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A BRIEF HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF DIMASA KACHARI IN THE HILLS DISTRICT OF ASSAM, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Dimasa are part of the greater Kachari group – one of the ancient Kachari tribes. Kacharis being one of the indigenous tribe of India's North East, their history is quite old. The earliest Kachari settlement was in the foothills of the Himalayans. From there they moved to the Brahmaputra valley with their

capital of 'KamrupliKamrupa'. Presently Kacharis happen to occupy a special place in the ethnic composition of the Autonomous Hills Districts of Assam. They are mainly confined to the Dima Hasao District (previously North Cachar Hills District). However, they are also found in small scattered groups in the districts of Karbi Anglong, Nagaon, and Cachar. The Dimasas form a part of the Bodo-group of people which also include the Bodo-Kacharis, the Meches, the Rabhas, and the 'Koches' of Assam. They are said to belong to the Tibet Burman groups, linguistically speaking. Western-China has been traced out to be the original home of the TibetoBurman group of people. The Dimasa Kacharis inhabiting the present Autonomous Hills Districts and the Bodo-Kacharis inhabiting the plains of Assam are believed to



belong to this same stock of people although their language and customs differ more in nature than have something in common. Here, the paper is basically concerned with the evolutionary development of the Dimasa Kachari as a greater part of the Kachari groups and origin of the two terms 'Dimasa' and 'Kachari'.

KEYWORDS :Dimasa; Kachari; Dima Hasao; Cachar;Barman Kachari; Customary Law; Ethnic Identity.

INTRODUCTION :

The Dimasa Kacharis are one of the major tribal communities of Assam and they constitute an important ethnic group in North-East India. Present Assam is inhabited by a number of Kachari tribes, such as the Bodo-Kacharis in the Kamrup, Barpeta, Dhubri, Goalpara, Darrang and Sonitpur Districts, Sonowal Kacharis and Thengal Kacharis in Upper Assam Districts, the Barmans in Cachar district, Mech Kacharis who are more or less scattered in the plains districts in small groups and the Dimasa Kacharis in the Autonomous Hill Districts namely, the Dima Hasao (erstwhile North Cachar) Hills and Karbi Anglong Districts.

The Dimasa Kacharis are a Scheduled Tribe in the Autonomous Hill Districts of Assam. Their present abode is confined mainly into the Dima Hasao Hills District. They are, however, found in small scattered groups in Dhansiri, Mahangdijua (Manja), Hawaipur and some interior areas of the Karbi Anglong District also, In the District of Cachar, the Dimasas are known as Barmans.

RACIAL AFFINITY AND MIGRATION:

The Dimasa Kacharis belong to the Bodo group of people which, besides the Dimasa, including Bodo-Kacharis, Rabhas, Lalungs, Tipperahs, Meches, Koches, Chutiyas and the Morans. Linguistically the Dimasas belong to the Tibeto-Burman family. The original home of the different groups of people belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family was in Western China near the Yang-te-Kiang and the Howangho rivers from where hordes of them went down the courses of the Chindwin and the Irawadi and then the Brahmaputra and started settling down in the valleys of these rivers and also remote hills adjacent to the valleys.

The Dimasa Kacharis who are otherwise known as Hill Kachari inhabiting the present Autonomous Hill districts and the Bodo-Kacharis inhabiting the plains of Assam refer to the same stock of people although their languages and customs have many differences than likeness. This might have been the result of separation and isolation of these two peoples for centuries together.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

1. To bring out the facts of the origin of 'Dimasa Kachari'
2. To study and explore the meaning of the two terms Dimasa and Kachari
3. To identify the folk cultures of the Dimasa Kachari
4. To highlight the socio-political-religious life of the community
5. To understand how traditional belief of a community is used as a symbol of ethnic identity.

METHODOLOGY:

The research paper is based on descriptive while, the required information was obtained from chronicles, research books, research paper, periodical articles, magazines, encyclopedia and journals books, memoranda, pamphlets and also other archival records both official and non-official. Besides, some persons having knowledge of the subject were also interviewed.

