

**ARIOUS ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND REACTIONS IN KARBI ANGLONG  
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***Abstract***

*Karbi Anglong is located in central part of Assam said to be the most desolated hill district lacking almost every basic necessity which her neighbours get to enjoy the flow of socio-economic, political, education, and civil attainments. These dimensions take dawdling gait proceeding towards new era; they are to be accelerated so that civil, economic and political rights may fulfil self actualization. A 'within' struggles of grass root level remain concealed from outlook scene so this could not cope up with sheer speed advancement of modern science and technology. Social change is deliberately slothful therefore economic development follows lethargic rate of change. People are unable to take part in active social building programmes due to political perplexity experienced earlier and also with the existing conflict at so-called Block I & II border dispute. Want for standard schools and colleges is a serious matter of concern for the Indigenous people who have remarkably journeyed from the longest frequency of struggle for a piece of autonomy, notwithstanding fat promise of government conversely turned out to be an incomplete response to meet the cost of endeavour. The state government enterprises Karbi Anglong politics disguising compromising propaganda with handful of deceptive lip-service, meanwhile the inflow of developmental index always dwells in missing link, apparently nosy for personal welfare while phony assurances reach-out to the destitute. Hoax promises are meant for vote bank to the Legislative Assembly and Parliament. Frivolity towards people's wills to entertain civic amenities is a much ado decadence of policy makers. Kudos to their temperament for being submissive in nature showing loyal attitude by discarding aggressive behaviour against the government despite of negligence they have experienced. Political disposition should address itself for constructive purposes not to cause sedition and manipulation as it happened before. Concept of Liberty and freedom should be genuine and must reiterate in the minds of citizens in the process of educating young people together with religious tolerance as the keyword for*

*enlightenment. We will examine in the following whether these problems can substantiate or not at all.*

### **Introduction:**

The main aim and objective of this write up is to glance at the four areas of social, political, economic and education scenario and trying to offer solution to the people of Karbi Anglong which may find it relevant in accordance with an ongoing crisis they are indulging presently. The article also elucidates brief genesis of the tribe all, about seeking identity and permanence. Well, not much is written on the Karbi Tribe of Assam despite few researched passages are available in the archives derived from the reports prepared by the East India Company during land survey and discovery in the then undivided Assam. The Karbi community is one of the principal tribes of Assam, constituting the third largest tribal community after the Bodos and the Mishings. Large numbers of them reside in the present district of Karbi Anglong located in central part of the state bordering Nagaland, Meghalaya and other regional districts. Karbi Anglong comes under the Sixth Scheduled district set aside by the Constitution of India, born on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1952. Other karbis have confined in other parts of Assam like Dima Hasao(N.C.Hills), Kamrup, Morigoan, Nagoan, Golaghat, Karimganj, Udalguri and Sonitpur districts. Good number of them are also found in Balijan circle of Papumpare district in Arunachal Pradesh, Jaintia Hills, Ri Bhoi and East Khasi Hills districts of Meghalaya as well as in Nagaland. Few are settled in Bangladesh in a small village named Umjalong adjacent to Meghalaya. The Karbis are also recognised as Scheduled Tribe in Meghalaya which may be a mere sycophancy for, government policy of Meghalaya does not have job reservation as beneficiary of special quota of the state. Inferior feeling is an additional impediment to meet the challenges with the world outside because Karbis prefer to live in aloof, places far away from disturbances like industries, factories, busy roads and direct contact with people of different communities. This coy nature is irrational though unique per se, but does not conform with present emerging society.

