

# The Bodos of Assam

a socio-cultural study

DR. HARKA BAHADUR CHHETRI ATREYA



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The Pragiyotishpura or Kamrupa mentioned in the Kalikapurana or in the Jogini Tantra, had been dominantly remained under the Mongolian cultural people since 2500 years to 3000 years back.

The word 'Kamrupa' changed into Asham, Hasam, Assam and Asom with the entrance of the Ahoms from the Burmah (Myanmar) after 1230 A.D. The Bodos in different parts of this region were, according to place, known as Dimacha Kachari, Barman in Silchar, Tippera in Tripura, Rabha and Garos in the Southern Assam, Mech and Koch-kachari in the plain Assam and Meche in the West Bengal and East Nepal. This greater community, fragmented in different names in different places, have been tried to extract in the book and tried by the author for their unity and integrity to relate them with the 'Bod' province of the Mongoloid region in the North China and the Sivarai mountain of the same region which relates them with their God 'Sivarai'.

In fact, the Mongolian culture or the Bodo community in Assam, is a very rich culture which have been analytically discussed according to their sub-communities name.

The main aim of the study on them, was to unite, uplift and identify them to the world stage as a culturally rich community, though socially and literally backward in comparison to other communities. The great Vaisnavite prophet Sri Sri Sandardeva, tried his best to bring all communities under the *Ek Sarana Bhagamati Dharma*, but the Ahoms were irritated with him. His educational principle flourished at the time of king Naranarayana of the Koch dynasty. This has been studied in *The Bodos in Assam: A Socio-cultural study*.

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Though he was engaged in the teaching as a lecturer, he has devoted himself in the social project works under the HRD Kolkata since 2003 and have completed such works accordingly. Behind this sincerity and tireless effort, he has preserved unity in the diversity, i.e., unity in multiple-communities through their common development to the interest of unity and integrity of the nation.

Cover Photograph :

Background : Bodo girls performing the *Kherai Dance*

Inset : Drummers at the *Kherai Puja*

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# THE BODOS IN ASSAM A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY

Year: 2005-2006



DR. HARKA BAHADUR CHHETRI ATREYA



Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata



TOWARDS FREEDOM

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### PREAMBLE

It is historically presumed that the movement of people which started from South Africa scattered to different countries. The people were known as immigrants and at times established their civilisations that we know as aboriginal, ethnic etc., because of their pre-historic settlement there. Indian historical analysis says that the Austrics were the aboriginals of this country and their smaller species in the North-East of India, are known as the Khasis.

The Mongoloid people, historically related to Sibrai mountain of North Mongolian hemisphere, found living in this North-East region of India, are candid, intrepid, simple, good-natured, trustworthy, decisively united in need, helpful. The movement that started from the 'Bod' country in Mongol, now having scattered through the North East India, played a major role in the cultural introduction of the locality.

Amidst the multi-lingual people of the region, what the Bodos have shown through a series of struggles, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, is now a milestone of settlement for peace and prosperity. Time will show its result in the days to come for more progress through peace if the Governments (the State and the Central) give priorities to the Tripartite Agreement without neglecting the non-tribal citizens.

The Government 'of the people, by the people, for the people' is giving all reservations of rights and priorities to the tribals, thereby giving a chance for the demand of a Tribal State in the near future, opening a door of ethnic struggle, with only words of safeguard to the non-Tribals. It is the local Government which is arousing the feeling of superiority among the tribals through provisions and the feeling of inferiority among the non-tribals through non-provisions.

The bottom line is that the turbulent 80s and 90s should not return in Assam. This project may bring out the realities for solutions in future while taking steps for the developments of the Bodos in particular and the non-Bodos in general.

Chapterwise summary of the present project is given below.

- Chapter - I** : This introductory Chapter of the Project Work comprises generic detail through historical analysis. The Bodos are a large group of people of the Northeastern States, West Bengal, Lower Bhutan and of Eastern plains of Nepal. They are the real roots of the present Assamese culture. More than twenty two sub-communities are found in the plain Assam areas. Linguistically, their origin remains the same. They were royal ruling people.
- Chapter - II** : It deals with the settlement of the Bod-Bora-Kacharis etc. in the North-East region of India. It has described the Bodo as a major community in the composite culture of this region i.e. in Assam. The greater Bodo-Kachari culture includes many dominant sub-communities which have been described in detail with their rites, social code, marriages, religious rituals etc. These details include the Koches and the

Kacharis, Rajbanshis, Sonowals, Dimasas, Rabhas, Kok Borok, Deori, Moran-Motaks, Chutias, Saraniyas and the Meches (Bodos) in Assam and West Bengal. Their cultural affinity is visible in their dances, dresses, folk songs, music, love, nature etc.

- Chapter - III** : This Chapter deals with the outlook, beliefs, philosophy and religious faith of the Bodos. The Bathou religion and its philosophy with five holy sermons have great realisations in the Bodos' beliefs. These five principles on senses of love, hatred for the five sinners, five Bodo songs and dances etc. are deeply rooted in the common Bodo mind. The influence of Brahma Dharma after 1905 A.D. and Christianity upon them have been more or less general. Their myths and legends, heritage, language and literature, food habits, birth, marriage and death have been summarised in this chapter.
- Chapter - IV** : The social life of the Bodos and their traditional heritage are described in this Chapter. The change through the Renaissance has been seen in some dynamic roles of the social, literary personalities and also of the political leaders and freedom fighters, who sacrificed their life for the Bodo community in general. The three fold organisations, villagers or cultivators, ceremonies relating to cultivation, land reforms, literary enlightenment, political activities since the beginning of the twentieth century have been included in

the social life. Muga and Silk production has been given importance as their traditional glory.

**Chapter - V** : Since the 'Bodoni Pandulipi', through the Bodo Sahitya Sabha to the Cultural Movement, social unrest and the revolutionary activities of the Bodos have been elucidated in this Chapter. This chapter deals with the early Bodo literature along with religious details of Brahma Dharma and its code 'Pandulipi'. The formation of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, reflection of the Bodo society in their literature, formation of Bodo Writers' Academy and the activities of the All Bodo Students' Union have been inserted in this chapter in detail. In short, the influence upon the Bodos and their struggle for existence have been described briefly highlighting their social and literary organisations.

**Chapter - VI** : The Bodoland Movement for a Separate State (50:50), militants' fighting and consequent reactions in the society, social confusion, and settlement through Government Accord have been extracted with database analysis. The separate medium (instruction) movement of the Bodos through their organisations sought to divide Assam 50:50 i.e., the northern bank of the Brahmaputra for the Bodos. The Bodo movement under the late Upendra Nath Brahma, President, All Bodo Students' Union influenced the plain areas of Assam in general. This has also influenced other

tribal communities for their separate identities in small areas necessitating the formation of Autonomous Councils. The movement spearheaded by ABSU concluded politically with the Bodoland Autonomous Council in a particular area. This was a kind of political settlement for the solution of their demands on behalf of the Bodo people.

**Chapter - VII** : This concluding Chapter deals with some drawbacks, social problems and also suggestive remedies aiming at common social status, peace and prosperity. This chapter deals with the first political settlement with the signing of the Bodo Accord by the Central Govt. and the All Bodo Students' Union. The failure of Bodoland Autonomous Council was due to administrative deficiency. The ABSU formed co-ordination committee of Bodoland Movement including all organisations of the non-Bodo people for the advancement of the Bodoland movement towards its settlement. After ten years of BAC, Bodoland Territorial Council including four districts came into existence in 2003 for the administration of the said areas. But, in general, the BTC has not fulfilled the aspirations of all the Bodos of Assam as because it is limited to northwest of Assam comprising four districts only. This research work covers all districts of Assam and also areas beyond the state in some particular matters like cultural affinities among the Bodo family.