DIMASA:

The term Dimasa literally means the children or descendants of a big river, meaning the Brahmaputra. 'Di' means water, 'Ma' means big and 'Sa' means children. The Ahoms called the people of this tribe Timisa and according to Sir Gait; it was clearly a corruption of the term 'Dimasa'. As the Brahmaputra is the biggest river in Assam the literal meaning of the term Dimasa cannot but be the children of the Brahmaputra.

But the view of very much disputed. According to Mr. S. R. Thaosen, the Dimasas were known as bodosa prior to their settlement in Dimapur. When the bodosas migrated to Dimapur region and started living on the bank of river Dhansiri, they came to be known as Dimasa. According to his interpretation the terms 'Dimasa' refers to the people inhabiting on the river Dhansiri and in Dimasa the Dhansiri river is known as 'Dima'. Mr. Thaosen considers it an utter absurdity to refer the Dimasas as the descendants of a big river (The Brahmaputra).

Slightly similar view is expressed by Mrs. Nirupama Hagjer in her Assamese book entitled 'Dimasa'. According to her there has been a tradition among the Dimasas to introduce themselves as the children (Sa) of the place of their habitation. 'Dimasa', in her opinion, is derived from Dimapura, that is to say, the people who lived in Dimapur. The ancient capital of the Kacharis on the bank of the river 'Dima' (Dhansiri). Mrs. Hagjer also raised a pertinent question. If the Dimasas were so called because of their habitation on the bank of the river Brahmaputra, why then the other of the Kacharis were not called so?

The Dimasas call the river Brahmaputra Dilao and the bodos, on the other hand, call it Tilao. Considered from this point of view the Dimasa should have been called Dilaosa.

In the book of 'Tribes of Assam' compiled by Mr. S. Barkatati it is stated that the word Dimasa supposed to have been derived from Hidimba, a demoness who was married by Bhīma, the second pandava prince, as the legend says and the outcome of this wedlock was their son Ghostkock who left a glorious example of heroism in the battle of Kurukshetra fought between the Pandavas and the Kouravas. Even the name of Dimapur is also supposed to have been derived from Hidimba-a shortened from Hidimba-pur².

Similar view is expressed by Mr. N.K. Barman, also. According to him the inhabitants of the eastern region of present Bharat (India) were unknown to the Aryans of Aryavarta. When the Pandava brothers explored this area, this region was recognized and subsequently mention was made of this region in Sanskrit literature and mythology. Maghavarna, who ruled this part of Aryanavarta, was the son of Ghototkoch and grandson of Bhima-the second Pandava and Hidimba. Thenceforth this ruling family of 'Kachari' nation assumed the aristocratic distinction of 'Hidimbachha'. It was contorted into 'Dimba-chcha' and subsequently as 'Dimachha' in course of time.

Now even if we agree that the term Dimasa originates from Hidimba, we cannot account for why the other numerically strong section of the Kacharis who live in the Brahmaputra valley is called Bodo, Bodosa or Bodofisa. If the origin of all the Kacharis in Assam refers to Hidimba, Dimasa should have been their common name.

It is an obvious fact that prior to the advent of the Ahoms, the Kacharis must have lived on the banks of the Brahmaputra and man of its tributaries. The veracity of this statement is well-established by the fact that many principal rivers in Assam like Di-puta, Di-Karai, Di-Hong, Di-bong, Di-bru, Di-hing, Di-sang, Di-khow, etc. bear the syllable 'Di' before them which is invariably a Dimasa word meaning water. Hence the literal meaning of Dimasa which means the children of a big river cannot be ruled out as an absurdity.

Similarly the literal meaning of Dimasa may be the children of 'Dima' which means the Dhansiri. This would mean that the term 'Dimasa' had its origin only after the Kacharis migrated to Dimapur area probably in the later part of 11th century. But the term seems to be of much older origin because of the fact that from Dimapur the Kacharis did not migrate to upper Assam to rechristen the names of the rivers. They must have rechristened the names of the rivers with the prefix 'Di' much ahead of their migration to Dimapur region.

From the facts stated above it can be presumed that the term 'Dimasa' is not of recent origin.