### **Historical Background:**

The history of untimely settlement of the Karbis is quite knotty to trace the root due to the lack of testimony and archaeological evidence. On account of oral tradition concerning history of migration few points are available which we have received from their elderly narration. There are reliable sources provided by scholar like British Surveyor Edward Stack in 1882, had spent long years among this particular tribe and studied about their anthropological genealogy in course of land survey in entire Assam, he studied on the basis of culture, habits, religion, custom and laws and language. So the Karbis belong to Tibeto-Burman linguistic group of the large Mongoloid race originated in Western China close by the rivers Hwang Ho and Yangtze Kiang and lived there for centuries before the mega event of mass exodus down to the rivers as it happened once upon a time all over the world in search of food and shelter. China has been known as Celestial Kingdom; abound with multi-ethnicity in the pre-migration period, was the homeland of many mongoloid races. Gradually the

glorious 'Heavenly Kingdom' faded away by unforeseen natural havoc like famines and grave diseases thereby forced them migrating to different parts of North Eastern India. The Karbi tribe along with the homogeneous groups moved down the course of two great rivers, Chindwin River and the Irrawaddy River en route Burma, finally entered Assam before they scattered to different parts of present North Eastern regions. Assam was the then undivided province of North East, have embraced various tribes prior to Ahom invasion of plain Assam easy physical feature. Subsequently the Karbis become one of the prominent tribes of entire Assam. For centuries they lived under the Jaintia suzerainty, the Jaintia King welcome them in his land as refugees following an expulsion of the Kachari King. Soon the two tribes practiced cultural exchange including marriage and languages spoken phonologically intermixed. Unexpected misunderstandings between the two tribes made Jaintia King drew the Karbis back to unknown forest now the comrade have nowhere to seek political asylum hence they entered in a very dense jungle situated beside the Jaintia Kingdom. The Burmese invasion in Assam perpetrated inhumane oppression on the people of Assam and Jaintias but the Karbis got rid from this cruelty and carnage by taking refuge in the thick jungles and high hills leaving their hearth and home in the sub mountain regions, the young Karbi girls started to use tattoo by drawing a black line from the forehead to the chin in order to make their faces look ugly to protect themselves from malicious act of Burmese invaders. That thick and undiscovered jungle the Karbis have entered in side after eviction by the Jaintias presently called Karbi Anglong.

### **The Sixth Scheduled Land**

Karbi Anglong is situated in the central part of Assam surrounded by Golaghat district in the east, in the west by Meghalaya and Morigoan district, Nagoan and Golaghat district in the north and Dima Hasao district and Nagaland in the south. It lies between 25° 33' N to 26°35'N Latitude and 92°10' to 93°50'E Longitude. It covers total area of 10, 434 Sq.Km, 10,397 Sq.Km rural and only 37 Sq. km. covers urban areas. The district is covered by dense tropical forest in both the hills and plains areas. There are twelve important rivers serving purpose for agriculture as well as fishing they are Kopili, Nambor, Amtereng, Borpani, Deopani, Kolioni, Jamuna, Patradisha, Dhansiri, Longnit, Dikharu and Doigrung. The forest area is larger than human settlement area at approximately 4,922.019 sq. Km including 14 State Reserved Forests and 17 District Council Reserved Forests in the district. It is the largest hill district, demarcated out of Nagoan, and has been specified as one of the Tribal dominated areas as mentioned in the Sixth Scheduled item No. 6 of part A, paragraph 20 Vide Govt. notification No. TAD/R.31/50/201, dated November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1951, the then new Mikir Hills district was formed, officially created on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1951 but the council was constituted legitimately on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1952 with its territories along the lines of Nagoan district, Sivsagar, North Kachar Hill, Morigoan district, Nagaland, Jaintia Hills and Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya. Again Mikir Hill District was altered its name as Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1976, Vide Govt. Notification No. TAD/ R/115/74/47 Dated 14-10-1976, published in a report of Sixth Scheduled paragraph 1 (3) (ff). Karbi Anglong became full-fledged autonomous district in the map of

Assam with Diphu as its district Headquarter administering three sub-divisions and eleven developmental blocks.