## FOREWORD

Till the development of Sanskrit Language and literature in the greater part of India, there was no other developed language or literature in other parts of the country. It is undisputed that the Sanskrit language, its grammar, literature and other subjects developed in India were followed by other countries. In a sense, India was the centre of intellect. That is why, the Paninian Grammar with thirty two hundred rules has not yet been surpassed by any other grammar of the world; rather they have followed this great 'Vyakarana' for unified command of the alphabet, word, sentence, structures and other areas and processes. The country, particularly known for Indus Valley Civilisation, has remained a resource for other Indian or non-Indian, tribals or non-tribals of the country. This great literary contribution has influenced, inspired other peoples' development from speech to space.

Thus, whoever has preserved their language, literature and culture in their locality, has been a source of study for the researchers. Researchers have always shown interest in those people who have preserved their language, literature and culture. The Bodos, though Mongoloid in origin, needed a deep study to know and understand them, for, they have been a mixture of vivid varieties of races in their struggle for existence in the Indian cultural context. An exhaustive study of the Bodos is necessiated

by the fact that they have been a mixture of different races and also because that they have shown greater resilience in their struggle for existence.

In a great country like ours, the Bodos should be studied or a research be done to bring them under a close scrutiny. The Vision – 2020 will be fulfilled only when all sections of the community get a balanced treatment. The prosperity of the country will be meaningless if the backward sections are deprived as they are the backbone of the country. This study hopes to contribute to the unity, integrity and common prosperity of the Bodos.

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## CHAPTER – I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Bodos : The Generic Connotation**

History tells us that the name of a community, caste or race changes from its origin or remains with a connotation in a sense. In such a context, we will now try our best to bring the term 'Bodo' for the introductory discussion.

The Bodos or the Boros are a race of the Mongoloid people who are described as the inhabitants of a country lying to the north of the Himalayas and in the western belt of China. This country is known as Bod, meaning a homeland of a particular racial community. Some parts of the country known as Hor Bod, Kosh Bod etc.

As a general practice the name of the community and their country is named in their own local language. The inhabitants of Bod country are known as the Bodo Phicha or Bodocha or Borosa. 'Bod' means 'land' or 'country' and 'phicha' or 'cha' means 'son' or 'children'. The Bodos were, in every sense, children of the Bod country. In course of time, those among them who moved out

from Bod to regions far and wide in search of food and shelter, remained simply as Boddo-Bodo-Boro etc.

In the book *The Background of the Assamese Culture*, R.M. Nath writes- "When Buddhism spread into the Bod countries, especially the southern part, inhabited by the Buddhist Lamas, it was known as Bsti (Lamas) Bod and later on, it transformed into Bsti Bod-Tibod-Tibet etc.<sup>1</sup>

Linguistically, the Bodos or the Boros include a large group of speakers of the Tibeto-Burman speeches of the North and East Bengal, Assam and Burma (Myanmar). This large group of people include Bodos or Boros of the Brahmaputra valley, Meches of Lower Assam, West Bengal, East Nepal and the plains of Bhutan and Doars area in North Bengal, Rabhas in Lower Assam, Garos in West Meghalaya, Dimasas of Dimapur and Maibong area, Kacharis of Kachar district and in all parts of Assam, Tipras in Tripura; Lalungs, Sonowals, Misings, Deuris, Chutiyas in Upper Assam and Lower Arunachal Pradesh, Koches and Hajongs in the Western Assam and all other parts of the plain Assam.

Hence, 'Bodo' as a generic term refers to all the Tibeto Burman (Bodo) speaking people of Sino-Tibeto origin.

"In pre-historic period, Tibet or Tribistan, were perhaps divided into five parts – Har-Bod, La-Bod, Kosh-Bod, Tibod and Tse-Bod. People descended from Kosh or Kosh-Bod, at a time known as Kosh-Hari or Kochari who lived in the Kosh-Bod area. Kosh+ Hari =dynasty, fragmented to Koschari in the modern period."<sup>2</sup>

### Specific Connotation

#### 1. Kacharis

The Eastern Boros of Cachar (or Kachar) District, especially North Cachar, call themselves Kacharis. According to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, "This group of Bodos assumed their name from the district of Kachar. The meaning of 'Kachar' is lowland or border land and is originated from Sanskrit *Kaksavata-Kachada-Kachar*."<sup>3</sup>

They are in the Bodo language, known as Dimasa, Di=water, ma=big (Dima=big water i.e., Brahmaputra, Sa or Cha=son or

children, hence Dimasa=sons or children of the big river, the Brahmaputra). The Kacharis are divided into several groups. They are Sonowal or Thengal Kacharis, Dimasa Kacharis, Lalung Kacharis and even the Rabhas or Rabha Kacharis.

At present, the Boros or Bodos of the Brahmaputra valley, particularly of some districts like Kamrup, Nalbari, Barpeta, Odalguri, Sonitpur and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal are known as Bodo-Kacharis or Boro-Kacharis, although all of them are popularly known as Bodos or Boros.

"Ethnically, the great King Chilarai (sixteenth century) belonged to Koches, an important species of the generic 'Bodos'. The above mentioned different tribes like the Koches, have other sub-tribes. The present constitutional introductions to these tribes and sub-tribes have some peculiar discriminations. Some Bodos are not constitutionally declared as tribes. The Koches are tribes in Meghalaya, but Scheduled Caste in West Bengal, Other Backward Classes in undivided Goalpara district and Other Backward Classes in other districts of Assam. The Kacharis-Meches, Deuries, Dimasas all belonging to Assam are tribal people. Rabhas are the tribal people everywhere but the Garos are not, in Assam."<sup>4</sup>

This, in short, is the connotation of the Bodos since their generic condition to the present day fragmentation in history. This will be more clearly identified and understood by reading what some historians and commentators have to say.

Here are some quotations given below to highlight the Bodos and their settlement in the past and the present. Sir Edward Gait in his book *A History of Assam*, Chapter-I, has given a quotation about the Bodo people's physical appearances. He said, "The Mongolians' main physical characteristics are a short head, a broad nose, a flat and comparatively hair-less face, a short but muscular figure and yellow skin."<sup>5</sup>

Here is what some scholars have to say about the Bodos. These may help us comprehend their ethnicity, locality and vastness of settlement over a long period of time.

“The Bodos who spread over the whole of Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal forming a solid block in North Eastern India were the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in eastern India and they form one of the main bases of the present day population of these tracts”

Dr. Sumiti Kumar Bhattacharjee  
*Kirata -Jana-Kriti*, Page-46.

“The Mlechha dynasty ruled Pragiyotisha for four thousand years, was indeed shorn off its royalty towards the end of the eleventh century”

Dr. Nagendra Nath Basu.  
*The Social History of Kamrup*, page-35

“This was in A.D. 1488, when the Kacharis’ capital was probably at Dimapur, from which place it was removed to Maibong in A.D. 1536, after a decisive victory had been gained by the Ahoms. The capital remained there for two centuries when the attacks of the Raja of Jaintia necessitated a further retreat to Khaspur in the plains of Cachar. These migrations were shared in only by the Raja and a few of his followers. The great bulk of the Kacharis remained behind and became the subjects of the Ahoms in Upper Assam and of the Koch kings lower down the valley.”

*Linguistic Survey of India*  
G.A. Grierson

“The Kachari tribe, by which these doors are principally inhabited, appears to be a race, quite distinct from the aborigines of the Assam Valley.”

Captain Pemberton,  
*Report on Bhutan* page 13.

“The whole of Assam (barring the Eastern parts inhabited by the Nagas and the South-Eastern parts inhabited by the Kuki-chins) and North and East Bengal was the country of the great Bodo people.”

