Review of Literature

As no previous research work has been conducted on Hawar dialect of Dimasa, the present review is taken from the published literature based on standard dialect. E.A. Gait in his ‘Report on the Census of Assam for 1891’, vol. I (1892), gave a short outline of Kachari Grammar, particularly some salient features of the morphology and syntax but did not mention about the phonology. He explained the grammar of Bodo or Plains Kachari which applies to Dimasa and to the other languages of the group as follows:-

(i) Inanimate objects have no gender. The gender of animate object is denoted by a qualifying word placed after the noun.
(ii) Two types of numbers i.e., singular and plural.
(iii) Case is denoted by affixes.
(iv) Adjectives sometimes precede, but usually follow the noun they qualify.
(v) The comparative is formed by adding some word meaning ‘than’. The superlative is formed by adding some word signifying ‘all’.
(vi) The numerals only run up to ten, higher numbers being expressed by the use of the word meaning ‘a group of four’.
(vii) There are three personal pronouns which are used without distinction of gender. Possession is denoted by the use of genitive and there is no relative pronoun.
(viii) The imperative is the simplest form of the verb, the different tenses are denoted by affixes which remain unchanged for all persons, numbers and genders.
(ix) The passive is formed by prefixing the past participle to the different tenses of the verb ‘to be’. The causative is formed by conjugating the verb ‘to give’ with the infinitive of the main verb.
(x) Conjunctions are rarely used, their place is taken by participle.

G.A. Grierson in his ‘Linguistic Survey of India’ Vol.III, pt-II (1903), gave brief sketch of Dimasa grammar of North Cachar Hills District known as Hasao dialect (at present
Dima Hasao District) and Hojai Dialect known as Dembra dialect of Dimasa of Nagaon District. While describing the grammar of the dialect of North Cachar Hills, he mentioned that the plural is formed by the suffix ‘rao’. He described the case suffixes like –

Accusative – ke
Instrumental – jung
Dative – ke; -ne
Ablative –ni–farang
Genitive –ni
Locative –ha

He mentioned pronouns like –

Ang I
Ang –ke Me
Ani My
Ani –rao We
Ani-rao-ke Us
Ani-rao-ni Our
Ning Thou
Ning –ke Thee
Nini Thy
Nini –rao You
Bo He
Bo –ke Him
Bo –ni His
Bo-rao, boni-rao They
Ibo This
Shere Who ?
Shumo What ?
He also mentioned pronominal prefixes like ‘ni –fa’ meaning ‘your father’. He described conjugation of verb by taking the word ‘shu’ meaning ‘strike’ in different tenses. He mentioned the formation of causative verb by adding ‘ri’ meaning ‘to give’ to the main verb. He mentioned two ways of negative sentence formation by adding either ‘gur’ as in ‘ri –ba guri’ ‘gave not’ or ‘a’ as in ‘Ning ti-fu-a’ ‘you are not able to call’.


He mentioned different pronominal forms like –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ang</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ani</td>
<td>My</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jung</td>
<td>We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jini, jung-ni</td>
<td>Our</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nung</td>
<td>Thou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nini, nung-ni, nu-ni</td>
<td>Thy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni-shi, nungni-shi</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni-shi-ni, nungni-shi-ni</td>
<td>Your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pu</td>
<td>He, that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pu-ni</td>
<td>His</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pu-shi, puni-shi</td>
<td>They</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pu-shi-ni, puni-shi-ni</td>
<td>Their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibu</td>
<td>This</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shere</td>
<td>Who?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shere-ni</td>
<td>Whose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shumang, shimung</td>
<td>What</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

He also mentioned that the relative is the Assamese ‘je’. He mentioned Pronominal prefixes as in ‘na-fa’ ‘your father’, ‘nu-fuang’ ‘your younger brother’, ‘pa-fa’ ‘his father’,
‘pu-fuang’ ‘his brother’. He provided suffixes used by the finite verb in different tenses. Grierson finally mentioned negative verb where negating syllable is ‘ā’ as in

Shēbai- ā ‘(I) didn’t transgress’.

Ri-ā ‘(thou) gavest not’.