The section of the people whom we now call Dimasa might have been known so prior to their migration to the Dimapur regions.

In this connection it will be worthwhile to mention the legend of creation of the Dimasas. According to the legend, at the beginning, the world was completely uninhabited and the shapes of the rivers, mountains, trees and plants, etc. were not the same that we find to-day. An unearthly silence had enveloped the whole atmosphere. In course of time two godly beings one male and one female appeared. Their appearance had broken the unearthly and all pervading silence of the world. The male was called Bangla Raja. He was also the god of the earthquakes. The female was called 'Arikhidima' in the shape of a very huge bird. The two fell in love and as a result Arikhidima had a divine conception.

Being a divine being herself and carrying a divine conception, Arikhidima had a great problem to find out a suitable nesting place for laying her eggs. Having flown out all the four corners of the earth in search of a suitable nesting place, Arikhidima, at long last, discovered a place called DilaobraSanggibra, the confluence of the rivers Dilao and Sanggi. DilaobraSanggibra was a very lovely place. The landscape with its shining sands and blooming flowers was beyond description. There was such a huge strong banyan tree that even the heaviest storm could do little harm to its twigs, branches and leaves. Arikhidima selected this heavenly place and landed on the banyan tree. There she laid seven divine eggs. When the hatching course was over, from the first egg Sibrai was born, Sibrai was followed by the birth of Du Raja. Naikhu Raja, Wa Raja, GanyungBraiyung and Hamiyadau from the second, third, fourth, fifth and the sixth egg respectively. All the six were gods in the form of the human beings, and they started playing gleefully on the golden sands of DilaobraSanggibra. But the seventh egg still remained in the same state although sufficient time had already elapsed. This has caused great anxiety to Arikhidima. When she could realize that the egg would not break naturally, she asked her sons to break it open. But none dared to do this. At last, Hamiyadao, the sixth son, who was naughty enough, gave a heavy kick to the egg. Out came the ugly shaped evil spirits from the immaturely broken egg and they tried to devour the world causing widespread chaos. At last they were pacified by Sibrai, the eldest brother who also detailed their habitats and living. Thus the sixth gods from Sibrai to Hamiyadao in the form of human beings were the ancestors of the Dimasa Kacharis. In other words the Dimasas are the descendants of six gods, namely, Sibrai, Du-Raja, Naikhu Raja, Waa-Raja, Ganyung-Braiung and Hamiyadao and they are worshipped by the Dimasa Kacharis as their ancestral gods. The Dimasas believe that the evil spirits that were born out of the seventh egg are responsible for their disease and other calamities.

From this legend it is obvious that the divine female bird Arikhidima was the ancestress of the Dimasas. There was very likelihood of calling the Dimasas as Atikhidimasa in ancient times-Arikhidima (the divine female bird), Sa (Children). As the term was found to be quite long, the former part, namely, 'Arikhi' might have been given up in course of time.

However, the hypothesis propounded here that 'Dimasa' originates from 'Arikhidimasa' requires further probe.

SOCIO-POLITICAL-RELIGIOUS LIFE:

The Village System:

In Dimasa the village system is called 'Nolai' meaning a cluster of houses and the whole village with the population is called Raji. The Dimasas have a tendency to live on the bank of the rivers and streams. Therefore, every Dimasa Kachari village is found to be situated on the hill slope with a river or stream running by. On an average a village comprises of thirty to forty houses. The houses are built in two rows facing each other and leaving sufficient space in between. The houses are built on the ground

and they do not have platform houses. The houses have timber superstructure, mud-plastered bamboo walls and thatched roofs. In order to protect the houses from the constantly blowing strong winds, protective, protective bamboo walls, usually almost equal to the heights of the tops of roofs, are erected all around the houses. Each village has a protective fencing all around with two gates one at the top and the other at the bottom.

Each of the families of a village has a few fruit trees like guava, mango, jack-fruit, plantain, etc. within the boundary of its homestead. From the distance the rows of houses on both sides of the village streets with the protruding fruit bearing trees look nice.