‘Kirata-Janakriti’, page 46  
Suniti Kr. Chatterji.

“..... In this way it may well be mentioned that the Kachari race were the original autochthones of Assam and that even now, though largely Hinduised, they still form a large, perhaps the main constituent element in the permanent population of the province.”

The Kacharis. Page-7-8  
Sydne Endle.

“Amongst the Tibeto-Burman people the Bodos were the most powerful. They built up strong Kingdoms and with varying fortunes and under various tribal names-The Chutiyas, The Koches, etc.”

Assamese, its Formation & Development, page-42  
Dr. Bani Kanta Kakati.

“The Kacharis gradually acquired an empire over Assam, Sylhet, Myman Singh and the valleys of the east of the Brahmaputra, their original seat being Kamrupa, and that their rule ultimately embraced everything from Kamrupa down to the sea. They built brick cities, and it’s supposed that the Tippera Raja was the youngest son of the house, the original Empire being divided into northern and southern parts.”

J.A.S.B. IV, Kachari Buranji,  
Introduction Page-XV

“The function of Male Oracle (Oza) and Female Oracle (Doudini) as priestly dancer of the time of Bathou worship and Kherai Festival is an essential requisite. Kherai is their national festival which also provides ancestral and heroic worship.”

“The Bodos are not animistic. They are worshippers of ‘Bathou’, the Supreme God. They have other Gods and Goddesses. They believe in ghost and spirit also. But the conception of Supreme God is predominantly remarkable.”

A Descriptive Analysis of Bodo Language, page-17  
P.C. Bhattacharaya.

The different definitions and quotations given by different distinguished authors prove that the Bodos are still living in a vast

area from Tippera (Tripura) to Sadiya in the south and far east, and Sadiya (Assam) to North-East of West Bengal. To the border of Bhutan there were twenty Doors or gates – thirteen in Assam and seven in West Bengal especially in North Bengal. Captain Pemberton mentions the following Doors in his 'Report on Bhutan'.

### 3. Doors in Assam State :

- |                                  |                    |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Booree Guma Door              | 7. Bag Door        |
| 2. Kulling or kalleng Door       | 8. Bijni Door      |
| 3. Goor kolaho or churkolla Door | 9. Cheerang Door   |
| 4. Baksha or Barska Door         | 10. Reepu Door     |
| 5. Chapaguri Door                | 11. Gooma Door     |
| 6. Chapakhamar Door              | 12. Korreah parrah |
|                                  | 13. Char Door      |

### Doors in West Bengal state :

- |                   |                   |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Dalimkote Door | 5. Buxa Door      |
| 2. Zumerkote Door | 6. Bhulka Door    |
| 3. Chamurchi Door | 7. Bagrakote Door |
| 4. Suckee Door    |                   |

The above introductory details and the quotations of different historians and writers show the Bodos in their past and modern settlement. In fact, the Bodos were spread and scattered far and wide in the west and east before and after the Ahoms in Assam.

As language, literature, culture and religion are the main elements of a particular language speaking community, Bodos in this sense, have their own entity since past though they were also immigrants to this country. Before going to discuss their socio-cultural aspects, a little discussion on how immigrants became ethnic or aboriginal in time would be pertinent here. No doubt, they are found to have scattered to different countries and made these countries their homeland. This aspect should also be classified and mentioned.

### 4. Indian people (The immigrants):

Many linguists, social thinkers and historians or anthropologists have said that people who are now called as ethnic, aboriginal, etc. were definitely immigrants i.e., they came from outside and settled here. The fact is that, all of them are immigrants either coming earlier or later in the time frame.

The earth is a common homeland of her own creatures that are created by her natural fertility. All have equal rights and power to embrace the land where they have been born and brought-up. In this context, it can be said that those who came and settled in a land since prehistoric period and since before the colonial invasion and preserved their own cultural identity in a single large group, are called ethnic or aboriginal of the said land. Thus, the history of immigrants and settlement prove themselves who are superior and inferior in demanding their homeland in one sense, and born and brought-up, right in the modern sense of ethnicity for the human generations, in another.

A short synopsis has been presented here regarding immigrants to India since the prehistoric period before discussing the socio-cultural existence of the Bodos in this part of the world. The subjects of the synopsis are the Negrito or Negribotu, Austrics or Austro-Asiatic, Dravira in the South-West, the Mongoloid in the East and the Aryans with their cultured civilisation in the far North-West.

#### a. *Negrito:*

"Historians and linguists have come to the compromise that the oldest or the earliest immigrants or incomers to the present "Bharat Varsha" were the Negrito or the Negribotu. They were the inhabitants of Africa. They moved from South Arab via Iran to India. In the beginning, they spread throughout India and later on, some of them came to Assam, Burma and advanced to Indonesia and Malaysia. Some of them, through the pass of Negrais in Burma approached to Andaman and Nicobar Islands. At this time, very few Negrito people of Philipines, some people of

Baluchistan and some Tamil lingual people like Paniyar, Kadir, Kurumba and Irula etc. in the form of small races still existed as the Negrito people. The Negritos, black in colour, have thick hair, broad and big nose. They were not civilised. They used stone weapons and moved from place to place for food gathering. They did not know how to cultivate. The worshipping of *Peepal* tree and the use of Bow and Arrow were, perhaps the first gift to Indian culture. They could not leave any impression of their language upon the Indian languages. The word 'Baad' or 'Baadur' in Indian languages might have come from the Negrito language. It is found as 'Baadur' or 'Baaduri' in new and old Bengali language, 'Gadur' in Bihari 'Chamdariya', 'Chamgadar' in Himachal, 'Chamgidar' in Punjab. The word 'Baad' is found to have its usage in the Andamani language at present, too."<sup>6</sup>

#### **b. Austrics:**

The Austrics came after the Negritos. The previous conception of the speakers and writers that the Austrics had entered India from South China and Northern Indo-China has now changed and it has been confirmed that the Austrics had come from the Mediterranean area. They crossed Iraq, Iran and entered India. The Austrics are black, broad nosed, mediocre bodied with long hair. In the beginning, some of them went to Indonesia from India and then to Australia. Some of these people are found living there still. The people like Chola, Munda, Khasi, Monkhmr, Nicobari etc. in India are the same group of these people in Australia speaking the same language. In India, they are called Nishada, Sandumna or Santhar or Santhal, Kolla or Chola, Bhilla, Pulind, Savar etc. Hunting, fishing, cultivation of crops, bettlenut, gourd, brinjal, turmeric, banana, ginger, taming of elephant, dog, pig, poultry, planting coconut, cotton, use of vermilion, counting of numbers on the bases of twenty, the idea of rebirth etc. were the gifts of these people to Indian culture. The playing of cowrie shells might have come from the Austric culture. The Austric language influenced Indian languages, especially the East Indian

languages in many ways and forms. The words like *karapas*, *kadali*, *baan*, *tambul*, *pinak*, *ganga*, *linga*, *kambal* and many other such words did come from the Austric language. The processes of making follow-up (*anukaran*) words, also, certainly have come from this language.<sup>7</sup>

#### **c. Dravida:**

The third great race that came to India was the Dravida, but from where they definitely came is still disputed. In one reference, Jean Preyzuski and some Dravidian authors have said that they were the inhabitants of India. Some other writers, showing their relationship with the languages of Australia and Ural-Altai family say differently. Dr. Lawary relates this family with the Bask family. Crooke and some other writers associate them with the African family. But, nobody has come to the conclusion about their originality. It is a great enigma that the linguists and other scholars have not yet been able to conclusively establish their original homeland.

