the same purpose. Political forces opposed to ASDC movement also set it as a root cause of the rise of armed militant movements and the violence.\textsuperscript{101} Secondly, a significant number of villages on the riverbank in Karbi Anglong district are Dimasa villages. Thus large numbers of fertile lands in Karbi Anglong are owned by the Dimasa while their population is around only 12 percent. This is cited by the Karbis as an issue giving rise to conflict. However, except for those displaced from the eastern bank of river Kopili in North Cachar Hills, most people did not think that there were any concrete contemporary socio-economic issue of dispute between the Karbis and the Dimasa.\textsuperscript{102} Moreover, different perceptions on the history of the area indeed led to the conflict. The Dimasa of Karbi Anglong though being a minority in the district felt that they were the rightful owners of resources because of their past history. The argument was that, the Karbi people migrated to the region more than three centuries ago and also promoted fresh migration from other regions of the North East.\textsuperscript{103} Lastly, the educated classes among the Dimasa also felt

\textsuperscript{101} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, p.35.
\textsuperscript{103} loc. cit.
that in the Karbi Anglong district, they had been discriminated in matters like development, employment, land allotments etc.\textsuperscript{104}

As a conclusion, the fact-finding team suggests that, contemporary issues were mixed with notions of history in the psyche of the people on both sides,\textsuperscript{105} which ultimately led the volatile situation in the various phases of the autonomy movement of the Dimasa.

Despite these fundamental issues of the conflict one may agree with the point of common historical background of both the peoples. Through the different stage of history, Karbi and the Dimasa had been sharing the territory along with the other communities. Their grievances, issues of socio-economic developments etc. may be placed in the right forum for further deliberations. The Karbi Lammet Amei rightly states that the Dimasa and Karbis have been living together peacefully since the time immemorial and this peaceful co-existence must be maintained by both the communities so as to continue to be proud members of the world community.\textsuperscript{106}

The Government of Assam also initiated the peace process. On the one hand, the Governor has instituted an inquiry Commission under the Chairmanship of Retired Justice P. C Phukan and on the other hand, the Government undertook administrative steps of rehabilitation, compensation

\textsuperscript{104} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{105} loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{106} A fervent appeal, Karbi Lamat Amei, issued by Khonsing Tokbi, President and Sing Kro, General Secretary on 10/10/05.
etc. The initiatives of peace process are going on with several underground outfits.

The Dimasa were the victims of historical circumstances. The colonial forces had divided the historic homeland of the Dimasa into several parts. As those divisions are maintained, their very existence is endangered. Migration from several parts of India has posed a threat resulting in the growing pressure on land. As a result, a sense of losing identity has grown gradually among the common people. Needless to say those, the hegemony of the ruling elite and their vested interests are largely responsible for creating such a situation.

The new and young intelligentsia among the Dimasa has conceptualised the issues and raised several demands to protect their identity. The demand for Dimaraji is the outcome of such exercises, which occupies a central place in the public domain. However, the intelligentsia cannot overcome its limitations. Therefore, while Dimasa intelligentsia accused the Karbis of imposing their dominance in Karbi Anglong and so demanded a change in the name of the district to Diphu, another sections claimed Dimasa dominance in North Cachar Hills by changing the name to Dima Hasao, without considering the existence of numerically weaker indigenous groups. In brief, they are following the footprints of the Assamese middle class of the 1950s; ironically it was the Dimasa intelligentsia along with the Khasi and Karbi counterparts who opposed such dominance.

The Final Phase of the movement for autonomy enabled the Dimasa to carve out a political space of their own, under the leadership of the Dimasa intelligentsia. The rise of the armed movements and violence were
the result of the apathy of the Indian state to the legitimate political aspirations of the people of the region. The role of State is far from satisfactory. The policy-framing processes of the state regarding autonomy movements are short-sighted. Despite the several movements in North East, the State has failed to adopt a concrete policy to address these issues in a right perspective. As a result, the issues remained only partially settled. The armed groups while strengthening their agenda by using the identity and historical issues on one hand have also effectively used dormant inter-community conflicts, on the other. However, the most tragic aspects of the entire autonomy movement are the gross violation of human rights and erosion of human values. Bloodshed and death of human lives are on the increase, irrespective of the fact whether the perpetrators are agents of the law-enforcing mechanism of the state or the activists of armed opposition groups. The irony is that the victims are the general people who have to sacrifice their all in the hands of those forces, who claim to be the protector or emancipator of the people.