

# **DEMAND FOR DIMARAJI: A STUDY OF THE MOVEMENT FOR SEPARATE STATE**

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# Chapter V

## Conclusion

In this chapter, the major findings of the present study are summarised. Besides, the limitations of this study are reported and the suggestions for further research are also made.

### Major Findings

The major findings of present study is that in the last few decades Indian politics has become increasingly besieged by ‘politics of identity’ emanating from the awakening of ethno-cultural consciousness. North East India has remained a politically sensitive and disturbed region since the post colonial phase of its history. The existence of numerous ethnic groups with distinct language and cultural attributes of their own made the region vulnerable to ethnic conflict and violence. The region is the abode of more than three hundred distinct ethnic groups at different stages of their development.<sup>1</sup> The identity assertion of various ethnic groups has been articulated through language, culture, region, religion, caste and race. This problem is very much acute in Assam. The different groups inhabiting this state have been pressing either for the creation of separate or autonomous state on the basis of their cultural identities or for special constitutional safeguards of their respective identities. At the beginning, they started their assertion with non-political issues such as the development of their language and culture. The unresolved economic apprehensions gave it a political direction in the subsequent period. In the subsequent period they became assertive of their political right and

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<sup>1</sup> Girin Phukan, *Introduction to Inter-Ethnic conflict in North East India*, Asia Publishers, New Delhi, 2005, p.1.

started pleading for adequate share of political power in order to maintain their respective identities. Dimasa Kachari is one of them. Now the Dimasas have been demanding the creation of a separate state 'Dimaraji' for Dimasas within India.

The Dimasas was one of the ruling tribe in Northeast India found them scattered in different districts of the state of Assam in the post-independence period. They were not in a position either numerically or otherwise to influence the course of politics in the state. Like many other tribal groups and linguistic minorities living in the state, the Dimasas were deeply disturbed by the aggressive cultural policy pursued by the Assamese middle class after coming to control the state power after independence. The controversial language bill of 1960 providing for making Assamese as the sole official language in the state of Assam was taken by the Dimasas along with other tribal groups a move to establish permanent monopoly of power in the state for Assamese. Consequently, the Dimasas like other tribal groups opposed the bill. They were party to the formation of All Party Hill Leaders Conference and to the demand for a separate state for the Hill areas of Assam. But while on the eve of the reorganisation of Assam the Mikirs (now Karbis) and the Dimasas of N.C. Hills and Mikir Hills (now Karbi Anglong) were given the option to decide whether to join the Autonomous State of Meghalaya or to remain in Assam, they decided for the latter partly for the assurance given by the government that all of their needs for development would be taken care of and partly because of the apprehension that they would be subjected to Khasi-Jaintia-Garo domination in Meghalaya. But the expectation generated by the government assurance was bellied, for not taking any effective steps except transferring more subject to the District Councils of North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao) and Mikir Hills (Karbi Anglong).

Further the decision of the academic council of Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University to make Assamese as the only medium of instruction at the college level in 1972 was taken by Dimasas along with other tribal groups and linguistic minorities as a step towards ensuring Assamese domination over the non-

Assamese.<sup>2</sup> This resulted in making the Dimasas to assert their identity. A number of socio-cultural organisations came into being aiming at the promotion of Dimasa culture as well as to reconstruct the past so as to constitute a distinct Dimasa identity.

An examination of the Dimasa movement reveals that the presence of integrated and localized networks that existed within the community were of some help in influencing mobilization and recruitment of non-combatants for political action. Informal societal networks presumably served as important facilitators for movement participation. More precisely, community-based allegiances in the Dimasa society served as the basic infrastructure for collective actions where common grievances and strategies of resistance and protest networks were constructed and coordinated by activist organizations during the agitation. It has been found that people joined the movement activities (demonstrations, public rallies and meetings) in huge numbers, mostly because they were tied to each other through pre-existing community affiliations at the most local level, in the villages and urban areas. As a result group members were subjected to a mix of persuasion (neighbours, friends, leaders), fear of social sanctions, genuine political preferences and sympathy for the activist organizations.