James Hoernall said that the Dravidians lived sometime in Mesopotamia and by the pressure of Akkadians or Semites, they were pushed to India through Baluchistan (where languages mark their presence). Mesopotamia was a place of Mundas and other Kol people, as the meaning of the word 'Mesopotamia' suggests. In groups, Negraits and Kol people together changed their residence to the forest area of Mesopotamia and other places near Mesopotamia due to heavy flooding of the whole Sind Valley by the Sindh River.

At that time the civilisation of Sindh Valley had already been created by the people who came from Greece, Aegean Islands and Misor. They contributed almost equally in establishing the ancient civilisation of India in different parts of the country at different times.<sup>8</sup>

As the meaning of the word 'Drabir' indicates the change of residence to forest areas, they were none but the people who went to Mesopotamia and its neighbouring forest areas due to heavy

floods in the Sindh valley. By the word 'Brahui' – we understand those Indian people who returned from Mesopotamia and were recognised by the people of India i.e. Sindh, and thereby were not opposed from entering to India. But those people again changed their residence in forest areas in South India like Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, etc. instead of Sindh valley and settled there since then. So, these people are called Drabir. It was probably B.C. 4000 as Dr. Tiwari says. James Hoernell further said that the Dravidians absorbed into the primitive Negraits and Proto-Polynesian population before passing to the South. But it is revealed now that the Kol people of India during the destruction of the Sindh civilisation left India in batches with the Negrait people and returned to India together with them. Consequently the language of all the people changed and their distinctive identity were lost. From this briefing we come to the conclusion that the Dravidians, as we find now, are a mixed race of Kol and Negrait people of India and they lived sometime in the Mediterranean area. They are not migrants to India but all the Dravidians are the sons of Indian soil. They are equal contributors in comparison with other citizens of India to the Indian civilisation since pre-historic period.

The mixed people i.e. Kol and the Negrait returned to India in three batches and their languages were a bit different in speeches like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada or Kanari. Besides these three main languages of South India, some others like Malayalam, Tulu, Kodgu, Kolmi, Toda, Gound, Khand, Oraon, Brahui, Malto etc. are their branches and sub-branches in existence in South India and some parts of North India. The reason behind this is that they changed their residence to different places. So, by the influence of local speeches, their languages changed accordingly.

#### **d. Kirata (Mongoloid):**

According to the Indian linguist Bholanath Tiwari, the Mongoloid came after the Austrics. "They lived originally on the banks of the Yangtze-Kiang River in China. One of their branches

established the Chinese civilisation. The other branch, in two parts entered India through the Brahmaputra river in the East, and crossing Tibet through Bhutan and accordingly reaching Sindh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Middle India, Bihar, Lower Nepal, Assam, Bengal and Orissa. The main languages of the Kiratas are Meithei (Manipur), Kachin (Burma), Naga, Garo, Boro, Lolo, Kukichin, Lepcha (Sikkim), and Newari (Nepal and northern India states). All of them are the sub-species of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the speech family."<sup>9</sup>

These greater Tibeto-Burman speeches influenced the Austrics, Dravidas and even the Aryans of India. They have sufficient influences on languages like Bengali, Nepali and Assamese. In Hindi and Punjabi languages too, there is an influence of the Bodo language which needs a thorough research. In Assamese languages, verb, noun, adjectives and names of places have sufficiently come from the Bodo language. Their movement and settlement will be described in the later part of this chapter.

#### **5. Vedic Literature:**

It has also been confirmed by the social thinkers, linguists, anthropologists and historians that Vedic Literature was in existence since the period much earlier than the Sindh valley civilisation. It is also confirmed that "There is not a single Dravidian language sentence found in Vedic literature though there is enough contribution of Dravidian language words in Sanskrit literature. The reason behind this is that, the Vedic literature was created much earlier than Sindh civilisation. It is to be made clear that the Santali or Kol language is the base of world languages. When there was only Kol language in existence, there was a developed language from Kol language like Prakrit language. For educated and advanced people, as well as for court language, Prakrit was in practice. So, during the inception of Vedic literature, there was no wide practice of Dravidian language existing in India, and thereby the question of the influence of Dravidian languages on Vedic literature did not arise. But the inception of Sanskrit

language was in a period, much later than the arrival of Dravidian language in India. The Dravidian contribution in Sanskrit language was therefore possible. The Dravidians contributed to the Vedic literature as Kol language speaking people prior to their departure to Mesopotamia and contributed to Sanskrit literature as Dravidians with their changed languages after their return. The Dravidian that had contributed to Vedic literature was thus found uncontextual. Thus, the Aryan culture and literature i.e. Vedic literature goes earlier to many centuries.”<sup>10</sup>

#### 6. The Bodos in the International arena:

The people who lived in Siberia and Mongolia around 2000 B.C. were known as Mongoloid. In course of time these Mongoloid people were divided into three groups. They are:

- (1) People going towards Europe and settling in Turkey and Italy.
- (2) People migrating to North America and Mexico and settling there.
- (3) People migrating from Mongolia and Siberia to West China and gradually settling in the Hwangho Valley and Tibet. After living for several centuries in the Hwangho Valley of China and Tibet, some of them migrated to the foothills of Bhutan. At first, they were known in Tibet as ‘Bod’. A brief idea has already been given about the ‘Bod’ in the generic connotations earlier.

A small section of the second group went to Japan and lived there. The people who are now living in Erich, North Japan and Mexico are the people of Mongoloid group. Dr. Suniti Kumar Bhattacharjee and Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha have claimed that the word ‘Bodo’ or ‘Boro’ was derived from the word ‘Bod’.<sup>11</sup>

#### 7. Historic & Pre-historic Assam (The Greater Bodo people)

Assam, in our present contextual studies, does not mean the present narrow Assam of the Brahmaputra Valley after seven decades of the twentieth century, but the Greater Assam covering the whole North-East India including Nagaland. Assam was the

eastern-most state of India. In the most ancient times, it was known as Pragjyotishpur and in medieval times as Kamrup. Assam is the modern name of the country which under the Ahom rule came to be called ‘Asama’ which means ‘peerless’ (or ‘uneven’). The word ‘uneven’ is very much suitable or apt geographically to this ancient land, while ‘peerless’ is also suitable for it is unparalleled.

Long before the coming of the Aryans in India, millenniums before Christ, this ancient land of Assam was inhabited by a people whom the scholars call ‘Austriacs’ or ‘Austro-Asiatics’. They are so called because they are said to have migrated from Austronesian and other islands of the Pacific Ocean to the Asiatic mainland. The beautiful megaliths or stone which they created over the graves of their deceased ones are found in different parts of Assam. They spoke Monkhmer language, akin to the dialect of the people of Munda tribe who are said to have migrated to India from the South-East Asia. They introduced the system of cultivation. They are also said to have started the cult of phallic worship of which the main centre of worship is still the temple of Kamakhya near Guwahati. The Khasis and the Jayantias are believed to be the descendants of the Austriacs of ancient Assam.

“The tribes of the Mongolian stock probably entered Assam long after the Austriacs had come. It is said that the Tibeto-Burman tribes of the Mongolian race were followed by the great Bodo tribe. About these tribal migrations and movements into Assam very little is known. The earliest literature of ancient India to refer to Assam is the ‘Mahabharata’, and it mentions Assam as the land of Mlechhes and Asuras, that is, a non-Aryan country. In the age of the ‘Mahabharata’, this country was called Pragjyotisha, and later on in the ‘Purana’ or ‘Tantras’ as Kamrup.”<sup>12</sup>

The extent of Pragjyotisha or Kamrup varied in different times. The Pragjyotisha, as mentioned in the Mahabharata, extended in the West upto the river Karatoya and in the South to the Bay of Bengal. The river Karatoya was regarded as sacred as the Ganges in those days.