**Present Tribal Population:**

Composition of tribal population depends on diverse ethnic groups inhabiting within the district far more the Karbis lead as largest group besides, some tribes have been migrated from various parts of Assam living together with the Karbis are Bodos, Kukis, Dimasas, Hmars, Garos, Rengma Nagas, Tiwas, Jaintias, Man (Tai Speaking). Further, high number of non-tribal population also found there mostly Biharis and Adivasis (Tea-Community). Hence density of Population becomes 93 per Sq. Km. with Sex Ratio of 956 females/1000 males. The 2928 villages both SC Population -29,520 and ST Population-935760 made up total Population of 9, 65,280 in the whole district of Karbi Anglong.

**Autonomous State Demand:**

The state demand committee is called 'Hemprek Kangthim' in regional Karbi language initiated a movement, named as Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) on 17<sup>th</sup> May 1986 followed by submission of Memorandum of Understanding to the state Government of Assam and entrusted to the Legislative Assembly. Since then unremittingly more than two decades have gone by, yet the memorandum is still keeping under great procrastination unwilling to fulfil for the cost of movement. Karbi Anglong comprising North Cachar Hill district strongly resolved to create one state to accentuate upon the signed memorandum and take tough action in different forms of reactions like interruption civil life by pressure groups and generate disturbances everywhere in the district. The movement is also an expression to implement the 30 subjects of North Cachar Hills' issues and Karbi Anglong 'all round catastrophes' so to lay down the modalities of observance for better administration. The said subjects and problems would be solved if the sixth scheduled settlement is transferred to complete tribal state autonomy. People have meditated that as long as statehood is not granted there would be no socio-economic, political and education progress, instead these elements encumber livelihood unceasingly. Negligence of Medical services in remote villages is the largest obstacle that hinders the life of average people who struggle for survival because they have no access to good road and hospitals not even small scale dispensary to attend the patients during emergency. Due to these short comings they cannot realize higher achievement to actualize themselves to apex status in the society. Statehood grandeur is an old dream for the people of Karbi Anglong district at times dissuades them from hopeful mood when corruption overruled particularly eating away of schemes and project package consigned to them from far distance Delhi. Outstanding paper presentation impresses Central Audit General of India's office meanwhile a white-elephant job is done with people's money. Corruption crept to a good deal astonishingly average society is ignorant about this unfair means. The reason why there is no voice against false practice is due to lack of knowledge concerning fundamental rights. Politicians and administrators of Karbi Anglong primarily confined to their own advantage, secondary feeling is for common people distribute them of lion's

share, the left-over meal. In recent years lack of interest for common development is publicly noticed yet repentance and realization by district authority has not been commenced. Systematic evaluation on suppression, corruption, intolerance, repression, nepotism and discrimination made people's organizations launched state demand. Besides becoming aware of various lacuna and loopholes active within the two districts apart from economic development as the focal point, the central administration unanimously reluctant to pay heed to the voice of the committees. In addition, special packages have been despatched directly to the district headquarter but the district administration seemed to be unable to utilize the packages owing to chronic drawbacks practice among the leaders, indulged in mishandling the central fund. No ideal is seen, people don't know the whereabouts of money. Fantastic experience of hypocrisy and discrepancies adding more public grievances during 27 years movement ended with non-interference and chaos. Currently, Autonomous State Demand Committee is dynamic, determined to accomplish the goal.

#### **Emergence of Combative Groups:**

Karbi Anglong owned good reputation since the birth of autonomous council but smooth beginning has digressed in a pathetic scenario with a sudden surfacing of underground factions, have come affront representing on behalf society entitled themselves as freedom fighters. This is a rare debut primarily formed for proliferation of power by exploiting innocent people so that they may lay support for their cause, none other than the United People Democratic Solidarity (UPDS). The UPDS at the start was social group turned vicious after surreptitious inspiration of perpetrators filliped them to form radical section by unifying between two nascent rebel factions from the East and West Karbi Anglong; they were mere self-styled militants namely Karbi National Volunteer (KNV) and Karbi People Force (KPF). The two combined as UPDS on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1999 followed by formation of Karbi Longri National Liberation Front (N.C. Hill base) as the handmaid of the UPDS group. Further, some outlawed militant groups such as Dima Hasao Daogah (DHD), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) are present till now inside the dense forests of Karbi Anglong, somewhat risky to trace their footprints during operation. Men in uniform find difficult to outline these underground terrorists due to unsophisticated weapons they possess inversely civil forces are often attacked by militants who have well equipped arms and ammunition. Militant-police conflict has maimed peace dialogue proposed by good will civilians. At present this sad plight has improved far better than during the midst 1990s as mutual understanding began to prevail for constructive work.