During the initial phase of mobilization from 1970 to early 1990s, protesters relied more on petition campaigns and other peaceful methods. Protest techniques, however changed after 1991 when the Karbis and the Dimasas, who had been fighting for an autonomous unit from a unified platform departed from each other because of strong and opposing ethno-political ideologies. Their divergence from a joint venture signaled a ragged relationship between the leaders of these two groups and the rise of radical ethno-nationalism. The period witnessed a switch in the demands of these two groups, from the formation of an autonomous district to the creation of separate states for the Dimasas and the Karbis.

The study reveals that after 1990, the new educated middle class Dimasa youth adopted the constitutional path to fulfill their demands. Under the banner of

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<sup>2</sup> P.S. Datta, *Autonomy Movements in Assam*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p. 59.

the All Dimasa Students' Union (ADSU) they launched the movement for a separate state 'Dimaraji'. The ADSU to fulfill their demand for a separate state i.e. 'Dimaraji' tried to get support of common Dimasa people. Leaders believed that without the support of common people, the 'Dimaraji' movement could not be a successful movement. For ensuring the support of common Dimasa people, the ADSU (All Dimasa Students' Union) leaders tried to create consciousness among the common men and women. The activists invoked the concepts of homeland for the Dimasas based on their settlement history and long duration of inhabitation in and around the region of Dima Hasao (former North Cachar Hills). The organization called for the protection of distinct Dimasa identity through its platform and sought to garner popular support for their cause.

The ADSU leaders used to communicate with the Kunang (village Headman) of Dimasa villages of North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong, Nagaland, Hailakandi and Cachar Districts to get a support in favour of a separate state movement. The Kunang (Headman of village) plays very important role in Dimasa society. It has been found that in most of the cases, Kunang of Dimasa villages did not know about the programmes and goals of the movement. They supported the movement just hoping a better future for Dimasa people.

Compared to their Bodo counterpart, the role of Dimasa activist organizations appears to be negligible in mobilizing a broad based support for the movement. Dimasa activist organizations failed to utilize societal endowments and turn these networks into a hotbed of support as efficaciously as their Bodo counterparts could do during Bodoland movement. Two important reasons may be cited to explain the limited capabilities of the Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) to establish a strong movement-supporter networks. First, the organizational structure of the main Dimasa activist organizations like All Dimasa Students' Union (ADSU) and Dimaraji Revival Demand Committee were thoroughly centralised. Ever since its emergence in the 90s, Dimasa Students Union remained numerically small, weak and a centralized body with the membership of a few hundred activists and volunteers across the district of North Cachar Hills. Majority members of Dimasa Students Union were organized into a single unit with an executive

committee, consisting of the president, general secretary and the spokesperson, which operated mainly from a central office located in Haflong (North Cachar Hills). The central committee was assisted by student activists and volunteers, responsible for all kinds of mobilization activities related to local organization and information campaigns, propaganda, publication and communication of movement ideologies and the overall programme of the organization during the agitation. The centralized structure, however, prevented All Dimasa Students' Union (ADSU) from organizing a broad mass-based movement. Absence of units at the grass root level limited the scope of All Dimasa Students' Union (ADSU) to dispense its mobilization activities beyond the district-level unit. This also hindered the prospects of the organization to forge alliances with the local people across a wider geographical range of the Dima Hasao District (North Cachar Hills District).

The Dimasa Leaders have adopted different methods at different phases of the movement. At the initial stage the movement was democratic and peaceful. The educated middle class Dimasa youths expressed their grievances through meetings, processions, demonstration etc. They published leaflets, booklets etc. to organize public opinion in their favour. Their representatives met the State Chief Minister, the Prime Minister, and the Home Minister of the Union Government and submitted memoranda to them.

In addition to the passive methods, the Dimasa leaders in the second phase of their movement resorted to active resistance method. In this phase the movement started with the demand for a separate autonomous state 'Dimaraji'. The cultural and economic movements by this time got transformed into a political movement.