The traditional village headman who is the top of the village administration is called 'Khunang'. He has both executive and judiciary powers. His executive powers consist mainly of giving guidance in respect of celebration of community festivals in the village. While his judiciary powers consist of trying of cases, maintenance of law and order in the village, etc. According to the custom the Khunang is to be elected by the village elders in a formal meeting. In changing his duties he is assisted by another official called Dilik (assistant headman). Like Khunang he is also elected by the village elders in a formal meeting. From the point of view of age and experience Khunang should be the seniormost person in the village Dilik is the next seniormost man. Next to him is Daulathu who occupies the third place from the point of view of seniority of age. Next to Daulathu, comes Habaisagao. But he holds his office only for two years. Besides the above officials, there are village officials like Pharai, Mantri, Hangsebukhu and Jalairao. But in the present day Dimasa society except Jalairao, the others have become non-existent. Jalairao, the lowest rank in the traditional village structure is still there because of the fact that any male married person can be a Jalairao.

Thus in the traditional village organizational set up, the Dimasas have 8 (eight) Officials, while the five officials at the top, namely, Khunang, Dilik, Daulathu, Habaisarau and Pharai constitute the senior group because of their ages and seniority, the remaining three officials, namely, Mantri, Hangsebukhu and Jalairao constitute the junior group. The members of the senior group being the traditional recruiting authority of the members of the junior group; have the virtual control over the latter.

Khunang, being the traditional headmen of the village, wields considerable authority and in fact his authority is undisputed so far as the affairs of the village are concerned. He is also respected by one and all in the village. The traditional village council with the eight sets of officials headed by Khunang settles disputes, tries cases of thefts, incest's, elopements, etc. and the Judgments delivered are binding on concerned parties. When women are involved, the elderly women are also invited to participate in the trials. Khunang and the other functionaries of a few village meet and sit together to settle inter-village disputes. Another important thing that is to be noted here is that no community function in a Dimasa village can be performed without the prior approval of Khunang.

Now let us examine whether the emergence of the Autonomous District Councils in the Dima Hasao Hills and the Karbi Anglong districts has strengthened or deteriorated the effectiveness of the traditional village council of the Dimasa constituted with eight sets of officials.

Khunang is recognized by the District Council as the headman of a village. In addition to his responsibility of maintaining the law and order situation in the village and trial of cases, the District Council specially that of N. C. Hills has entrusted him with some additional responsibilities like the collection of house tax and agricultural tax, maintenance of birth and death register, maintenance of records of arms in the village etc. Moreover, Khunang is also made responsible for execution of all development programmes meant for the village. As the Dimasa society is mostly guided by customs and traditions, the additional responsibilities now shouldered by Khunang do not stand in his way of

discharging his traditional functions. This has rather increased the powers and functions of the traditional village council in an indirect manner. It, therefore, appears that the traditional village organization is not incompatible with the modern political structure so far as the Dimasa society is concerned.

CUSTOMARY LAW OF INHERITANCE:

As the Dimasa Kachari have both male clans and female clans their law of inheritance is somewhat peculiar in nature. The Dimasas have a patriarchal society. But in spite of that have three types of property, namely, paternal property, maternal property, and common property. The paternal property or the father's property consists of real estates, weapons, cash money and the cattle. The maternal property or the mother's property consists of jewellery, clothes and the looms with their accessories used by the mother. The common property consists of the cooking utensils, brass-metal dishes and bowls and the other household equipment's. According to the customary law of inheritance of the Dimasa, while the paternal property is inherited by the sons, the maternal property is inherited by the daughters and the common property is shared by the sons and daughters equally. The sons can never inherit the maternal property even if there is no daughter in the family. In such a case the maternal property is inherited by the nearest female relative belonging to the same clan of the deceased woman. Similarly the daughters can never inherit the paternal property even if there is no son in the family. If a man does not have any sons, at his death his property will be inherited by his nearest male relative. But the most interesting provision of this customary law of inheritance is that as soon as a man inherits the real estate of a deceased person, he is liable to pay off all the debts of the deceased even if the amount of debt is more than the value of the real estate inherited by him. Under no circumstances he can get rid of this responsibility and it very often bears heavily on a person to pay off a very heavy debt because of the fact that he happens to be the nearest male kin of the deceased.