#### **Ethnic Violence:**

Communal riot sensation has crept in to their sentiment paralysing normal life endangering one another's business, its cancerous disease contaminated in peaceful atmosphere of evergreen tribal life which never happened before. This is an affiliation to ideological differences, responsible by

political dogma incited erroneously on simple and innocent citizens' temperament. Violence took in different forms like ostracism and eviction against the newly converted Christians by their own close relatives on the matter of faith and belief. Sedition to drive away the Christians presumably arose from indoctrination of few fanatics belonging to a particular sectarianism. The 2003 Kuki-Karbi conflict on account of Jhum Cultivation ban called by the proscribed UPDS caused bloodshed between the two indigenous tribes. Following this incident Karbi-Dimasa clash broke out in 2004-05 as a result of rebellious treason of media broadcasters feeding wrong information instead of pacifying the tempest. Thus this ethnic clash between Karbis versus Dimasas is said to be mega bloodshed in the history of Karbi Anglong, sponsored by a pre-meditated politics. Till present time ill feeling and mistrust does causing them suspicious each other preventing from carrying out developmental activities. Predictably this fire of hostility may ignite once again if no preventive measures could apply beforehand. In addition to this, border row along Meghalaya-Assam brought in tension as a strong claim of Khasi-Jaintia NGOs for Block I & Block II become one of core issue touching all aspects of discontentment, creating a bone of contention directly affected brotherhood of Karbis and Khasis consequently led to ethnic explosion. Peace and harmony shared between these tribes since time immemorial suddenly annihilated feeling of love and concern for one another. Apart from this there are Biharis and Adivasis living together with tribal communities, often fall victim to violence especially when heavy taxation is imposed by militant groups. Resentment amid Adivasis versus Biharis living in the same village led to illogical brawl in July 2005 which ended abruptly without reconciliation, it shows disgraceful face of idiocy. It has been observed that, people from different communities' residents of Karbi Anglong lack regret and repentance to the loss of life by means of violent behaviour they treated to one another. Now chauvinism, nepotism, corruption arose from lack of education definitely hard to eliminate once it's planted in the genes of different confined tribes. The most powerful instrument to dispel all bias and prejudices is to increase number of 'educated individuals'. This is serious challenge for entire district and its administration expecting good leadership without partial fulfilment. Secondly, a fight for authority and to dominate upon one another marked bizarre circumstance in pretext of land property chiefly extension of agricultural practice in the areas claimed by specified tribes, intrusion across demarcated boundary believed to have restriction for other tribes. Economic insufficiency hence to meet daily life is liable to inter-tribal bloodshed that turned out weaker sections endured ill treatment during relief mission many women and children were ravished and abused by army men mostly poor village girls but no justice has been provided so far, the law is paying no heed for trial. This raises gigantic question mark why Karbi Anglong authority favours injustice.

**Economic Circumstance:**

Majority of the Karbis are agriculturists they practice agriculture predominantly shifting cultivation those who live in higher land, while those in low land areas they practice permanent cultivation in paddy fields by means of traditional methods like ploughing with the help of oxen, hoe