In this phase, the Dimasa leaders resorted to strike, bandh, rasta-roko, rail-roko, mass hunger strike and mass rally etc. As the movement gathered momentum the period of strike, bandh etc. were gradually extended from 12 hours to 48 hours. For instance, the All Dimasa Students' Union (ADSU) called for a 36 hour Dimaraji bandh on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2007, demanding steps to fulfil the demands of Dimasa community. The Joint Action Committee of the Dimaraji

Movement called a 36 hour Dimaraji bandh on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2011 for the demand of separate state.

The movement remained non violent until the formation of Dimasa National Security Force (DNSF) and Dima Haram Daogah (DHD) in early nineties. The emergence of these militant outfits was partly because of the non-responsive attitude of the government and partly because of the politics of expediency as prevailing in the country. The emergence of these militant groups added a new dimension to both the nature and content of the 'Dimaraji State' movement. The Dima Haram Daogah (Nunisa group) and the Dima Haram Daogah (Jewel Group) or Black Widow adopted violent methods from the very beginning of their birth. At first they procured sophisticated arms, extorted money from the business community and terrorized the people. They overran the police camp, snatched arms and ammunition from them, ambushed the patrol party, blew up trains and bridges.

But the violent movement for 'Dimaraji' of Dimasas' perception resulted in making other ethnic groups, especially the Hmars and the Zeme Nagas living in the district of Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hills) suspicious. They apprehended that if the DHD succeed in getting its demand for 'Dimaraji', fulfilled, they would be marginalised and would come under Dimasa domination. Consequently, they opposed the demand. Their opposition strained the relationship between the Dimasas on the one hand, and the Hmars and the Karbis on the other. This strained relationship ultimately resulted in ethnic conflict in the districts of North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong and in some areas of Cachar District.

Though the protagonist claims that the aim of the movement is to ensure the development of all section of Dimasa community, there is reason to doubt whether the common Dimasa people will be benefited if the goal of Dimaraji comes true. Most of the common Dimasa peoples are not educated and they do not have much idea about the aims and objectives of the movement. Besides, the movement also lacks an action plan. The mass people supported the movement without knowing the programmes and goals of the movement. The people supported the movement

just to be a part of the flow. Leaders of the movement used common Dimasas emotion and sentiment as an instrument to get their support for the movement for separate state i.e. 'Dimaraji'

The common people of Dimasa community like, working class, farmers and peasantry remain passive or inert unless they are affected by ethnic conflict or ethnic cleansing operations. The demand for Dimaraji is mainly a demand of the educated middle class with which mass people do not have any direct contact nor their opinion has been sought. The demand for Dimaraji State, if fulfilled will hardly make the life of ordinary Dimasa people much better. The inbuilt tribal background will not go to the benefit of ordinary Dimasa people. They are uneducated and impoverished. It will give rise to a new power elite.

As far as settlement of the movement is concerned the government has taken an initiative to solve the problems of Dimasas. The first step was a ceasefire agreement in the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003. After the ceasefire agreement a series of talks held between Government of India, Government of Assam and Dima Haram Daogah (DHD). At last, on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2012 a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed by the representatives of the Government of India, Government of Assam and the two groups of Dima Haram Daogah (DHD), DHD- Dilip Nunisa group and DHD- Jewel Garlosa group at New Delhi. It is now to be seen how things develop after the signature of the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) between different parties.

### **Suggestions for further research**

The emergence of militant group such as Dima Haram Daogah (DHD), DHD (Nunisa) and DHD (Jewel) demanding the creation of 'Dimaraji' a state for the Dimasas not only change the nature of politics being pursued in the two hill district of Dima Hasao (N.C. Hills) and Karbi Anglong, but also strained the



relationship between the ethnic groups of the Dimasas and the Hmars, the Dimasas and the Zeme Nagas, the Dimasas and the Karbis. Given the limitation of time and resources at the disposal of the researcher, this aspect could not be thoroughly investigated.

In view of the limitation of the present study, it would be worthwhile to undertake a study to ascertain the impact of the emergence of insurgent groups on the demand for Dimaraji in particular and on the politics of Karbi Anglong and the Dima Hasao Districts in general.