It is to be mentioned here that while discussing about the North Cachar Hills dialect, Grierson used pronouns like /Ani-rao/ for the meaning ‘we’ which is not used in Hawar dialect rather it is expressed by the form /zuŋ/ for the same meaning. He mentioned other pronouns in the same dialect like /Ani-rao-ke/, /Ani-rao-ni/, /Ning/, /Nini/, /Bo-rao; Boni-rao/, and demonstrative pronoun /lbo/, all these forms will be /zu-ne; zuŋ-tʰene/, /zi-ni/, /nuŋ/, /nu-ni/, /buʃi/ and /ebo/ in Hawar dialect. While discussing about the Hojai dialect, he mentioned pronominal form /pu/ meaning ‘he’ which will be /bo/ in Hawar dialect as well as in North Cachar Hills dialect. Other forms like /pu-ni/, /pu-shi; puni-shi/, pu-shi-ni; puni-shi-ni/ will be /bo-ni/, /buʃi/, /buʃi-ni/ in Hawar dialect. He further mentioned interrogative pronoun / Shumang; shimung/ meaning ‘what’ which is not used in Hawar Dialect at all instead /ʃmadi; ʃnadi; nadi/ etc. are used.

Dr. Dhiren Singha in his ‘An Introduction to Dimasa Phonology’ (2007) whose analysis is based on Dimasa spoken in Haflong of North Cachar Hills District (at present Dima Hasao District) has mentioned six vowels, sixteen consonantal phonemes, two tones and seven diphthongs, morphophonemics and phonetic changes in loan words. He has mentioned diphthongs /ǝo/ and /eo/ which is absent in Hawar dialect and it is replaced by /ou/ and /iu/.

In the distribution of phonemes, it is mentioned /ǝ/ can occur in the initial and medial positions but in Hawar dialect, /ǝ/ occurs only in the medial position. He has mentioned the presence of alveolar /s/ which is a post-alveolar sound /ʃ/ in Hawar dialect. It is further mentioned that the phonemes like /b, d, g/ can occur word initially and medially. However, in Hawar dialect these phonemes can occur in all the three positions.

In case of consonant clusters, liquids are shown as the only second member. Apart from liquids, nasals and stop can also be a second member in the Hawar dialect.

Phanindra Jahari in his ‘Garaothai Ni Phandar’ (2010), a Dimasa-English dictionary, discussed traditionally based some grammatical aspects of Dimasa basically on standard
dialect. While discussing noun, he has given some words of neuter gender. He has recognized ‘miya’, ‘jla’, ‘la’, ‘jikh’, ‘ma’ as gender marker. According to him, /saosi/, /masi/, /si/ are used to indicate singular and /buthu/, /thurao/, or /rao/, /badamma/ are used for plural. However, the plural marker /thurao/ is not used in Hawar dialect. He has given some suffixes which are used in nouns like – /Ramkhe/ ‘to Ram’, /Ramjang/ ‘with Ram’, /Ramne/ ‘for Ram’, /Ramni/ ‘of Ram’ or ‘Ram’s’, /Ranniphrang; nising/ ‘from Ram’, /Ramha/ ‘on Ram’, /Ramlai/ ‘like Ram’. He has provided different forms of pronouns of standard Dimasa.

While discussing adjectives, he said that superlative marker is /daothao/ and for comparative /dao/ is affixed with adjectives and /tha/ is added to inferior nouns. It is to be noted here that /tha/ is never used in Hawar dialect instead /han/ is used by all the speakers. He has recognized two types of negative particle /ya/ and /da/.

He has mentioned three kinds of tenses – past, present and future. /blaikha/, /kha/, /re/ are used to express past tense, /saidu/, /du/ are used for present tense and /ma/ and /nang/ for the future. He has provided some words of adverbs. He said that to emphasize, adverb prefixes the verb twice like /Gebre Gebre thang/ ‘go quickly’.

He has mentioned that /jang/, /ode/, /thikhabo/, /bo/ are used for conjunction. Finally, he has provided interrogative words like /Sere/ ‘who’, /Somo/ ‘what’, /Bilaiyaba/ ‘which’, /Baraha/ ‘where’.

Scope and Orientation of the Study:

The review and evaluation of the available literature on Dimasa provides an adequate rationale for a further, more detailed study of Hawar dialect and borrowings in Hawar dialect. Although some research works have been done on Dimasa but most of the work is on standard dialect or other dialects of the same language. Keeping in mind the necessity of the situation, the present work named ‘LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AMONG LINGUISTIC MINORITIES: A CASE STUDY OF DIMASAS OF BARAK VALLEY’ has been chosen for a detailed study of Hawar dialect and also to highlight some of the influences of Sylheti on Dimasa spoken widely in the Barak Valley region, Assam.
Methodology:

The present descriptive study is limited to in and around of Cachar districts. As it is common for a researcher to go through the steps involved under research viz., finding of informants, data collection, sound recording vis-a-vis. The present work has also undergone the essential steps to bring about a success to the work. Being a native speaker of the Hawar dialect, it was not much difficult for me to collect data. However, for the betterment of the study a number of informants of different age groups of the native speakers have been referred in order to cross check the data.