After Mahabharata, in 'Puranas', the ancient Assam was known as Kamrup. In 'Kalika-Purana' it was mentioned that the temple of Kamakhya was in the centre of Kamrup. The 'Bishnu-Purana' mentioned four directions from the temple comprising four hundred miles to each direction, which were known as Kamrup. According to these accounts, therefore, the kingdom of Kamrup included Assam, East Bengal, and Lower Bhutan.

'Jogini-Tantra', which was composed even much later than the 'Puranas' also gives an extensive reference to the boundary of Kamrup. This extensive boundary comprised whole of the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur district (now in Bangladesh), Koch-Bihar, part of Mymensing district (now in Bangladesh) and probably Garo hills. The word 'Mymensing' is very much contextual with the Bodos. The meaning of Mymensing is to produce more rice (*Mai-rice, Monsing-produce more*). There may come many words of places, rivers, mountains, etc. which originated in the Bodo language.

### 8. Geographical Boundary of Kamrup:

According to 'Jogini-Tantra', ancient Kamrup kingdom had four main divisions:-1. Ratnapith 2. Kampith 3. Swarnapith and 4. Saumarpith. These names definitely carry Aryan impressions.

1. Ratnapith included the land between the river Karatoya of North Bengal in the West and the river Sonkosh in the East.
2. Kampith extended from the Sonkosh to the Rupahi in the East.
3. The tract between the Rupahi and the Bharali was known as Swarnapith.
4. Saumarpith included the whole of eastern Assam between the rivers Bharali and Dikrang in Upper Assam. Till the Ahom conquest, Pragjyotisha was known as Kamrup.

To make it clearer, the word 'Kamrup' in the Hindu mythology relates it with the then King Daksha, his daughter Sati and his son-in-law, Lord Siva. Being uninvited to Daksha's great sacrificial

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Yajna, Lord Siva, his son-in-law was in grim penance, knowing His wife had already died of vexation in the sacrificial field. Lord Siva wandered in penance taking His wife's dead body on His head. In order to stop this frightful wandering of Siva, the supreme Lord Vishnu, preserver of creation, took His great weapon, a *chakra*. With this, He cut the dead body of Sati into fifty one pieces. It fell on the earth in fifty one different places and wherever they fell the ground was held to be sacred. One of the important organs of Sati fell on Kamagiri i.e. Nilachal hill near Guwahati and the place was thenceforth held sacred and called Kamakhya. As Siva continued to do penance, the other Gods became afraid that He would thereby acquire universal power. They sent Kamadeva, the Indian Cupid, to make Him fall in love again, and thereby break his penance. He succeeded in his mission, but Siva was so enraged at the result that He burnt Kamadeva into ashes by a fiery glance of his eyes.

Kamadeva eventually regained his life and his original form (Rupa) in Assam, and the country where this took place came to be known as 'Kamrup' (Kamarupa). The ancient name 'Kamrup' is confined today to only a district of modern Assam including Kamakhya around Guwahati.

The Bodos (Kacharis) are one of the earliest settlers of this north east region of India. The Bodos, once a mighty race during the epic age of the Mahabharata, was long lost in oblivion, being divided into many groups of tribals and non-tribals. Very little has been heard or spoken about the race in the recent past. During the last days of the British rule in India, they began to gather some strength to give the race a dynamic motion. They tried to depict their picturesque entity—historical, social, religious, cultural, literary and in the last part of the twentieth century, politically. In fact, they are peace loving, honest, simple, sincere and truthful.

### 9. The Bodos (Kacharis) in the Kamrup and the invasion of the Ahoms:

"During the course of migration from the foothills of Bhutan, they changed their direction towards West and gradually settled

in Koch Behar, Rangpur, and Dinajpur of West Bengal. A section of them went far to the easts that are now known as Moran, Barahi and Chutia. The people who went to Bangladesh, at a time were mostly converted to Muslim.”<sup>13</sup>

In Kamrup and before the Ahoms, most history books were not written as we find today. After the twelfth century, the first ruler of the Ahoms in Assam started writing ‘Buranji’ i.e. history with his foundation of the Ahom Kingdom in Assam. Sukapha, the first ruler of Ahoms in Assam, left Upper Burma in A.D. 1215 with his councillors called Bar Gohain and Burah Gohain, eight nobles and nine thousand men, women and children. For thirteen years since his departure after a quarrel with his brother, the king of Maulung, Sukapha was a homeless wanderer, a prince without a kingdom. His Tai or Shan followers, however, stood by him during the critical time of his career. During this period of his wandering in the Patkai hills, he made occasional raids on Naga villages. In A.D. 1228 he arrived in Khamjang. As he proceeded to the plains, he faced a war with the Nagas near Nongnyang Lake and defeated them in the same year. The submission of the Nagas encouraged Sukapha. He gave some responsibilities to his nobles to rule them and approached and entered Namrup (Sibsagar). The plains of Sibsagar between the river Dikhu and Disang were under the possession of the Morans and Borahis. He defeated them in the terrible fight. He also adopted the wise policy of encouraging intermarriage between the Ahoms and the Morans and the Barahi tribes. Thus, came the existence of the Ahom king in Assam after several fight with the then Kachari kings, now known as the Bodo that includes Boro, Garo, Dimasa, Koch-Rajbonshi, Hajong, Hojai, Chutia, Sonowal, Deori, Moran, Motak, Barman, Rabha, Thengal, Sarania, Modashi etc.

“The Moran king “Badancha” and the Barahi king “Thakumtha” and their kingdoms, were welded into a single nation. The tact that Sukapha followed or displayed in his policy towards them, won for his Shan followers, the famous appellation, the Ahoms

as unequal from the other tribes, by which at a time, the state too, was named as Assam. Finally, he established his capital at Charaideo Hill, Sibsagar in A.D. 1213. The Ahoms, who conquered a kingdom, now in Assam appeared to have a great admiration for the country they made their home.”<sup>14</sup>

This is evident from the name they gave to Assam, which they called ‘Mungdunsunkham’ or the country full of golden gardens. Sukapha was succeeded by his son, Seteupha who ruled for thirteen years occupying the strip of Kachari territory between the rivers Dikhu and Namdang without a struggle and by stratagem. The Ahoms, later on, invaded the capital Dimapur and shattered the Dimasa Kacharis to different places. This partial detail in this reference needs a long narration to complete the Ahom reign in Assam.

#### **10. Rulers of Kamrup: A past social picture (Danava and Asuras)**

The Aryans under the great King Narakasura used to call the then rulers in Pragjyotisha as Danava and Asura. According to the traditional and mythological belief, the earliest King of Pragjyotisha was a non-Aryan named ‘Mahiranga’ Danava. His non-Aryan name was probably ‘Mairang’. A hill on the Shillong-Guwahati road is still known as ‘Mairang Parbat’. The great Bodo tribe, who migrated and moved into Assam, was mentioned in the Mahabharata, the earliest literature of ancient India, as Mlechhas and Asuras. In the north eastern parts they were known as Kiratas and Mlechhas who were Mongolian immigrants.

Mahiranga Danava is said to have been succeeded by Hatakasura, Sambarasura and Ratnasura. Mahiranga is called a Danava (giant) but his descendants are called Asuras (non-Gods). This shows that such titles as ‘Danava’ and ‘Asuras’ were applied indiscriminately to all the non-Aryans at that time.

These Kings were followed by a chief called Ghatakasura who is described as the ruler of the Kiratas. Perhaps he belonged to the same dynasty to which Hatak, Sambar and Ratna belonged. He was overthrown and slain by the famous Narakasura.