and dao are essential instruments assisting their work. Agriculture is primary source of income because other alternative means is least available like business enterprises, government office jobs so on are seldom significant, so they grow variety of crops both for food crops and commercial crops such as food grains, vegetables, fruits, paddy, maize, potato, tapioca, beans, sesame, ginger and turmeric, betel nut, pan leaves, banana, jackfruit, mango, pears, oranges, pineapple, brinjal, bottle gourd, pumpkin, chilly and different varieties of leafy vegetables etc. In addition to cultivation cattle rearing is another supplementary economic basis, they raise domestic animals like cows, buffaloes, pigs, hens, goats and sheep meant for sale in markets as well as meat consumption. According to Assam Human Development Report 2003 entire Karbi Anglong endures acute poverty rating 33.52 HPI (Human Poverty Index) which blows the highest poverty index in Assam. As a result children from remote villages suffer malnutrition severely affecting optimum health thus we find medical effects like mental and physical retardation. Karbi Anglong is rich in natural resources like mineral, water and forest resources. Some minerals found there, are Lime stone found in the Dillai and Sainilangso, China-clay in Upper Deopani and Silonijan area, Feldspar is found in Koilajan area, while Coal is found in Koilajan and Silbheta. Some small scale industries are operating menially manufacturing goods in the following plants; Bokajan Cement Plant, Karbi Chemical Mini Cement Plant (under construction), Agro-Base; for Rubber Plantation Industry and Citronella Plantation Industry; Tea Garden- There are a total of 12 numbers of Tea Gardens in the district which are Nambor Nadi, Deopani, Sobhoneswari, Ramanagar, Lahorijan, Borpathar, Dhansiri, Banaspati, Methunguri, Lengri, Nirmal, and Methoni. The gross domestic product from these manufacturing centres is extremely meagre and inefficient to provide employment to the human capitals. Many local Karbis are also neglected employment even in the N.F. railways passing through the district touching stations Hawaipur, Lamsakhang, Borlangphar, Langsoliet, Nilalung, Diphu, Doldoloi, Dhansiri, Rongapahar, Khotkhoti and Bokajan. From the above evaluation Karbi Anglong is quite sensitive in terms of economy, needed to nurture by new paradigm shift, and should have to set off from the base.

**Academic Definition:**

Educational scenario is generally positive although large number of children cannot access to city schools except village set up schools. Poverty is one of the biggest obstacles that avert young boys and girls going to better schools and colleges outside the state especially for professional studies like engineering, medical sciences, information technology etc. Nonetheless, in recent years effort and attempt have made in pursuing better quality education, investment for cost effective product has realised. In this manner social change had taken place though slow but the parents came to light counting value of education prior to 20 years ago. Look in the following, in accordance with the report received from census 2011, the total population of entire district is 9, 65,280 out of these 8, 51,158 live in rural areas and only 1, 14,122 live in urban areas. Literacy rate is somewhat optimistic, encouraging to note down that 5, 74,509 are literate including 3, 26,444 males and 2, 48,065 females. Hence total Literacy Rate according to this census is 73.52% of which 82.12 % is male and 64.62 %

female. The uneducated population comprised of adults and children who get abandoned to receive knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic. So far improvement has not been overtaken backwardness even though remedies have applied to eradicate illiteracy by means of launching non-formal education, informal education, vocational education programmes. One fattest drawback as a whole is unavailability of well trained human resource to run institutions in and around the districts. Many teachers are not paid properly as well as low salary maximum 2500 rupees per month to primary SSA teachers are an insult and exploitation. Teachers are reluctant to work in schools and colleges when delivery of duty is higher than payment receipt. Human capital manipulation has come across in the past up to present day.