RELIGIOUS LIFE:

The Dimasas believe that they are the children of Bangla Raja and the great divine bird Arikhidima. The six sons, namely, Shibrai (Shivrai), Doo Raja, Naikhu Raja, Waa Raja, Ganyung-Braiung and Hamiyadao born to Bangla Raja and Arikhidima are their ancestors and the Dimasa consider them to be their ancestral gods. In Dimasa they are called 'MADAI'. The evil spirits born out of the seventh egg of Arikhidima are responsible for all the diseases and natural calamities these spirits are to be worshipped and appeased so that they might withdraw their evil influences from the patients and the family concerned. Even before opening up of a new Jhum site, the wrongdoer evil spirits are to be worshipped properly with a view escaping from their wraths by way of scanty rainfall, paste infection etc.

The Dimasas consider themselves to be Hindus although they have their traditional gods and goddess. Among the six ancestral gods, Sibrai /Shivrai being the eldest are the most important and in every worship his name is to be uttered first. Sibrai /Shivrai are equated with Hindu Siva, and Ranchandi with Parvati or Kali. The Dimasas also believe that MATONGMAH, HEDEMDI AND KAMAKHYA are others names of Ranchandi. The Hindu Goddess Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) and Saraswati (Goddess of learning) have already made a place for them in the Dimasa religion. Of course, they have another name of Lakshmi and her name is Longmaili (Goddess of paddy.)

But the most noteworthy feature of Dimasa religion is the abode of Gods and Goddess. A particular Dimasa region is considered to be the abode of few specific Gods and Goddess. The whole Dimasa Kingdom in the Bygone days was divided into twelve religious areas called DAIKHO. It is believed

that the Gods and Goddess residing in a particular DAIKHO protect the people of the area and control their destiny.

There are twelve priests for twelve Daikhoes. The priest of a Daikho is called ZONTHAI. So far as the religious matters of Daikho are concerned, ZONTHAI is all in all. His authority is undisputed. The names of the twelve Daikhoes are given below.

1.ALU	5. LONGMAILAI	9. RANCHANDI
2.BAIGIAI	6. MANJA	10. RIAO
3.HAMRI	7. MISIM	11. WAIBRA
4.DAMAN	8. MONGRANG	12. WOA

It is believe that the Daikhoes were originally clan jurisdiction. The Dimasas have a tradition of worshipping the clan gods once a year. In the past the members of a particular clan had their jurisdiction in a specific area and in course of time the clan members had become the priestly clan (Hojai) of that area so far as the worshipping of the clan god/gods of that area is concerned. In due course the area became a Daikho-a territorial jurisdiction. Besides Zonthai, the head priest of a Daikho, there are subordinate priests from different clans in a Daikho.

Over the twelve Zonthais of twelve Daikhoes, there is a principal priest or chief priest called GISIA. The Gisia has an important role to play so far as the religious life of the Dimasas is concerned. The Gisia performs the annual worshipping for the well-being of all the Dimasas living within gates Daikhoes as well as outside. In this worshipping he is assisted by the twelve Zonthais. Another important function of the Gisia is to select a New Zonthai when this office falls vacant due to the death or physical inability of the incumbent. The new Zonthai is selected by him on the basis of the recommendations of the people of the concerned Daikho. The selected person will get the Zonthaiship only when the Gisia offers him holy water called DITHER. The priests are selected only from the Hojaisa clan. Women are not entitled to priesthood of Zonthai or Gisia.

The twelve religious divisions have their own presiding deities. Since the Dimasas do not have representative images of gods and goddesses, they raise some earthen mounds to represent their deities at the time of worship. Besides the deities of the Daikhoes, each Dimasa village has its own deities.

Similarly every Sengphong (male clan) has also its own deity. The ancestral god of the Sengphong (male clan) which first established the village is believed to be the presiding deity of the village and the Khunang generally belongs to this Sengphong and this presiding deity is worshipped by the Khunang as the family deity also. That is why; the Khunang is to be selected from the same Sengphong which originally set up the village so that the continuity of the worshipping of the same deity goes on without any interruption. The village deity is to be propitiated with worship annually.