*The Asura Dynasty:*

Under the Asura dynasty, Narakasura was the most powerful and celebrated King of ancient Kamrup. The rulers of this dynasty ruled over Pragjyotisha for a considerable length of time. This dynasty is also called 'Bhauma dynasty' in ancient history of Assam.

In 'Kalika-Purana' and 'Jogini Tantras' many traditional preservations describe that Narakasura was born of the earth (Bhumi) by Vishnu, the Great God, preserver of the world. Naraka was brought up by the Aryan King Janaka of Videha, earlier in the Greater Nepal (now in Bihar) and soon he became an accomplished scholar and a great warrior. He became versed in the Vedas and a devotee of Vishnu.

Pragjyotishpura was a neighbouring kingdom of Videha at that time. Naraka slew Ghataka, the King of Pragjyotisha, with the help of Vishnu and captured the throne. Naraka made Pragjyotishpur (city on eastern light) or modern Guwahati, his capital. There is a hill near Guwahati, which is still known as the hill of Narakasura. His rule extended from the Kartoya in the West to the Dikrang in the East. Naraka is said to have settled the people of the Aryan race in Pragjyotishpura after driving out the Mongolian Kiratas from this land. Narakasura's downfall started after the influence of King Banasura who insisted Narakasura to marry Kamakhya, though Narakasura was taught by Vishnu to worship the Goddess Kamakhya. No doubt, being a non-Aryan King, he was the first chief known to have introduced Aryan culture and civilisation in ancient Assam. His eldest son Bhagadatta and grandson Bajradatta fought consecutively against the Pandavas. Yudhisthir, the eldest brother among the Pandavas, arranged a horse sacrifice after his victory at Kurukshetra to secure recognition for him as the emperor of India. All kings surrendered to Yudhisthir but Bajradatta, the king of Kamrup refused to recognise him as the emperor without a struggle.<sup>15</sup>

Bajradatta was followed by his son to the throne of Pragjyotishpur. Narakasura's descendants continued to rule for

nineteen generations and the last kings of this dynasty were Subahu and Suprahu. The city of Pragjyotishpur was an eminent place, famous for the centre of astrological studies.

According to some scholars, Pragjyotishpur (which did not include the whole of Assam) was ruled by the Pandavas for some centuries. Some lesser kings were there besides Pragjyotishpur, such as Kadali (Nowgaon), Davaka (Nowgaon), Manipur, Hirimba and Tripura. Perhaps, Pragjyotishpur, the glorious city declined after Bajradatta. During this period, the Bodos or the people of the Mongolian race might have established their supremacy.

**11. Indian social influence on Pragjyotishpura:**

After the nineteen descendants of Narakasura and before the foundation of the Pushya dynasty or Barman dynasty by Pushya Barman (A.D. 355-380), there might have been the influence of different rulers like Berar, who ruled in Kundina in Saumar Pitha area bounded by the rivers Bharali and Dikrang of ancient Kamrup. The capital Kundina was near the Kundila river of Sadiya. As mentioned in the 'Bhagavad' and 'Vishnu Puran', another famous king, Vana, the eldest son of Bali, ruled Sonitpur. The Hari-Hara War remained famous in his time. The reason behind the bloody war was the marriage of Usha (Sonitpur) and Aniruddha (Dwaraka). The modern name of Sonitpur (the site of the bloody war) is Tezpur. Vana's grandson Bhaluk established his capital at Bhalukpong in North Sonitpur. All these are enough to bring the context of the concurrent rule of the Aryan and the non-Aryan rulers of Assam.

As mentioned in the 'Jogini Tantra', a Sudra King named Deveswor ruled over the land till the first century A.D. He was followed by other kings for several centuries as mentioned above. After the said century, there was Buddhist influence which spread rapidly in India and in Kamrup. There were Dharmapala, Padmanarayana, Chandranarayana, Ramachandra, Nagasankara and his descendants who ruled Kamrup and the neighbouring kingdoms. It needs a detailed study separately.

## 12. Present Assam in terms of geography

The mighty Brahmaputra river flows right across the Assam valley. The river Brahmaputra was called Luhit or Lauhitya or the Red river in ancient literature. The Brahmaputra river from Paraturamkunda to the last South-West part of Assam is just more than five hundred miles and the plain valley from the river to North and South is just sixty miles in breadth, approximately. This Greater Assam Valley, prior to 1970, was known upto Manipur, Tripura or the Arunachal Pradesh i.e., including all seven sister states at present in the North-East India. In fact, they were districts of Assam. It was on the bank of the Brahmaputra that the great civilisations flourished in the past. The history of Assam is mainly the history of the Brahmaputra Valley and its relations with the neighbouring hills and plains.

“Assam has a unique variety of people of different races and tribes. Some of the earliest tribes that came to ancient India are found in Assam. According to scholars, the Khasis and the Jayantias are the earliest inhabitants whom the movement of history refers to as Austrics. The people of Mongolian stock probably followed them. The various tribes of modern Assam, nearly twenty two as recognised tribes, such as Bodo Kachari, Garo, Chutia, Moran, Motok, Mech, Rabha, Lalung, Mikir, Aka, Dafla, Miri, Abor, Mishmi, Sonowal, Madahi and Naga belong to different branches of the Mongolian race.

The Bodos were once a powerful people. At one time, they are said to have ruled over the whole of Kamrup. Just before the arrival of the Ahoms in the thirteenth century, the Kacharis and the Chutias i.e., the two branches of the Bodos ruled over a large part of Eastern Assam. The last to enter and settle in Assam were the Aryan people. Between the pre-Aryan races and tribes and the Aryans, there were much cultural fusion and exchanges.”<sup>16</sup>

## 13. Ancient cultural and socio-political conditions:

Besides Pragjyotishpur and Kamrup, there were other small kingdoms which have already been mentioned. Monarchy was

the general system of government in ancient Kamrup. It was hereditary. The nineteen descendants of Narakasura have also been mentioned. No doubt, Narakasura brought the Aryan influence in Pragjyotisha, but he drove out the Mongolian Kirata kings from the land. Even the non-Aryans like Mlechchas or other kings embraced Hinduism. They were initiated into Hinduism by the Brahmins and admitted into the Sudra caste. The conversion of those tribes into Hinduism was the result of the spread of Brahmanism in Kamrup. Aspects of social life, dress, food and other habits of the non-Aryans were dominantly influenced.

There were hereditary kingly ruled states with the Mantri Parishad and the Brahmins were appointed as ministers. The small kingdoms like Davaka, Kadali, Hirimba, Manipur and Tripura were also influenced by the Hindu laws of Kamrup.

Land tax, duties on sales and purchases were imposed. There were Brahmottars, Devottars and Dharmottars property without any tax. Under the village panchayats, there were Gaon Buras who carried on the administrative works. Vedas and the Hindu scriptures had sufficient influences. The kings were the protectors of religion. Ministers, priests and chiefs helped the king. Bhukta, Mandal, Vaishya, Pura and Agraharas (village groups) were under the administrative branches.

The ancient Kamrup was an integral part of the Indian culture and civilisation. The culture of Kamrup was a mixed culture of the Austrics and the Tibeto-Burmans and other non-Aryan tribes of the place.

The ancient Kamrup, since Pragjyotisha, was a place of learning. The Chinese traveller Hiuen-Tsang spoke highly of the devotion of the people to learning. Along with Sanskrit language there were Devanagiri script and the Assamese language in the formation with distinct words. The Kamrupi language was slowly coming into existence. Sankardev, Madhabdev and Haridev played dominant roles in the literature of the time.

Trade and commerce was also carried on with other countries

like Tibet, Bhutan, Sri Lanka etc. The Abors, the Daflas and the Mishimis carried their native products even to China. The most intimate trade relation was maintained with Magadha, Gujarat and Kashmir.