#### **En route to Loosing Identity:**

To know ethnography of Karbi tribe is prime concern in the study of anthropology, it provides information of all aspects regarding Language and dialects they speak; always keep their identity alive till today. The social scientists are interested to investigate about their customs and habits, behaviour and mentality. Identity orientation have examined that they are rich in cultural heritage, but this treatise does not claim any existence of 'their own scripts' rather they use Roman Scripts unlike other tribal communities do for all purposes. Karbis follow patriarchal system in contrast to matrilineal system of marriage practice among the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos of Meghalaya. With the passage of time Karbi men and women are influenced by outside force so some of them go for inter-tribe marriage especially with matrilineal society leaving their father's property behind and annex with that system which usually don't happen before therefore giving alarm and worry for kin and kindred. According to Karbi Customary law marriage takes place within the tribe and prohibits inter-tribal marriage particularly with matrilineal ones. Language and dialects they speak among those Karbis living in different districts vary accent and tonality. The karbis living in Kamrup and Morigoan districts have totally lost their original language instead they speak and write in Assamese, they feel proud to use other culture and language are put to extinct. Conversion to Christianity as well as Hinduism is not new curriculum both in Karbi Anglong and outside actually they have their own original tribal religion dissimilar from Hinduism or Christianity. Except the Karbis living in Meghalaya and Karbi Anglong, have forgotten everything including dress, mores, social norms, custom has changed over to high caste customs like rituals, funeral, sacrifice and worship of idols, interaction and wooing in social network services. Accurately pointing based on the attitude studied upon them, that uneducated Karbis are vulnerable to foreign influence can be carried away any wave but difficult to inculcate education.

#### **Political Disposition:**

Get back your memory during election and compare with condition after election how winners or elected legislators behave towards people who have crown them bunch of power. MLAs and MDCs usually fond of misusing public money, mode of conduct is at times interesting. This is the reason why Karbi Anglong always goes backward. Contrasting this, involvements with underground



outfits in political affairs as their vanguard is evidently exercised. Currently political condition in the district is cool since the UPDS endorsement for peaceful dialogue of the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) with the centre on historic day of 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 putting all enmity in to the trough opening new threshold aptly a paradigm shift. A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Central Government, the Government of Assam and the UPDS gives a boost of Ahimsa in near future. The cadres took initiative for building up social work, determined to yield fruits of hard work by implementing appropriate packages consigned from Delhi. Official laying down of arms ceremony held in the district head quarter convinced Central Government their willingness to bloodshed termination. The surrendered UPDS now are taking active part in political arena together with civil society reaching out all four legislative constituencies Bokajan (ST), Baithalangso (ST), Diphu (ST) and Howraghat (ST) as well as five parliamentary constituencies namely Halflong (ST, N.C. Hills), Bokajan (ST, Karbi Anglong District), Howraghat (ST, Karbi Anglong), Diphu (ST, Karbi Anglong) and Baithalangso (ST, Karbi Anglong). North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong have one representative to Lok Sabha. We hope that politics will keep on staying stable without inflicting human elements as before.

#### **Concluding Remarks:**

Meek nature of the Karbis should no longer apply in day to day life, instead of this placid nature they need radical change in building themselves in a tough mentality so that they will be able to cope up with today's emerging scientific technology advancement. Soft mindedness is the main reason to why socio-economic remains static in place of dynamic movement. The Karbis are also nature dependent satisfied with what they get. They also belief in natural deities for birth, death and progress in fact have no truth for that but just a superstition due to lack of knowledge, false belief taught in tribal religion or Hinduism reveals hindrance to innovations and creativity among the Karbis. Agriculture cannot serve basic needs anymore therefore employment should create venture for educated youths, must outdo the aged methods of earning income. Ignorance is effective leader of poverty and embarrassment while ethnic violence is an expression of not being enlightened. Different forms of unrests often appear against the good will, Block I & II dispute is interstate unrest for boundary between Assam and Meghalaya. Its fatal crisis that may reduce proactive feeling, then delimit frequency of sharing for common policy. Statehood demand will not come true if developmental index fail to present to the head of Central Government. Peace should prevail by coming to reconciliation and tolerance among the warring groups in as much as there is no assurance on violence explosion. Although jhum cultivation is the mainstay in the past but now many farmers are reluctant to practice because they come to know that deforestation harms oneself and that, environmental degradation is suicidal attempt. The UPDS menace is subsided and hopefully not to revive some day but looking forward to turn in to productive party. There is room for improvement which may consume time and space quite a lot so I am very positive about them.

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