In the Dimasa worship at present pigs, goats and buffaloes are sacrificed. But during the reign of the Kachari kings there was even human sacrifice. At least one human was sacrificed in a year.

The Dimasas believe in the existence of a Supreme Being who is the creator of all. But the concept of this Supreme Being is very faint. They do not have any prescribed worship for him. He is, however, considered to be harmless. Sibrai/Shivrai plays a more important role in their day to day religious life than this Supreme Being.

The Dimasa concept of heaven and hell is also very faint. According to their belief DAMRA is the land for the dead where the dead persons retain their original form. Just like the Karbis the Dimasas also believe that in Damra everything is quite reverse. As for example, on earth a man moves forward with

his foot. But in Drama he moves backward with his hands by keeping his head upside down.

The Dimasas have a clear concept of a virtuous, dutiful and good man. Such a man must possess a number of traits. He should be capable of distinguishing between good and evil, honesty, and dishonesty, virtue and vice, etc. and follow the path of honesty and truthfulness and lead a virtuous life. Secondly, as a human being he should perform his duties and responsibilities in a proper way. He must take care of his parents while they are alive and should perform their funeral rites after their death. As a member of the society he must follow the customary rules, laws and traditions. Lastly he must be loyal to his wife and should perform the assigned duties to his family. A man with such traits is sure to be reborn as a human being after his death.

The Dimasas have a few persons who can predict the present and the future through oracles. These persons are wise and well-versed in the performance of religious rites and in Dimasa they are called Pathri. When natural calamities take place, epidemics break out, crops fail due to scanty or heavy rains and people starve due to famines, the services of the Pathris are requisitioned. The Pathri wearing new clothes take his seat religious tunes are played on the musical instruments. The Pathri concentrates his mind and after about fifteen minutes an extraordinary sensation comes to his mind. In this high ecstasy of mind the whole body of the Pathri starts trembling and his eyelids close automatically. At this stage questions are asked and the replies given are considered to be direct communications from God. The oracles also mention in clear terms the religious ceremonies to be performed and the sacrifices to be made to get rid of the present troubles and to have a better prospect in future.

In the Dimasa society, magicians still play an important role. While the services of the Pathri are requisitioned to find out the causes of calamities from which the people of a particular region suffer, the help of the magician is sought to find out the reason for ailment of the family members or harm that has been caused by unaccountable situations. The magician with the help of a stick or a rope or cowries makes certain calculations and find out the causes and suggests remedial measures to be adopted to get rid of the disease or the harmful spirit. Very often the magician's remedial measures do not produce any effective results. But still then people's faith on the magicians continues to hold good. The only commendable part of this game is that the magicians do not demand any payment for the services rendered by them although the concerned family is at liberty to offer the magician some kind of payment either in cash or in kind.

Black magic is considered to be practiced by women only and the Dimasas call them SAGAINJIK (witches). It is believed that such women do harm by means of their black magic and as far as practicable these women are avoided by the people. But the existence of such witches in the Dimasa society is very few and far between.

The Dimasas have their own way of taking oath and as this has a religious sanctity behind it, it would be worthwhile to mention here how the oath is taken.

Early in the morning before partaking of any food, a sword, a piece of earth from a landslip, a grain of rice, a leaf from the plant of a stinging nettle, a piece of Indigo and the tooth of a tiger are placed at an open space just outside the village. The persons who are to be sworn are then taken to this place. Approaching the place each person at first looks up to the sky and says that if he speaks false he will be struck by lightning. Then pointing to the sword he says that he will meet death by a sword similar to that placed before him if he speaks false. Next, pointing to the piece of earth from a landslip he says that his body will be washed away by the rain like the piece of earth placed before him in case he speaks false. He then points out to the grain of paddy and says that if he speaks a lie he will lose his identity totally just like this grain of paddy which once planted will be completely forgotten as soon as the seedling or the

shoot comes up. Pointing to the leaf of the stinging-nettle next, the man says that if he speaks false his body will suffer from chronic tortures which the leaf of the stinging-nettle is capable of inflicting. After this he points out the piece of indigo and says that the colour of his body will be changed to indigo-like if he speaks false. And lastly pointing to the tiger's tooth he says that he will be devoured by a ferocious tiger having teeth like the one in front of him if he speaks a lie.