The non-Aryan religious practices had great influence on Aryan Hinduism. The non-Aryan practices like cult of fertility, head-hunting, human sacrifice, blind belief in mother goddess, Shaktism and other animistic beliefs were famous. The Shakti worship, a non-Aryan practice, was followed by the Hindus. The Shakti temple of Kamakhya (Kha-mai-kha) and Kesaikhati (Kali) temples near Sadiya were famous among the tribes and later among the Hindus.

After the reign of Bajradatta, the glory of Pragjyotisha, perhaps, started to decline. Among the nineteen descendants of Narakasura, there were no famous kings (except Bhagadatta and Bajradatta). Nothing, however, is known about the history of the period from Bajradatta to Pushya Barman, the founder of the Barman dynasty. With the establishment of Barman dynasty in the fourth century A.D., the political history of Pragjyotisha or Kamrup is known more precisely.

The reign of Kumar Bhaskar Barman from fourth century A.D. to mid-sixth century A.D. (A.D. 560 to be precise) was the glorious period in the cultural and political life of Kamrup. The Chinese pilgrim and traveller Hiuen-Tsang says that Kamrup was the greatest kingdom in the East. He describes Bhaskar Barman as the "King of Eastern India." His famous account '*Si-Yu-Ki*' describes the manners of the people of Kamrup as simple and honest. They were of short stature and their complexion was dark yellow. This is, perhaps, due to the Mongolian origin of the people. The people were, perhaps, mostly Hindus. The king and courtiers were, at least, Hindus. He saw the temples of the Devas (Hindu Gods). Bhaskar Barman was inclined to Buddhism. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva.

From A.D. 750 to A.D. 1250, there were different dynasties

like Salastambha dynasty, Pala dynasty etc., and several kings like Salastambha, Sri Harshadeva, Bala-Barman, Banamala Barman, Birabahu, Brahmayala, Ratna Pala, Purandar Pala, Indra Pala, Gopala, Harsha Pala, Jay Pala, Ram Pala and Kumar Pala. Jay Pala was the last king of the Pala dynasty, who ruled upto the 12th century.

#### 14. East and West kingdoms of Kamrup:

After the defeat of Moran and Motok kings in the East and the invasion upon Kamrup by Tughril Khan Malik Uzbek, the king of Kamrup, Sandhya transferred his kingdom to 'Kamata' or 'Kamrup-Kamata' in the West. The kings of the Kamata were designated as Kamateswara or Kameswara (Lord of Kamata). Kamata, however, was much smaller in extent than the ancient Kamrup which included Goalpara and Kamrup districts of modern Assam, besides portions of North Bengal and Mymensing. Though there were Ahoms in eastern parts of Assam, some smaller kingdoms were under the Kachari dominion. The expansion of the Kacharis from the South-East Assam compelled king Sandhya of Kamrup to remove his capital to the western part of the kingdom after A.D. 1250.

Some Mongolian kings and their descendants and others were already Hinduised and their names, too, changed to Hindu names like Sandhya Ray, Rupnarayan, Pratapdhvaj, Dharama Narayan, Durlav Narayan, etc. Durlava Narayan established the headquarters of his kingdom at Gouria (Koch Behar). As the western part of Kamata included Gauria i.e., part of North-East Bengal, they called themselves as Gaureswor. Thus, the foundation of the Kamata Kingdom was laid in the West and it flourished under the greatest Koch or Kachari king, Chilarai, who converted to Hinduism. King Naranarayana founded his capital at Koch Behar. The Ahom kings, under whom the modern Assamese identity came into being, continued their reign in the East for nearly six hundred years.

The Kamata kings, in fact, were really the Hinduised kings.

The Kachari King Tamradhwaj and his son Arimatta ruled Kamata and the regions east of Kamata for many years. Being a powerful king, Arimatta extended his kingdom upto Darrang. After Arimatta, there were three kings of this dynasty, viz., Ratna Singha or Sukaranka, Sutaranka and Mriganka. They had control over Kamata, but in the eastern parts, because of the rule of Arimatta, had no supremacy.

It may be summed up that the Indian civilisation in Assam received many elements from the non-Aryans. The culture and civilisation in Assam is also a mixture of Aryan and non-Aryan elements. The Austrics or the Austro-Asiatics (Khasi-Jayantias etc.) and the Tibeto-Burmans and other non-Aryan tribes made considerable contributions to the foundation of the common culture of Assam. The Aryans, in fact, only added to its varied characters. Even now, the social, economic, religious and cultural status of Assam bears the influence of the non-Aryan people of Assam. Further, even arts, music, architecture, sculpture and Hinduism (especially in Assam) are indebted to various non-Aryan cults and practices. The influence of non-Aryans on the Aryan culture is more marked in Assam than elsewhere. Thus, the culture of the present Assam, since its ancient time has been a mixed culture of the Aryans and the non-Aryans, which has some distinctiveness and beauty of its own.<sup>17</sup>

### 15. Kachari

Though Assam has remained a place of cultural assimilation and fusion, the Bodos (Kacharis) have maintained their distinctive identity through the ages. The old Sanskrit scriptures like the Yajur Veda, the Atharva Veda, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Assamese texts like Kalikapurana, the Yogini-tantra, Assam Buranji, Kachari Buranji, Darrang Raj Bansawali etc., contain references to the 'Kirata' people, the pejorative name given to the people of Bodo community or the non-Aryans in Assam. The word 'Kachari' has been described by many writers and historians but it becomes appropriate with the word '*Kach Cha*'

referred to in the Mahabharata, as 'the last part' of any place, side, worn cloth, etc. 'Kachchad' or 'Kachar' or 'Cachar' as is known today might have been the last part of the South-East Assam and hence the Sanskritised name was suitable to the place and the people who settled there as Kachari. Some others say that the people who settled near the 'Kosh' river were known as 'Kash' and 'Hari' ('clan' in the Bodo language). They were also known as 'Koshari', 'Kochari', 'Kachari' or the clan of the 'Koches' or 'Koshes'.

To sum up this generic description, we make a gist here about the Bodos. The Bodo people including their western and eastern branches had royal glories that we find in the descriptive history mentioned in the books cited earlier. The western section of the Bodos (Kacharis) occupied the thrones of Koch-Bihar, Bijni, Darrang and Beltola at Gauhati, while the eastern section was occupied by them in the name of Chutiyas which included Moran and Motoks.

They established a powerful kingdom with its capital near Sadiya and a section of the eastern Bodos maintained their capitals at Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur against the continuous invasion of the Ahoms and neighbouring kingdoms till the time of the British rule in Assam. Even today, these people are known as Dimasa or Dimasa Kachari (Hills Kachari).

The historical records in the name of 'Buranji', which started with the reign of the Ahoms, do not show the Bodos or the Kacharis in proper light till the last part of the nineteenth century. Why the Mongoloids were not treated with justice has remained an unsolved mystery as because their records are not shown properly in the history of nearly seven hundred years. Leaving the Ahoms aside as the new-comers or immigrants into Assam, the real historical entity of Assam is the Bodos' history or the Kacharis' history which has already been described in the West and the East Assam references.

The history of the Kacharis or the Bodos at present is a history

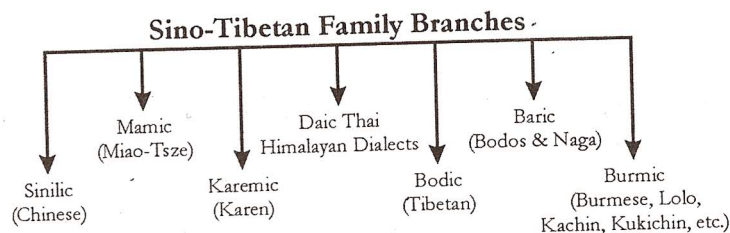
of struggle – social, political, religious, literary – since the beginning of the twentieth century. It is clear now that they were misused by subversion, conversion, division and sub-division in such a way that some of them have already forgotten their fore-fatherly culture, language and literature. Even the British, took a chance to convert them to another religion. The *Divide and Rule Policy* of the British, which was not an exception in the case of Assam, affected the Bodos in the beginning of the twentieth century. But, it is best for all the communities to preserve and nurse their cultural entity and identity rather to lose their self with others in the name of homogeneity or the so called ‘mainstream’.

The Bodos i.e., the Mongolian people were the inhabitants of the Himalayas and West of China, the land that is known as ‘Bod’. The word is supposed to mean ‘a homeland’. The Linguistic Survey of India makes it clear that the term ‘Bodo’ in the sense of a generic term was first applied by Hodgson.<sup>18</sup> Hodgson applied the generic name ‘Bodo’ to the Sino-Tibetan languages. S.N.Wolfendon is of the opinion that “the tribal name ‘Bara Fisa’ consisting of Bara and Fisa (son or daughter) can be equated tohbrog-pa, inhabitant of the steps, the nomadic Tibetans and that the term can be reconstructed into Hbrogbutsa-descendants of the steps.”<sup>19</sup> Grierson called them “Bara, Bodo and plains Kachari” after Sydney Endle’s grammar.<sup>20</sup>

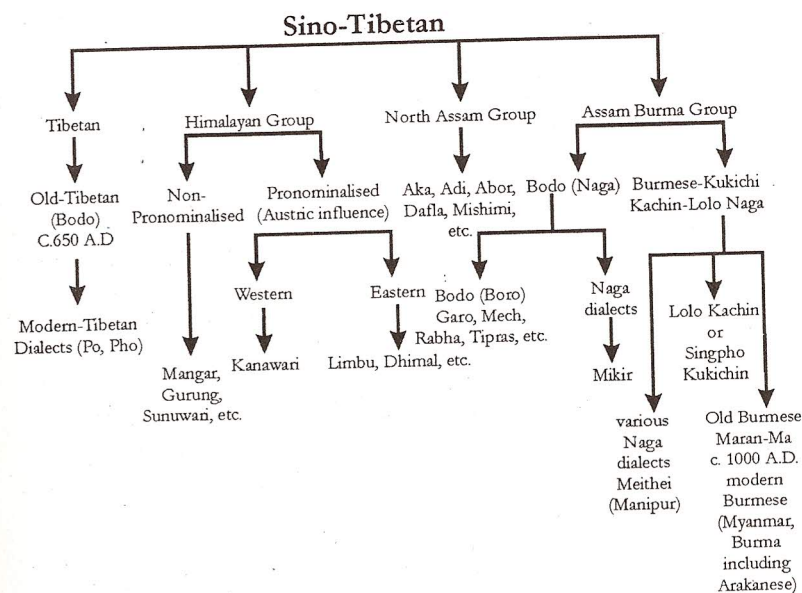
For a better clarification, a table may be inserted as below:

### A. Tabular Representation of Sino-Tibetan languages

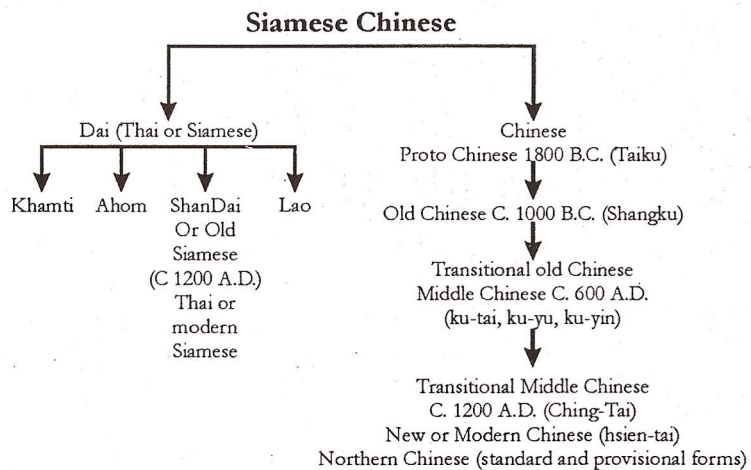
(Following Robert Shafer’s classification in *Journal of American Oriental Society*)



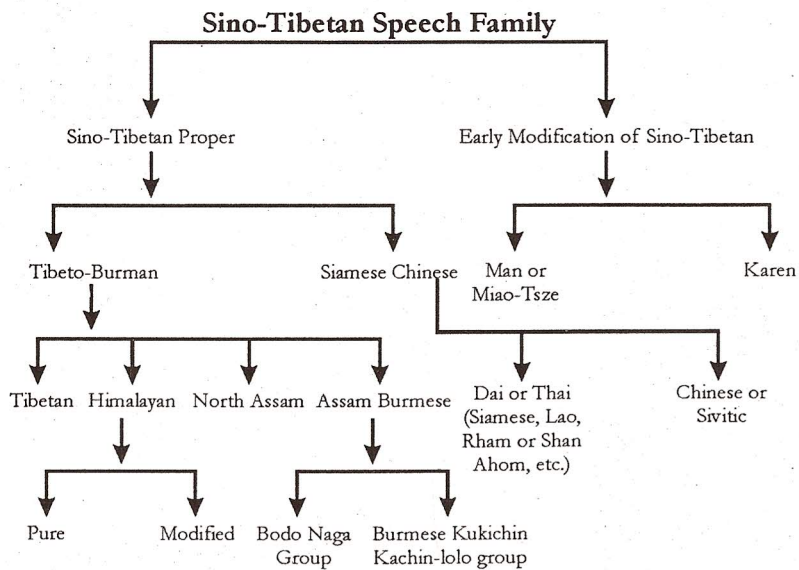
### B. Detailed indication of the speeches in the two branches of Sino-Tibetan (Following S.K.Chatterjee’s classification)



C.



D. Tabular Representation of Sino-Tibetan Languages  
(Following *Linguistic Survey of India*)



Conclusion:

A person with only a past but no vision of a future is doomed to die. Every ideology worth its name contains a vision of the future. This view of the future which gives shape to the hopes and aspirations of the common people is vital for the indigenous people of India who are today threatened with extinction. Behind this threat, is concealed the hope of the revival of lost glory in this competitive world.

'Bharatvarsh' i.e. India, has remained a country of immigrations. If we use the term 'immigration' for all who came from outside – the Austrics or the Austro-Asiatics, Dravidas, Aryans from the North-West and the Mongoloids from the North East – all should be called outsiders without any discrimination or bias. History itself proves that human beings are the most movable creatures for their food, shelter and safety. Being superior in comparison to other creatures, human beings can settle in a particular place in the name of society. This trend of social existence has been continuing since pre-historic period, and whoever move from their original homeland and settle at their destined place might have embraced the place as their discovered land and homeland. As the written history finds them in their setting since a long time, they are called aboriginal settlers of that place and this sense of significance relates to all other people including the Bodos i.e., the Sino-Tibetan origin through the Assam-Burma group in the North-East India and abroad.

Loss of culture means loss of identity. The present history around the world is a battle of existence through cultural entity. This universal truth that the Bodo Kacharis have adopted shall remain as a great lesson to the other tribal and non-tribal people of the world in regaining their lost horizon in times to come. Their socio-cultural movements for existence are genuine, contemporary positive and exemplary to the conscious masses.

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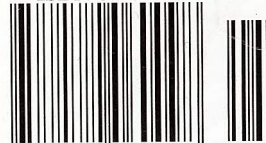
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