FOOD HABITS:

Rice is the staple food of the Dimasa Kacharis. Rice made from BARA paddy is a delicacy for them. However, it is taken occasionally not as a staple food but as tiffin. Bara rice is required for the preparation of rice beer (Joo) also. During the festivals cakes made from this kind of rice are indispensable.

The Dimasas produce a kind of alkali by burning the dried trunks of the plantains. This alkali they use in curries of different types. Alkalic curry with dried fish is a favourite delicacy for the Dimasas. Vegetables grown in the kitchen gardens and Jhums, leafy vegetables and other eatables including roots procured from the neighbouring forests and hills supplement their staple diet. Rice with vegetable curry, chilies, dried fish and occasionally with meat are generally taken thrice daily in the morning, at noon and in the evening after sunset. Fish for domestic consumption is caught in the rivers, streams and ponds with JABBER (pointed iron rod for piercing big fish), NAKHULU (fishing trap made of bamboo) and net. Dried fish is, of course, brought from local weekly markets.

The Dimasas drink blank tea, that is to say, without milk and sugar twice or thrice daily. They neither drink milk nor do they milk the she buffaloes for commercial purpose. In this connection it may be remembered that each Dimasa family rears buffaloes and the buffalo calves are sold to the traders. The logic adduced by them against the habit of drinking milk or milking the she buffaloes is very simple. The milk in the breast of a mother whether human or animal, is always meant for the offspring's. To deprive the offspring's of the milk of the mother is a great sin. The Dimasas hunt the wild animals in the forest with Jong's (hunting spears), bows and arrows and fire arms. Deer's meat is a delicacy for them. They eat fowls, pigs, ducks, goats and buffaloes also.

Chewing of raw betelnut with betel leaves, lime and tobacco is very common. In a Dimasa village, chewing of betelnut is a common sight. The children, of course, generally do not indulge in this habit. But as they grow up they automatically form this habit by imbibing the footsteps of their elders. Smoking of tobacco, biddies and cigarettes is also very common.

The most favourable beverage of the Dimasa is rice beer called Joo. The Dimasa women brew rice-beer at their homes with rice and other ingredients locally available. To entertain guests with Joo is a must. But, it is to be remembered that the Dimasas are not habitual drinkers like other neighbouring tribes. During festivals, feasts, weddings, death ceremonies, etc. rice beer is freely used. But at other times only a limited quantity is used for everyday domestic consumption.

CONCLUSION:

Dimasa has a concept and idea to uplift his own society. It has an education for preparation of intellectual. Dimasa has a conception of philosophy to rebirth the soul. A Dimasa family generally consists of the head of the family, his wife, their unmarried son and daughter and unmarried brothers and sisters of the family. Dimasa Kachari has forty male clans called Sengphong and forty two female clan called Julu. The Dimasa society has its own society system of marriage. Existence of female clans along with the male can makes the Dimasa marriage somewhat complicated. The male clans and female clans are exogamous and no marriage can take place between the boys and the girls of the same

clan whether be it patri clan or matri clan and however distantly related they might be i.e. A boy belong to Kemprai clan (Patri clan can never marry a girl of a Kemprai father although they might be very distantly related. The same principal is followed in case of the female clan also i.e. a girl belongs to madaima mother.) The Ritual performance: The Dimasa has a place cremation ground called Mangkhulong. Dimasa cremate the dead body after death. But in olden times and days, this performance has to be conducted after one month or a year gathering all relation and others. The Dimasas have a very rich knowledge of utilizing their naturally available resources in the form of medicines, commercial products, food, and aroma and in therapeutic treatments; particularly the women being higher in efficiency and intelligence can utilize their age old knowledge to conserve their resources and heritage as well as to make economic gains out of them. However, it is quite sure that when their traditional knowledge will fuse with the modern education, they will be able to do the same in a more organized, scientific and of course in a more profitable way.

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